

**KHELOBEDU CULTURAL EVOLUTION THROUGH ORAL
TRADITION**

by

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DECLARATION

I Moyahabo Rosinah Mohale declare that **KHELOBEDU CULTURAL EVOLUTION THROUGH ORAL TRADITION** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

Date

M.R Mohale

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate Khelobedu cultural evolution through oral tradition. The purpose of this study was to investigate and interpret the nature, direction and magnitude of cultural evolution in relation to the Khelobedu culture. The study was qualitative in nature and a case study research design drawing on ethnographic methods was used. Data-gathering techniques included semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, observations, field notes and focus group discussions. Theories of culture were used as the theoretical framework of this study. Data was analysed by means of content analysis. A number of findings emanated from this research project. First, Khelobedu culture has evolved substantively. Second, contact with other indigenous South African cultures also influenced the perceptions of the Balobedu people. Third, Christianity is one of the major factors that propelled the evolution of Khelobedu culture. Most of the participants described themselves as Christians and they demonstrated lack of interest in traditional practices. Fourth, appreciation of western culture has increased among the members of Balobedu. It was highlighted that the wide spread of technology and mass media makes western culture easily accessible and more appealing. Fifth, politics brought a change on how the Balobedu people conducted their legal and communal affairs. However there was also an indication that some of the values and practices were still valued by members of the tribe. For example language, value of respect and so forth.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter the study of Khelobedu culture is outlined briefly. The study which is presented here is mainly based on the Khelobedu cultural evolution. The concept “Khelobedu” also refers to a language spoken in and around Bolobedu by the people of the Rain Queen Modjadji. Khelobedu is grammatically similar to both Tshivenda and Sesotho. The language is a dialect which is similar more to Sesotho than Tshivenda since Sesotho became the home language used by schools in the Limpopo Province. This language contains some sounds that exist in Northern Sesotho.

Currently, the PanSalb does not allow the language to be used in the schools around Bolobedu. Bolobedu is regarded as the land of offerings. However the people of Bolobedu cannot be separated from their culture since their origin is believed to be a result of cultural influences. The name Lobedu is thought to be derived from practices referring to the daughters or sisters who had lost their families. Bolobedu central place is Khehlakong.

Culture refers to the customs, beliefs, art, music and all other products of human thought made by a particular group of people, at a particular time, within a particular geographical space. Since the arrival of Europeans in the country, African indigenous culture has changed in various ways. It is evident that the indigenous knowledge inherited from the ancestors is no longer displaying its original characteristics. Mkabele (2005:178), in his observation argues that African indigenous cultures have changed rapidly. African cultures have now assimilated in the arena of Western civilization. Balobedu tribe is one of the tribes within South Africa and it is also affected by cultural change. In this dissertation the main focus is to examine how the Balobedu culture is the most affected by cultural change.

1.2 Background information about the Balobedu tribe

A study by Cartwright (1974) shows that, the Balobedu tribe came into existence in the early seventeenth century. This group has its origins and attachments to the former Great Zimbabwe and Mapugumbwe Kingdoms. Balobedu are the descendants of the Shona from

Zimbabwe. It is rumoured that this kingdom was established by Monomotapa (MwanaMotapa) after quarrelling with his father in the early seventeenth century. The chief of the tribe for instance, was appointed by the spirit of his predecessor. Krige (1943: 24-25) indicates that the old chief had to commit ritual suicide for the coronation of the new chief to take place. The house in which the chief committed suicide was then regarded as the coronation place.

The Balobedu people were originally divided into two groups, namely the Southern Transvaal BaRozwi and the North Eastern BaRozwi. According to Motshekga (2004: 35) the North Eastern Transvaal Balozwi were known as “Bana ba Tsiekhalaka (The children of ants)”.

The first chief who broke away from Monomotapa had a daughter known as Dzugudini. Dzugudini entered into a sexual relationship with her brother and she fell pregnant. She and her mother refused to reveal the secret of who had impregnated her to her father. They decided to leave the royal kraal. She fled her father’s brutality and took some of his followers and her rain making powers to the Venda region of the Northern Province. Krige (1943: 24-25) reveals that “they took with them; from the king’s secret place; the sacred beads of the tribe and the rain charms”. They eventually fled across the Limpopo River and settled on the slope of the Drakensburg which is next to Duiwelskloof.

In the nineteenth century the Balobedu tribe migrated further south to the fertile Molototsi valley, where they founded present-day Ga-Modjadji. Dzugudini was blessed with a baby who was named Makhaphele. Makhaphele was destined to establish a new dynasty. He led the nation after the death of his mother in Vuthuhazindi in the Tswaing Mountains currently known as Soutpansberg. Mashale (2009:44) points out that Makhaphele was blessed with three sons, namely Mohale, Ragolane and Kgada. Makhaphele died in the Soutpansberg and was buried at Phiphidi falls. After his death, his three sons competed amongst themselves to lead the BaRozwi, and Mohale won the fight. He succeeded his father and led the BaRozwi kingdom. Krige and Krige (1980:308) point out that Mohale is regarded as the founder of the tribe, and is associated with rituals for instance, the Bird of Mohale which is associated with rain. Mohale and his followers established the kingdom of Balobedu.

Anonymous (in Mashale, 2009:44) emphasises that members of the kingdom were originally known as Balobedu ba Mohale. They also praised using their totem. They were usually

associated with pigs and, therefore are known as Dikolobe (Pigs). Mohale led Balobedu tribe, together with the Kith and the Kin of Mamabolo (the pigs) and the Nengwekulu (the elephant) from the Soutpansberg region to the Letaba Valley. According to Motshekga (2004: 43), the Nengwekulu separated from the BaRozwi ba Mohale at Phukubweni which is currently known as Ha Sekgopo. They settled at Naje, which is near Tshaneng (basket), currently known as Tzaneen. It was rumoured that Tshaneng acquired the name because of its shape; it looks like a basket. When the missionaries came to South Africa it was difficult for them to pronounce the word Tshaneng, so they pronounced it as Tzaneen. Tzaneen is situated in the Letaba valley. Anonymous (1969 in Mashale 2009:44) indicates that Chief Mohale was separated from Ragolane and Kgada (the elephants) at Naje in Tzaneen. He migrated from Khiedeulu (known as Deerpark) and moved to Medingeni. Balobedu people occupied Medingeni and the mountains of Thlohlokwe which stops at Modjadji's neck on the route to Giyani. Motshekga (cited in Mashale, 2009:45) assumes that when Mohale and his people arrived at that particular place, they came across a certain tribe which called itself the heirs (Bakgoma) of Khioka (Seoka) who occupied the Thlohlokwe mountain range. Mambo (King) Mohale used his sacred power to defeat the Seoka tribe. He did not want to be ruled by someone else from that tribe. Most of the Seoka people were assaulted and killed. Those who survived Mohale's brutality had no alternative but to accept Mohale's leadership.

After his victory Mohale took over the whole Letaba valley and named it Bolobedu. This is a comparatively small tribe, which even today is still below a million. Motshekga (2004:42-44) emphasises that Mohale as the founder of that place, reigned the tribe until he died. Historically according to the Balobedu culture when the chief/queen becomes old he/she must commit ritual suicide to give a room to his successor.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, chief Mugodo arrived on the scene after the death of his father. The tribe was then led by Mugodo, a male leader, who was a descendant of the original Chief Mohale. Chief Mugodo was threatened by his sons and councillors. Mugodo's ancestral spirits warned him that their sons intended to defeat him. Chief Mugodo came up with the prophecy that according to his ancestors, he would be succeeded by a Queen, particularly a woman in whose veins would run the blood of Monomotapa/Mwanamotapa (<http://www.ezakwantu.com>).

According to him to the ancestors said he should be succeeded by his child. Krige (1943:25) indicates that Mugodo extended his prophecy and claimed that, according to the wishes of the ancestors, he must commit incest with his daughter so that she might give birth to a girl who will eventually succeed him and her mother to become the leader of the tribe. Mugodo proposed his favourite daughter, but she refused. He put the same proposal to another daughter of his, Modjadji.

Krige indicates that Modjadji, by then, was a young, unmarried woman who was ambitious. Modjadji was told that if she accepts the proposal, she would succeed her father and her child would also succeed her after her death. She accepted the proposal. Mugodo made all the agreements with his beloved wife. Mugodo's wife was murdered by the King's sons and counsellors because they did not agree with her decision to support the king on the matter.

Mugodo committed incest with his daughter Modjadji and she fell pregnant. A baby boy was born. The boy was not accepted by the tribe and was killed before he could breathe. Her second child was a girl who was accepted. Mugodo ensured that the new heir to his throne would be a Queen. That's how a new dynasty arising from a woman founded. This was done with the intention of restoring the tribe's matrilineal tradition.

Modjadji became the first rain Queen in the world. She was filled with the powers to make rain, which expanded the wealth of the kingdom. "Modjadji was known as an extremely powerful magician, able to make rain for her friends and droughts for her enemies". She was regarded as the transformer of clouds. The highlight of the existence of the Balobedu tribe came into being under the rule of Queen Modjadji who was recognised throughout the nations for her rain making powers. She was respected by many tribes for many centuries because of her powers of rain making (<http://www.ezakwantu.com>).

The kingdom of the Balobedu covers a small area, which is situated in the northern part of the Limpopo Province. The area is visited by many tourists who are also attracted by Cycad trees found in the area. The result is that the area is rich in natural history. The Queen's palace was surrounded by thick forests which were used for traditional ceremonies. The forests were regarded as the home of the ancient Modjadji cycads, thus recognising the value of the forest. The cycad which is known as Mofaka, according to the local dialect, is a tree that symbolises ice. The trees are cone bearing evergreen plants, native to warm regions. Moreover, the

cycads trees are about 13 meters tall making the highest in the world. Because of the status accorded the plant, no one is allowed to own it without a legal permit obtained from the relevant people. Bolobedu area is situated between the Venda, other Sotho speaking peoples and the Shangaans. In terms of language the Lobedu shares a language similar to the Northern Sotho. Their language, khelobedu, is assimilated into the Northern Sothos as a dialect.

The Lobedu dialect also shares some similarities with the Venda language. It has certain features in common with the Venda, which also originated from Southern Rhodesia. The Lobedu differ from their neighbours, the Shangana-Tonga. Krige and Krige (1943: 148-150) acknowledge that about 1800 chieftains seem to have assumed powers in place of a line of chiefs. As a result, Modjadji became a legendary figure throughout black and white South Africa. Krige and Krige further argue that Queen Modjadji has always been surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery. The rain Queen does not work alone; she always has a rain doctor who works and co-operates with her. Unlike other South African Queens who are rain makers, Modjadji is the only Queen who had the power to withhold rain from the undeserving or to bring it to the deserving. Krige and Krige (1980:305-306) reveal that around 1825, when Bodile (Chief of Letswalo) was in power there was an exchange of rain medicines between the two chiefs of the Lobedu and the Letswalos.

According to the Lobedu tradition, strangers are not allowed to see the real Queen, but only a substitute. Many people went away from the mountain of cycads, believing that they had seen and spoken to the real Modjadji, while it was not always the case. According to custom, the Queen must abstain from public functions, thus creating mysticism fuelled by isolation. Modjadji does not leave her kraal and very few people outside her royal village have seen her. She communicates with her people via her male councillors and village headman and chiefs.

However, it is not easy to approach the rain Queen. Annual rain making ceremonies are meant to take place every year at her royal compound. Her magic of rain-making was believed to be so powerful that she received gifts and requests from many renowned leaders. She has practised her magic powers for the following South African chiefs: chief Chaka, Moshesh and some of the Tswana rulers. Modjadji, the rain Queen possessed the ability to transform the clouds into rain. The cultural structure and districts are kept together by the need for rain.

The Balobedu tribe is a traditional chiefdom which is different from other Sotho tribes. The Balobedu tribe has been ruled by women for many centuries. Modjadji is believed to be the only traditional ruling queen in Southern Africa. The Modjadji chiefdom is divided into administrative units, with some of the units placed in several villages. The villages which form part of Lobedu tribe are over 200. The administrative group comprises the close relatives of the Queen and for each village, the Queen appointed a headman. Talbot (1943:138) indicates that a village usually comprises a group of natives from the father's side sometimes including a few members from the family of the mother. The royal succession of the queen is passed from mother to eldest daughter and has been a part of tribal traditions since the sixteenth century.

There was some mystery surrounding this rain Queen who rarely showed herself even to her own people (Cartwright, 1974). The Balobedu chieftaincy had their own practices which were unique and were not influenced by the Tsongas, who belonged to the 'nguni' cultural groups which were assimilated into Lobedu culture before the nineteenth century (Cartwright, 1974). In her article titled 'Finding the Lobedu', Jones (1998) stated that they had to remove their shoes when they entered the Queen's hut. Jones found that to be a strange practice. It is also mentioned that the Queen carried out three ceremonies every October, one at each sacred shrine where she poured beer. In this chieftaincy's culture, the Queen could marry as many wives as she wished. This statement is also supported by Cartwrights (1974) findings in which he mentions that chiefs of other tribes sent their daughters to be the Queen's wives.

1.3 The genealogy of the rain queens

The child who became the first Modjadji was known as Maselekwane. She was the rain Queen from 1800 to 1854 and she was unmarried but was cared for by a number of wives. Queen Modjadji and her people were highly respected and untouchable by the warring tribes. Honourable kings such as King Shaka and King Mtsilkatse came to her not carrying weapons, but with hats in their hands. All her fantastic myths were spread around her person and powers. She resided with her half-sisters Leakhale and Madogane, whom she regarded as her wives. She committed ritual suicide in 1854 according to their cultural beliefs. Motshekga (2010:158) states that she took the poisoned cup as per the sacred kingship.

The second rain Queen was Masalanabo who succeeded her mother Modjadji 1. She led the Balobedu tribe from 1854 to 1895. According to Motshekga (2010:158), Masalanabo was the child who resulted from the union between her mother and her mother's father. Masalanabo committed ritual suicide after she had chosen the daughter of her sister greater Leakhali, Khesethwane as heirs (<http://www.exakwantu.com>)

Motshekga (2010:158) argues that, because Masalanabo was unmarried and sterile, she decided to take her mother's second-ranking wife Leakhale as her principal wife. Leakhale was blessed with two children, Masalanabo a daughter and Molokwane a son. Masalanabo as a daughter assumed the dynastic title Modjadji II

Khesethwane the daughter of Leakhale and Mampeule became the third rain Queen and reigned from 1895-1959. Motshekga (2010:158) states that Leakhale was the daughter of Makhefora the fifth wife of Mogodo who was from the Mahasha family. Khesethwane was recommended as heir by Masalanabo's council before Masalanabo's death. Modjadji the third is the one who turned the whole social structure and the economic system of the Balobedu and she performed her duty competently. Modjadji the third's cultural powers and magic for conducting rain were above expectations. Krige and Krige (1943:215) state that Khesethwane has been credited with occult powers through which she was able to control and measure the annual rainfall. She was respected, loved and feared by many of South African's powerful leaders.

Makoma Modjadji was the fourth rain Queen and she succeeded her mother Khesethwane Modjadji. She reigned the tribe from 1960-1980, and was different from other rain Queens because she did not follow the traditional rules. She married Andreas Maake whom she had several children with. She was succeeded by her eldest daughter Mokoepo Modjadji.

Mokoepo Modjadji was the fifth rain Queen and she reigned the Balobedu tribe from 1981 to 2001. Mokoepo played a very important role in following all the customs she was expected to follow. The former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela, has travelled to Bolobedu during the leadership of Queen Mokoepo to pay his respect with the intention of asking her to bless them with rain. Traditionally, a Queen of Balobedu is not allowed to go up and down. A Queen is expected to sit in her royal compound without interference, to conduct her ritual performance.

Mokope had three children, namely Khithukgunya, Makheala and Masopha. Khithukgunya was her eldest daughter, who was expected to succeed her mother according to tradition. She passed away at an early age and her younger sister Makheala was expected to lead the Balobedu after her mother. However Makheala died two days before her mother's death in 2001. Mokope was 65 years old at the time of her death. This led to the coronation of Princess Makobo who was Makheala's daughter. According to tradition, she was entitled to lead the Balobedu tribe.

Makobo Constance Modjadji V1 was the sixth Queen of the Balobedu tribe. She reigned the Balobedu tribe from 2003-2005. At the time she became Queen, she was 25 years. This made her the youngest Queen who also reigned for a very short period of time in the history of Balobedu tribe. She was different from other rain Queens because she was formally educated and too modern since she liked to wear jeans and T-shirts. She used to watch soap, operas and chat on her cell phone. Some members of the royal council did not have faith in Queen Makobo because according to their custom a rain Queen should live a secretive life once enthroned. She should live away from other people, hidden in the royal kraal with her wives. The rain Queen can only communicate with her people through her male councillors and indunas (headmen). Makobo used to visit nearby discos and her behaviour was against the customs of the people and was totally unacceptable. This led to a long delay before she was crowned. She was crowned on the sixteenth of April 2003 and her coronation was conducted by Tony Mphephu from Venda. According to the *Star* (Newspaper) (2003:2), former Gauteng premier, Mathole Motshekga, and a royal spokesperson described the ceremony as a once in a life-time occasion. During the coronation of rain Queen Makobo, the event was marked by showers of rain, and this, it was believed, symbolised that she was welcomed in the world of rain making by her ancestors.

According to the Lobedu custom a Queen is not allowed to be romantically involved with anyone who is not of royal blood. She should fall in love with someone who is also from the royal family and, who is also related to her through blood. The children born to such a relationship are expected to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Makobo had a boyfriend, David Mogale, who was not from the royal family and believed to be a commoner. David Mogale is a former manager of Greater Letaba municipality. He is believed to be the father of Makobo's second child, and it was rumoured that he had moved

into the royal compound, which is against the custom of the Balobedu because he is not from the royal family. As a result, this caused tension between Mogale and the royal council members, and Mogale was banned from the village. The royal council members did not accept Makobo's two children. On the 10th of June 2005, Makobo was admitted into Polokwane Medi-Clinic due to an undisclosed illness, and she died two days later at the age of 27.

Mysterious events happened when the rain Queen Makobo died. First, Makobo's brother Mpatatla disappeared on the day of Makobo's death. Second, a fire broke out in a local chief's house where Makobo's coffin was kept before the funeral but it was extinguished. Makobo's death led to many speculations. Some people assumed she had died from a heart attack because Mogale had been expelled from the royal village. Mogale argued that she was poisoned by the royal council when they realised that she was not suitable for the position. Hospital staff believed she died of HIV related diseases. Some people were concerned about the disappearance of Mpatatla. The post-mortem showed that she died of chronic meningitis (<http://www.ezakwantu.com>)

The *Citizen* of March 2006:8 reports that a problem arose in the royal family after the death of Queen Makobo Modjadji. The Mokoto family sent a petition to the then President, Thabo Mbeki, to elect one of the family members to succeed Makobo. They made a claim that the Balobedu clan was led by their forefathers from Zimbabwe before they occupied the Lobedu area. The spokesperson, Clement Modjadji confirmed that there was tension between the two families. The Mokoto family did not accept Mpatatla, Makobo's brother who was nominated to lead the tribe until Makobo's daughter Masalanabo was crowned. Masalanabo was five years old by then. It was rumoured that the Mokoto family and the community at large were tired of Makobo's behaviour. They thought that the Modjadji family had abused its power when they realised that Makobo had a relationship with a former Greater Letaba municipality manager who was considered as a commoner. As a result they did not recommend Masalanabo to succeed her mother because her blood was contaminated.

In the end the Royal families decided to end their conflict. The Modjadji clan, made up of the Molokwane, Mokoto, Mathekga, Morwatshehla, Mampeule and Modjadji families, gathered together at the Modjadji Royal Palace a year after the Rain Queen was buried. They came together for a cleansing ceremony for the late rain Queen Makobo. The ceremony was

accompanied by traditional dance and songs as a symbol to show the end of the mourning period. They came up with an agreement that Mpatatla, the younger brother of the late rain Queen, be appointed temporarily as regent. Mpatatla was to occupy the position until Masalanabo was old enough to fill the position because at the time of Queen Makobo's death, Masalanabo was five years old.

The leadership of the tribe was now taken by Prince Mpatatla on behalf of Masalanabo who was Makobo's daughter. This was first time in the history of Balobedu that this has happened. Mpatatla, as a man, is not expected to be the leader of the Balobedu because since the eighteenth century, their kingship was meant for women. This may lead to conflict in the Modjadji tribal authority as happened in other tribes like Sekhukhune, Mamitwa and so on. The kingship may begin to lose its real direction, as some of the duties are taken over by councillors. The result is that the dignity and the role of the king may start to disappear.

The Modjadji Royal Family and council spokesman confirmed that "*the Modjadji culture only allows women to take over the throne*" Citizen (2006:10). Some people suggested that Prince Mpatatla's daughter should succeed the late Queen Makobo because her mother is a cousin to Mpatatla. However Prince Mpatatla himself confirmed that Makobo's daughter will lead the Lobedu tribe.

The Balobedu people have their own traditional dances, *khekgapa* for women and the *dinaka* for men. The women have to perform their dance during traditional events such as the inauguration of the Queen or headmen, traditional weddings, or celebrating the coming of the new season. Traditional songs and dances accompany the rain-making prayers to be used in protest if a queen failed to make rain by neglecting their ancestors. Dinaka is commonly practiced by all the Northern Sotho tribes such as the Lobedu, Sekhukhune and Moletsi people.

1.4 Statement of the research problem

The world we live in is dynamic and ever changing. From the Stone Age to the era of Information Technology, human practices are influenced by the developments around them, be it from their localities or from nations many miles away. The Balobedu culture has motivated me to examine how the culture of the Balobedu tribe has evolved throughout the

ages. To start with, it is worth acknowledging that I am a Lobedu woman. As a child I grew up observing particular cultural practices which were considered different to what the elderly people regarded as the genuine cultural practices of Balobedu. The trends of changing cultural practices have continued many people acknowledge that today's cultural practices are different from those of the past. It is this observation that made the researcher question whether the dynamics of change that have been observed in other tribes occur in the culture of the Balobedu tribe. The purpose of this study is to investigate and interpret the nature, direction and magnitude of cultural evolution in the Khelobedu culture.

1.5 Rationale for the research

Karenga (1987) defines a people's culture as the very particular manner in which people celebrate and introduce themselves to the world and into the arena of history. Culture is all that is and all that one has. It is more than just folklore, music, and dance, and it embraces a people's world view. For many people, culture gives them the essence of who they are. However, Oomen (2002) attests that cultures are not coherent. In fact, she argues that reality shows a murky and smudged picture of blending lines and uncertain culture. The Khelobedu culture is no exception to being contaminated by other cultures. In relation, to this Krige (1947) argues that being in contact with western cultures had brought with it some disturbances. These disturbances have affected upon institutions and cultural patterns. Krige further argues that these disturbances cannot be compared with a major cultural evolution within measurable period of time not only of the Lobedu but of many other tribes. Krige (1938:293) states that the Lobedu will lose their individuality and become more and more like their neighbours. This cultural evolution motivated me to conduct a study which will enable me to explore whether what Krige envisaged is indeed taking place.

Given the background of the Balobedu who had been ruled by the renowned Rain Queens, Modjadji I, II, III, IV, V and VI, and the studies that have been conducted by various researchers about the nature of the tribe's practices, it is believed that this study will contribute to literature which, at the moment has not dwelt much on whether the culture of the Balobedu still maintains its originality in relation to time and space. With major cultural evolution is taking place due to the diffusion of popular culture around the world and the impact of globalisation across nations, the researcher believes that investigating how the culture of this indigenous tribe has evolved will contribute to existing literature.

1.6 Research aims and objectives

The main aim of this study is to investigate and interpret the nature, direction and magnitude of cultural evolution in relation to the Balobedu culture. The study aims to unveil how and why the Balobedu culture is one of the most affected by cultural changes. It is important to highlight that this study is ethnographic in nature; therefore, it will be conducted through oral tradition (Carmack, 1972: 228). The discourse of evolution has been widely discussed in research. According to Situngkir (2004:20) the term evolution originated in the field of biology and it explains the existing biology systems including the origin and development of human beings. However, evolution has since been extended to explain the changes in the societies and in culture.

The main aim of this research is to:

- a. Investigate how the culture of the Balobedu tribe evolved over time;
- b. Explore whether contact with other tribes has contributed to the changes observed;
- c. Ascertain whether the spread of Christianity has, in any way, affected how people respond to certain cultural practices;
- d. Determine whether western culture and globalisation have influenced the local culture; and
- e. Find out how the political affairs of the country influence the cultural patterns practiced by the Balobedu tribe at a given time and space.

1.7 Research design and methodology

In order to outline the process through which the present research study was conducted, the researcher presents the research design and the methods used in the research. An ethnographic case study was conducted and it utilised a qualitative approach.

1.7.1 The research design

In this study, a case study drawing on ethnographic methods was used to carry out this research project. In ethnographic studies, researchers study a case in its natural setting. This allows them to become part of that natural setting (Punch cited in Fielding, 1996a:157). The researchers deploy a range of interconnected methods and strategies which helped them to

have a clear understanding of people's constructions, their thoughts and meanings, beliefs and actions as they occur in their natural environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:407).

The researcher used data collection strategies used in ethnographic design and combined them with those used in a case study research design to answer the research question. Furthermore, the researcher captured the experiences of cultural evolution within the Lobedu tribe as experienced and perceived by the people themselves.

Using the case study method had its limitation because the researcher could not participate and observe at the same time. Thus, combining both methods was vital.

In this qualitative ethnographic case study, the researcher personally spent a lot of time on site, and came into contact with individuals, activities and operations of the case. The intention was to accurately reflect the meanings of what was taking place in the Lobedu tribe (Stake, 2005:450). In this study, the Khelobedu culture was studied in detail and, in this regard, the researcher made use of the participants' observations by immersing herself in day-to-day lives of the people. She not only observed people but she also interviewed the targeted group. The qualitative method provides descriptions of a case, a group, an event in the so called case study and also gives an overview of ethnography as both studies were used to collect data.

1.7.2 The research method.

For this study, the research method used was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research was used to address the problem of cultural change experienced by the Balobedu people. The use of the qualitative approach was necessary because qualitative research enables the researcher to understand the feelings and experiences of the participants in an analytical and interpretive way (Merriam & Associates, 2002:11). Qualitative researchers seek to study participants in their natural settings while at the same time attempting to make sense and interpret the cultural patterns in terms of the meanings the participants attach to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). In qualitative research, there is a range of different ways of making sense of the world (Smith, 2001:58).

Researchers seek to narrate the experiences, stories and voices of the participants. The aim of this study is not to generalise the findings of the study beyond the Balobedu tribe. During the interview sessions, the researcher experienced some of the realities revealed by the participants in the Lobedu tribe.

1.8 Data collection techniques

Research is defined as a process of collecting and logically analysing data with the intention of achieving some purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 1992:8). The data for this study were collected through interviews and archival searches. The research tools employed in this study include, among others, observations, interviews and document analysis. In addition, semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews were used. The reason for employing the three techniques is that the researcher was interested in observing and interrogating what was happening in people's lives. Different techniques were used "to provide verbal descriptions with the intention to capture the richness and complexity of behaviour that occurs in natural settings from the participants' perspective" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1992:43).

1.8.1 Interviews

Unstructured in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to utilise informal conversations during the interviews. Questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked in the natural course of things (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, and 2000:271). The questions in this study were open ended. Creswell (2007:225) argues that open-ended questions enable the participants to voice their experiences unconstrained by previous research findings or the perspective of the researcher. Qualitative researchers used probing to get more information from the participants.

Semi-structured interviews also allow for probing and clarification of answers (Niewenhuis, 2007:87). During the semi-structured interviews, participants were required to answer a set of pre-set questions. Some of the community members, certain members of the royal family and elders in the chieftaincy were interviewed. Focus group interviews were conducted, and these enabled the younger participants to express their feelings. Questions and responses from the participants were audiotaped. This allowed the researcher to have an accurate record of the conversations. Apart from that, brief notes were taken, and these were recorded using an

interview protocols. The interview protocols helped the researcher whenever the audiotape malfunctioned.

1.8.2 Observations

During observations, the researcher gathers first hand open-ended information by observing people and places at the research site (Creswell, 2007:223). This technique affords the researcher an opportunity to record information as it occurs in a natural setting (Creswell 2007:223). The researcher conducted observations as both an observer and a participant observer. As a participant observer, the researcher took part in some of the activities at the research site. The intention was to conduct observations during traditional and modern ceremonies. This helped the researcher to observe certain patterns of behaviour and interactions. Field notes and a video recorder were utilised to record the observed events.

1.8.3 Document analysis

Qualitative researchers can obtain public and private records about a site or the participant in the study (Creswell, 2007:230). Documents were analysed, and these included both published and unpublished materials such as newspapers, personal journals and photos.

1.9 Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilised in this instance due to the fact that the researcher did not want to generalise the results of the study to the wider population. The participants were selected because they are part of the Khelobedu cultural group, which shares patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language. The demographic composition of the community in terms of gender and age was taken into consideration when selecting the participants. The purposive sampling was applied in two phases:

- In the first phase a representative sample was drawn from the targeted individual participants. Interviews were conducted with older participants who were represented by educators, university students, village headman and officials from the royal family.
- In the second phase, focus group interviews were conducted with selected high school students, who participated voluntarily during their spare time to avoid disturbing their lessons.

1.10 Ethical considerations

Researchers have a responsibility to protect the dignity of people who participate in their studies. The following ethics were observed in the study:

1.10.1 Securing access

The research project involved interviews with members of the royal family, and this required the researcher to ask for permission to carry out an investigation. The royal family members were contacted in writing. The letter explained the purpose of the research and also indicated to them why the researcher believed that the research was worth undertaking. The researcher pointed out that interviews would be conducted at a time which would be convenient for the participants. The reason for conducting observations during traditional ceremonies and the performance of rituals was revealed.

1.10.2 Informed consent

The researcher has the responsibility to inform participants in a research study which they are part of (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Participants or legal representatives of those people who are unable to give informed concern were given informed consent forms (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The assumption made is that fully grown and responsible individuals were able to make correct decisions if given full information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:51). The basic principle of informed consent is that subjects must base their voluntary participation in research projects on full understanding of the possible risks involved.

Participants were reminded and made aware that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the researcher did not make any implied or stated threat or penalty. Participants were required to sign a statement indicating that they are aware of the risks, and that they chose to participate anyway. In addition to that, the researcher sought written consent because this would eliminate all unobtrusive field observations and informal observations.

1.10.3 Confidentiality and the right to privacy

Qualitative researchers have an obligation to protect participants and their wellbeing by not revealing their identities (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). In this study, the right to privacy and confidentiality was ensured. Confidentiality entails that while the researcher can identify a given person, he/she essentially promises not to do so publicly. The researcher has a responsibility to guard the information that is confided in her. The names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms.

1.11 Chapter breakdown

Chapter 1: This is the background chapter presented the reasons for selecting that particular problem, the rationale, as well as the statement of the problem.

Chapter 2: The review of the literature that basically represents the most authoritative scholarship on the research problem is discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used to investigate research problem.

Chapter 4: The chapter presents and discusses the data or information collected and analysed in the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents the discussion and analyses the findings of the study. These findings are compared with findings from the literature in chapter 2. This is the final chapter in which the main conclusions of the study are summarised, discussed and interpreted. Where necessary, recommendations are made for further research and practice or policy.

1.12 Summary

The research aims and objectives of this study are outlined in this chapter. The aim of the study is to find out how the culture of the Balobedu tribe evolved through time. The research design used to answer the research question is qualitative in nature. Interviews and archival searches were adapted to collect data. A qualitative orientation was introduced to facilitate

the study. Moreover, the importance of researching how and which factors contributed to the erosion of the Balobedu cultural norms and values are reviewed. The salient argument is that the Balobedu culture should not be ruined but kept in practice to preserve the indigenous knowledge for the benefit of the young generation.

This first chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. The chapter also presents the problem statement, the aims of the study, a brief synopsis of the research strategy and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 of this study reviews literature related to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The discourse of evolution has been widely discussed in research. According to Situngkir (2004:20) the term “evolution” originated in the field of biology and it explains the existing biological systems which include the origin and development of human beings. However, evolution has since been extended to explain the changes in societies and in culture.

Culture, as a concept that this study is focusing on is discussed to a larger extent in this section. The researcher highlights and interprets the narratives of the Balobedu people as they make sense of the evolution within their culture. The literature review, therefore, commences by discussing the concept of culture. It proceeds to discuss the theories of culture that underpins this study. The review concludes by presenting an overview of the debates in this field in relation to the different systems and behaviours within the cultural phenomenon. In discussing the various aspects of culture, this review of literature is mostly grounded in classic empirical work conducted on the Khelobedu culture. However, this will be compared and contrasted with literature based on other indigenous cultures.

2.2 What is culture?

Culture is defined in different ways by different authors. Mazumdar (2000:2) defines culture as a group of mutually interacting people with negotiated, shared values, understanding, norms, ideals, way of life and a way of looking at the world and their place in it. This is usually the acquired life style of a group of people which consists of patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feelings and actions that are characteristic of members of a particular society or segment of a society (Harris, 1975:3). Culture is, therefore, something which applies to a given distinct group of people, and it involves the habits of those people as distinct from the habits of other peoples. Culture tends to bind a people together very strongly and instils certain values very effectively. Donald (2009:8) states that culture brings a people up, cultivates them, and literally raises them as a parent raises children towards adulthood. The intention of culture is to make men good members of a given people. Culture is a complex phenomenon as Fornäs (1995:1) explains:

Culture is a web of flows, multiplying, converging and crossing. Some of the interconnecting whirls of culture are visible on the surface, others are hidden deep below, some are strong and irresistible, others local and temporary.

In the context of this study, culture is viewed as an evolving phenomenon. During cultural processes, man creates his living environment, and he has the ability to improve gradually by preserving and changing developments made by previous generations (Mead, 1999: 37). Thus, culture can be interpreted as behaviour that can be learned or transmitted by parents to their children (Mead, 1999: 37).

Teaching and learning of culture occurs, to a large extent, through oral tradition, which is mainly based on second hand information. For example, the use of storytelling is of vital importance in the replication of culture. According to Sugiyama (2001:228), it is almost impossible for an individual to accumulate all cultural knowledge which is sufficient for group survival and reproduction through personal experience. Accordingly, storytelling has the potential to counter information deficit which may occur when individuals lack first hand information necessary to survive (Sugiyama, 2001: 228).

2.3 The theoretical framework

As societies become modernised, boundaries within and between cultures across the globe are thinning. This phenomenon triggers change in cultural patterns and practices, which, in turn, present diversified experiences throughout the generations. The question is: ‘Why are some patterns and practices persistent whereas some are facing extinction? In this study, the specific question is: Is the culture of the Balobedu people still persistent or is it facing extinction?

To answer these questions, the researcher positioned the study into cultural theories which were used to conceptualise the findings of this study. Within the theories of culture, the following concepts were used to underpin the findings of this research: cultural evolution, culture as an adaptive process, the role of preferences in culture change, and the role of socialisation in a cultural context. These concepts are discussed next.

2.3.1 Cultural evolution

The literal meaning of the word “evolution” is ‘the change in the inherited characteristics of biological populations over successive generations’. Similarly, those who advocate for cultural theory indicate that culture may be seen as a process through which man creates his living environment and is able to improve progressively by retaining and modifying advances made by previous generations (Mead, 1999:37).

Cultural evolutionists set out to prove that changes in technological, environmental, demographic or socio-political conditions can make individuals and groups adopt new practices (Chipnik, 1981:257). Accordingly, this study aims to locate the culture of the Balobedu people within its historical perspective, by reviewing literature that was written over a long time and also engaging the memories that the people hold through oral tradition.

Furthermore, the culture is placed in today’s context where an investigation is conducted to highlight if it still persists in a midst of changing technology, environment, demography and socio-political conditions. This prospect is also highlighted by Mead (1999:7) who explains that cultural evolutionism purports that within any given society, a sequence of invention and change is expected. The cultural evolutionist’s view becomes a relevant tool to conceptualise this study as it examines cultural characteristics in terms of their transmission through time.

Moreover, cultural evolutionists put forward the notion of cultural relativity (Carmack, 1972:239). The concept of cultural relativity implies that the attitude and knowledge that people holds about their social past is important in understanding their cultural evolution. Cultural relativity also takes into consideration knowledge of adjacent cultures (Carmack, 1972:239; Mead 1999, 7). In the context of this study, it is important to compare and contrast the cultural traits of the Khelobedu culture to the Tsonga, Venda, Pedi, Zulu and other relevant cultures.

Cultural evolutionists purports that human beings do not only act on their material environments but also on their informational environments (Sterelny, 2011: 813). This brings to light the discourse of modernity. According to Sterelny (2011:815), as a result of modernity, human actions have become more varied and less stereotyped. Thus, Sterelny (2011:816) introduces the concept of ‘evolution of minds’ which basically means that as the

new generation come to interact with the world that supports and guides learning, individual minds become well-adapted for learning.

One of the prominent proponents of cultural evolution is Hayek (Angner, 2002; Sugden, 1993). Hayek views society as both a spontaneous and artificial order. On one hand artificial order is designed and imposed on the group (Angner, 2002:697). This entails that individuals are directed to follow rules that are specifically crafted by somebody else. On the other hand spontaneous order stimulates individuals to follow abstract rules of conduct, and its general properties are predictable (Sugden, 1993: 395).

Hayek argues that as members of a group follow general rules of conduct, they do so in relation to the actions of others and specific conditions known to them. Hence, spontaneous order can also be characterised by specific unpredictability (Sugden, 1993: 396). Moreover, Hayek adds that spontaneous order is not designed but emerges as a result of individual action (Angner, 2002: 697).

It is important to note that spontaneous order is evolving in the process of cultural evolution, which triggers natural selection of rules that operate on the order of the group (Angner, 2002:698). As a result of natural selection, groups practicing the most dominating traditions will overshadow the adjacent weaker groups (Angner, 2002: 698). In this regard, cultural evolution becomes relevant for this study as it will highlight the extent to which the culture of the Balobedu people is dominating or being dominated by adjacent cultures. This attempt to explain how culture is impacted by natural selection brings to light the concept of culture as an adaptive process which will be discussed in the subsection that follows.

2.3.2 Culture as an adaptive process

The sub-section above highlighted culture as an evolutionary process. However, this sub-section departs from Keesing's (1974:74) view of culture as an adaptive system. Keesing's argument is rooted in the opinion that a human being is designed in such a way that he is open-ended and can adapt to various environments. This adaptation is primarily the process of cultural change (Keesing, 1974:75). According to Keesing (1974:75) the systems that facilitate how the human race interacts with the environment include, but are not limited to,

technologies, modes of economic organisation settlement patterns, modes of social groupings and political organisations, religious beliefs and practices.

In accordance with cultural evolution, those who advance culture as an adaptive process purport that culture changes in the direction of equilibrium within the environment. Therefore, if there is an upset in any in the adaptive system, additional alterations leading to culture change occur through natural selection (Keesing, 1974:76). As an adaptive process, culture has an ensemble of potential solutions from which individuals can select, in order to solve the frequently encountered challenges (Hutchina, 1999:354). The ability of people to select from the pool of potential solutions can be linked to the cultural theory of preference formation. Preference in culture change is discussed next.

2.3.3 The role of preferences in culture change

Cultural theorists advance that when people make fundamental decisions, the choices are simultaneously decisions of culture (Wildavsky, 1987:5). Therefore, it will be unreasonable for researchers in the field of culture to neglect studying why people want what they want. Wildavsky (1987:4) makes a link between preferences and interests.

First, preferences are presumed to be emanating from interests. This means that individuals have a tendency to evaluate a situation, in order to develop different interests. As a result, they are able to distinguish between the interests of others and self interests, which, in turn, inform the choices they make.

Second, preferences are endogenous and not exogenous. Wildavsky (1987:5) argues that preferences are internal to an organisation. Thus, they surface from social interaction either to defend or oppose the status quo. The concept of culture as an endogenous phenomenon reveals the fact that people will always try to give reasons for or try to justify their actions. During the process of behaviour justification, individuals forward their preferences by either supporting or opposing the existing institutions (Wildavsky, 1987:5).

In relation to preferences, Wildavsky (1987:6) presented the Model of four cultures as adapted from Douglas (1982).

Table: 2.1 Model of cultures as adapted from Douglas (1982) as cited in Wildavsky (1987:6)

Strength of group boundaries	
Weak	Strong
Apathy (fatalism)	Hierarchy (Collectivism)
Competition (Individualism)	Equality (Egalitarianism)

- *Apathy (fatalism)*: there is no room for preferences as decisions are made for individuals. In this regard decisions are imposed and people cannot control what happens to them.
- *Competition (individualism)*: individuals seek to be different and do not desire to be bound by external influence. Social ties are weak as competition between individuals prevails.
- *Hierarchy (collectivism)*: decisions are prescriptive and they are binding to all members of the society. In this kind of culture, authority is institutionalised and inequality is justified. Social ties are stronger as specialisation and division of labour promote peace and tranquillity.
- *Equality (egalitarianism)*: this culture is characterised by few prescriptions. Social ties are stronger as individuals experience shared life of voluntary consent. There is a tendency by equality culture to manipulate other cultures.

According to Wildavsky (1987:7) preferences enable people to change or decline social limitations where possible. It is further mentioned by Wildavsky that individuals are social creatures who are not only being shaped by the society, but are also influencing their social context. This brings to light the role of socialisation in culture change.

2.3.4 The role of socialisation in culture change

The subsection above has already highlighted the significance of the society in culture change. This subsection discusses the role of socialisation in culture change. Socialisation is defined as “the process by which people acquire the behaviours and beliefs of the social world that is the culture in which they live” (Arnett, 1995:618). Arnett (1995:617) argues that cultures are characterised by broad socialisation, which encourages individualism, independence and self-expression, as well as narrow socialisation which promotes obedience and conformity, while it discourages deviation from cultural expectations. Arnett (1995:618) presents three roles of socialisation: first, socialisation controls impulses and facilitates the development of conscience. Second, socialisation prepares individuals for different roles, for example, occupational roles, gender roles and roles in institutions such as marriage and

parenthood. Third, socialisation cultivates sources of meaning like what is to be valued, what is important and what to live for.

Socialisation emanates from different sources (Arnett, 1995: 618-623). For instance, family practices echo and reproduce the culture of the society as a whole. Peers may be in disagreement with other sources of socialisation or support socialisation originating from other sources; school and work environment is affected by family, by community and by cultural belief system. Community influences vary in terms of the level of socialisation. Some communities have limited influence over the socialisation of the child, whereas others put pressure for conformity to community standards. The range of media that members are allowed to consume influences the span of socialisation. Cultural belief systems instil norms and values which determine how a person thinks and behaves, lastly the legal system, as a source of socialisation puts certain constraints on behaviour.

In this section, theories that will be used to analyse the findings of this study were presented. Some of the concepts that emerged as sources of cultural change are discussed in the next section. This helped during the discussion of the findings of this study when the researcher highlighted how the culture of the Balobedu people evolved and adapted as a result of influences from various sources.

2.4 The dynamics of the institution of marriage

In chapter one, the nature of marriage within the Khelobedu culture was discussed. In this section of chapter 2 the dynamics of marriage of the Balobedu are compared and contrasted with marriages which feature in both South African and international literature, such as same sex marriages, marriages with close relatives, and the payment of bride-price (magadi).

2.4.1 Same sex marriage

Research reveals that Catholics and the Protestants purport that marriage must be a union between a man and a woman and as a matter of morality, definition and western practice cannot be extended to two people of the same sex (Eskridge, 1993:1428). This viewpoint emanates from a biblical scripture in Leviticus chapter 18 verse 22 which reads as follows: “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable”.

However, recent developments in the legalisation of same sex marriages have led the redefinition of marriage (Lannutti, 2005:6). Marriage is no longer only viewed from a religious perspective, but it is also viewed from the perspective of other socio-political contexts. Accordingly, Achmuty (2004:102) explains that marriage takes into consideration the public statement, the social status and the legal status. Same sex marriage has been contested by some institutions in society. However, there is evidence of its occurrence in the Lobedu tradition.

A study conducted by Eskridge (1993) reveals that Native American tribes raised some of the boys to become 'berdaches'. Boys that were berdaches were destined to marry men and be called wives. They performed duties that were traditionally meant for women, while the husbands hunted and led the family (Eskridge, 1993:1457). Likewise, female berdaches were raised to marry women.

In contemporary society, this trend of a man marrying another man or a female marrying another female is linked to the lesbian and gay subculture. In the lesbian and gay subculture, the same sex union is based on affection and sexual orientation. In contrast to this, the Khelobedu culture does not show evidence of sexual engagements between women who unite in marriage. It is important to mention that studies do not reveal man marrying man in the Khelobedu culture.

The purpose of same sex marriages which involves women within the Balobedu culture is twofold. First, same sex marriages were common in the community and it was an acceptable norm. Same sex marriages were usually practiced in the royal family when the king's wife who had to give birth to a prince was barren. A close relative was given to the king so that he could impregnate her (Setlhabane, 20 August 2012). Second, a woman who is barren is allowed to marry a daughter-in-law who will take care of her. The daughter-in-law is given a chance to get a man from outside to impregnate her. The children born under such a relationship are regarded as the mother-in-law's and she is considered their father. The old woman is then responsible for the children and their mother. In other instances, the daughter-in-law would be given to the woman's husband to bear children. The woman, whose father-in-law slept with her husband, is regarded as the father of the children (Mangena, 16 July 2012).

Third, superior women who are potters and doctors have the right to marry their daughters-in-law. These are women who have their own cattle and money, thus making them able to obtain wives. Such women call their wives daughter-in-law in the sense that they are married on behalf of their sons.

Similarly, the Venda people practice woman to woman marriages. The Venda people are neighbours of the Balobedu and they resemble them in their way of life and many of their social arrangements are similar (Stayt, 1971:143-4).

2.4.2 Marriage of close relatives

Civil laws and cultural preferences have an influence on marriage choices (Shaw, 2001:315). Marriage of close relatives, which is apparently conforming to cultural preferences, has been reported extensively in literature (Barth, 1986; Hafez, El-tahan; Awadalla, El-khayat, Abdel-Gafar & Ghoneim, 1983; Khuri, 1970; Krige, 1932; Kuper, 1975; Shaw, 2001; Warsy *et al.*, 1995). Some people refer to the practice of marriage of people who share the same blood as consanguineous marriage (Shaw, 2001; Warsy *et al.*, 1995), whereas others refer to it as endogamy (Barth, 1986). The most commonly reported is marriage between cousins.

Moore (1963:296) in his argument about cross-cousin marriages mentions two types of marriages, namely, the asymmetrical and oblique cross-cousin marriages. He acknowledges that the term asymmetrical stresses a one-sided quality. This allows males and females to marry on opposite sides of the family. Furthermore, Moore argues that, in a matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, a woman's son is allowed to marry his mother's brother's daughter, while a man's daughters are allowed to marry their father's sister's sons. As a result, the patrilineal form links a son to his father's relatives, while the matrilateral links a daughter to her mother's relatives.

The matrilateral form is commonly practiced by many African societies. Matrilateral cross-cousin is psychologically biased in favour of creating a bond between mothers and sons and fathers and daughters. Homans and Schneider (1955:51) conclude that "in asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage, if the power is in the father or his lineage, the preferred marriage will be with the mother's brother's daughter. If the mother's brother or his lineage has the authority, the preferred marriage will be with the father's sister's daughter."

It appears that cousin marriages were allowed and preferred in ancient times. For example, in Rome, Greece and Israel these marriages were carried out (Shaw, 2001:320). However, cousin marriages were disapproved of in parts of England, first, because there was a concern with morality and family stability, and second, because there was a concern with the biological fitness of children born from such marriages (Shaw, 2001:320). Likewise, the Hindu and Sikh marriage rules forbid cousin marriages (Narasimhachar, 1980:55; Shaw, 2001:321). In the northern parts of India, cousin marriages are seen as incest and are not openly accepted, whereas these are practiced in the southern parts of India which is comprised of the Christian community (Bittles, 1991:791; Kumar, 2000:127). Findings of a study by Shaw (2001:315) revealed that British Pakistanis favoured cousin marriages and disapproved marriages across the social divide. This traditional view encouraged marriages which were arranged by parents and relatives (Shaw, 2001:324). Nonetheless, a new trend of bride and groom influencing the arrangement of marriage is emerging among the British Pakistanis (Shaw, 2001:324).

A study conducted by Khuri (1970) in the Middle East, revealed that it was the norm for Muslim man to marry a father's brother's daughter (patrilateral marriage). In this tradition, daughters are entitled to half the amount given to sons. Such a practice means that if a daughter marries an outsider the wealth and property she inherited will be transferred to a strange family (Khuri, 1970:598). If a father allowed his daughter to marry an outsider, he faced a predicament because he was expected by the whole clan to keep the property within the family (Khuri, 1970:605). A further envisaged benefit of a consanguineous marriage was that the paternal cousin would keep the family secrets because if she revealed the secrets of the family she would be embarrassing her own family (Khuri, 1970:609). Moreover she was obliged to serve her father in law and encourage her husband to keep obeying his father if she failed to do so; she would fall short of her obligation towards her uncle, who is just as good as a father to her (Khuri, 1970:609).

Elsewhere, Barth (1986) conducted a study in Kurdistan. The findings revealed that a paternal cousin was given first preference to marry a girl. Barth (1986:392) argues that the advantage of marriages of close relatives was that the father of the bride knew the groom and he would be able to influence the groom's actions towards his daughter. In addition, just as (Khuri, 1970) had discovered, Barth (1986:392) found that an additional advantage was that property was retained in the family. The same belief was evident among the Saudi Arabian

population who asserted that cousin marriage is beneficial since the fortunes remain within the family (Warsy et al., 1995:626). Moreover, couples benefit from such unions because they adjust quickly as they grew in the same environment (Warsy *et al.*, 1995:626). In instances where the father consider giving his daughter in marriage to an outsider the paternal cousin will first free her by surrendering the hold he has over her (Barth, 1986:392).

Cross cousin marriage was as norm among the Lobedu (Krige, 1938:278 & Kuper, 1975:74). In the literature reviewed above, the common type of cousin marriage which involves the father's brother's daughter known as patrilateral. This differs from the type of cousin marriage which is practiced by the Lobedu. The Balobedu's cross-cousin marriage is matrilateral since it involves a mother's brother's daughter. In the Lobedu tradition, a girl was specifically born for a certain family. A brother's daughter was said to be born to marry into her father's sister (Rakhadi)'s family. The girl grows up knowing that she will marry a cousin and she will have to cook for her father's sister (Krige, 1938:278). Even if her father's sister does not have a son, she will become a wife of the family. In this case, a woman can have a lover or a family relative will be chosen to impregnate her. Although the patrilineal marriage occurs among the Lobedu, it is often accidental; they mainly practice and prefer matrilateral cross-cousin marriages.

Krige and Krige (1943) reveal that the Lobedu have a unique type of marriage, which is a marriage between the giver and receiver in marriage exchanges. A woman's father has a strong influence in the arrangement of the marriage. He is the one who takes decision. However, there is a dimension in which the girl's father's sister is regarded as the critical actor. A woman (Kgadi) has a right to be cared for by her brother's daughter as her wife or her son's wife (Mamolatelolo as she has followed her aunt). According to Sacks (1976:566), men and women who are in such a relationship are regarded as beneficiaries of the products. In this relationship, women are "gifts" as daughters, and men are "actors" as fathers, and "gifts" as brothers. Both sexes are able to take the actor role and gift roles at some point in life.

2.4.3 The payment of bride price (magadi) and the practice of wives as gifts

Marriages in some cultures involve payment, either in the form of a dowry or bride price. A dowry is a type of marriage fee that is offered to a daughter and to the groom's family. According to Harrell and Dickey (1985:119), the purpose of paying a dowry is twofold: First, it is a way of giving a daughter her inheritance, and second it is a way of showing off the status of the family that pays it.

On the contrary, the bride-price or bride-wealth is a marriage payment from the groom's family to the bride's family (Harrell & Dickey, 1985:107). Findings highlight the bride price as an indicator of social status (Frakenberg & Thomas, 2001:4; Kaye, Mirembe, Ekstrom, Kyomeihondo & Johansson, 2007:301; Wendo, 2004:716). Participants in a study by Kaye *et al.* (2007:301) revealed that grooms who were able to pay high bride prices were considered to be appropriate partners. In some instances grooms who fail to pay the entire proposed bride price may end up losing their wives as the family of the bride has a right to recall their daughter and marry her to a worthy suitor (Wendo, 2004: 716).

Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride price is the most commonly employed payment among most ethnic groups during marriages (Wendo, 2004:716). These groups include the Lobedu tribe, which refers to the bride-price as 'Magadi'. The bride price is paid in cattle, but these cattle are not in consumer's goods (Krige, 1939:395; Leach 1951:48). Recently, this method of payment has gradually changed to cash. If a man can afford to pay the bride price, he can marry as many wives as he likes (Leach, 1951:49). In this case, breeches of norms related to the payment of the bride-price are handled through a legal system of reconciliation, compromise, and harmony.

However, challenges associated with the payment of the bride price have emerged. For example, Kaye *et al.* (2007: 300) reveal that participants in their study viewed the bride price as indicating that a woman has been bought and would therefore play a minimum role in decision making. The bride price was perceived to have unpleasant implications on gender relations. In addition, younger participants in Kaye *et al.* (2007:301) argued that the bride price was unacceptable as it reduced women to objects which could be purchased. This was seen infringing women's rights.

Similarly, a study by Wendo (2004:716) revealed that women rights campaigners are of the opinion that the bride price must be abolished as it plays a critical role in ensuring that women have limited control over their sex lives. The study further indicated that women who try to get out of detrimental marriages experience resistance from parents who already received the bride price. Moreover, destitute families put pressure on their daughters to marry at a young age (Edlund & Lagerlof, 2006:307; Kaye *et al.*, 2007:301). It is also argued that instead of giving the bride price to the father of the bride, it would be better to give it to the bride to invest for the use of her own family (Edlund & Lagerlof, 2006:307).

In some instances, women were given to the Lobedu Queen as gifts in a practice commonly known as 'goloba'. Nel (2011:36) further indicates that the *vatanoni* are of different types, for example there are those who related to the queen through blood; some are given by the queen's close relatives to ask for rain; some are daughters of district heads, while others are daughters of foreign leaders who are given to the queen to ask (ho loba) for the rain. Maunatlala (2012) reveals that the wives are accepted by the queen as royal wives (*vatanoni*) and the intention is to renew the ties from one generation to another through cross-cousin marriages.

Some daughters are given to the queen by their parents in order to get political favours (Mangena, 16 July 2012). All the royal wives are given special attention in the tribe because they have a strong relationship with the queen. However, some royal wives are given away to important people such as the queen's councillors in the tribe, her relatives, and headmen (Nel, 2011:37). Some of them remain the queen's wives and they are allocated lovers to impregnate them.

Modjadji (2012) points out that some royal wives are given the opportunity to lead the Balobedu people in the villages whereas others are given higher positions on the tribe. Krige and Krige (1943:95) point out that the gift of woman is a socially recognised manner of offering tribute to a political superior, and the giving of beer is typically a point of honour and an approved form of tribute. However, it was proven that the Lobedu Queen accepts gifts in the form of women from foreigners (Mathekga, 21 June 2012). Krige and Krige (1943:173,174) argue that "when the Queen accepts the women as gifts without reciprocation to the district heads, she repays the gift with cattle bride-price" The wives are then

reallocated legally as true wives to other district heads and Lobedu court officials of high rank.

Leach (1951:50) point out that in the Lobedu kingdom, there are certain Shangana-Tonga groups who depended on the Lobedu Queen. The Lobedu regarded them as low caste and they were not allowed to marry the Shangana-Tonga people. Although marriage with them was strictly forbidden, the Lobedu accepted tribute wives from these groups also. Leach further indicates that the women are reallocated to the Lobedu nobility not as wives, but as daughters. Finally they are then married to the Lobedu commoners, putting them in *Vamakhulu* relationship to the nobles.

Molokwane (2012) reveals that the Shangana-Tonga people are excluded in the kingship all together. In contrast, the Venda people were of a better standing. The Lobedu tribe shared common practices with the Venda tribe since both of them originated from Shona tribes. Krige (1937:325) stresses the intimate and age long relationships between the Venda and the Lobedu. The next sub-section details the role of a man's sister (Khadi).

2.5 The role of a man's sister (khadi)

There is special treatment given to a man's sister in the Khelobedu culture, especially the eldest sister (khadi) of the family. First, she is seen as the counsellor of her brother's family, and she is responsible for solving any grievances referred to her. Krige and Krige (1980:142) reveal that the sister is expected to build the house of her brother and, therefore, she has a gate through which she may enter her brother's house through the gate which the cattle seek. As a result, the sister had a right to demand a daughter-in-law from that house one who can come to stamp and cook for her. Maunatlala (2012) acknowledges that the wife is then regarded as the wife of the cattle-linked brother. The right is not phrased as the right of her son to obtain his wife from that house, but the right is the respect of the house because that wife is the wife of the cattle-linked brother. Maunatlala further assumes that the wife must send her daughter, if requested, as long as cattle are offered to be the daughter-in-law of her husband's cattle-linked brother. Even though the sister has a son or not it is her right to be helped or served (Setlhabane, August 2012).

Krige (1974:16) emphasises that the most interesting thing in setting of woman marriage is the complementary status of the uterine brother and sister. Both are of lifelong importance for the development of the house in which they were born into. Molokwane (2012) argues that the eldest brother in the chief's house succeeds his father as family head. He is the one who maintains order and law in the family. The eldest sister becomes the ritual head, responsible for officiating in all major sacrifices and for the health and welfare of her brother's children (Mathekga, 21 June 2012). A '*khadi*' or any other sister has the responsibility of providing her brother with bride wealth, and this affords her a claim for a co-wife (Kuper, 1979:68). In this tradition, a sister whose cattle were used to obtain a wife has special interest in her brother's household and his daughter will one day marry her son (Krige, 1938:276).

Moreover, the brother's eldest sister is seen as the priestess of the family. She is the one who has been anointed to intercede with the spirits on behalf of her brother's family (Lombards and Parsons, 2003:81). The *khadi* always officiates at the annual harvest offering to the gods. She is authorised to scold the ancestors for the misfortunes of the family and to further ask for good health (Lombard and Parsons, 2003: 82). If the brother, in any way, ill-treats the *Khadi* of his family, the gods are likely to make his children sick until the brother humbly apologises to his sister, who will openly express her cause of distress openly (Krige, 1938:276). For the children to be healed, the *Khadi* will have to intercede with the ancestors on their behalf. She will work together with the brother of her father who is still alive.

A *khadi* is responsible for the division of the inheritance on the death of her father and also to allocate her father's wives to men who would enable them to raise the family by impregnating them (Mampeule, 18 August 2012). In a situation where there is no son, a *khadi* becomes a leader until her death; the son of another house rarely succeeds. Krige and Krige (1980:144) state the fact that a sister whose marriage cattle have been used by her brother to marry a wife has considerable control in her brother's house. Krige (1974:32) emphasises that among the Lobedu there are a number of duties that can be rendered by either a male or a female. The role of a *khadi* in officiating at the beer offering ceremony to the gods reveals that leadership roles can be given to members of either sex (Mangena, 16 July 2012).

2.6 Initiations

Initiation is a unique practice that usually commences from childhood when a new born child is welcomed in the world of the living by his or her ancestors (Mampeule, 18 August 2012). Initiation is seen as a ceremony used to mark a new stage in one's life, especially in girls and boys who have reached puberty. Various ritual ceremonies are performed during the child's early life. However, the practice varies from one society to another.

These ceremonies continue until the child reaches puberty (Masopha, 16 July 2012). Puberty is the stage where most initiation practices in South Africa are performed, mostly by the Bantu-speaking people. Initiation practices are defined as the passage of rites by anthropologists since there are various ceremonies performed that enable the process to be successful (Nel, 2011:1). This phase ends when all the characteristics from childhood, boyhood/girlhood have disappeared. Finally the last stage is displayed by maturity which symbolises manhood/womanhood.

A study conducted by Krige (1938:277) shows that there are five initiation schools in the Khelobedu culture. Out of the five, two are for boys and the other two are for girls, one is, however, for both girls and boys, it includes elderly people of the community. Boys go through "*bodika*", and "*gomana*", whereas girls go through "*khopa*" and "*vyali*" (Ramafalo M, 15 September 2012). After the initiates have completed the first stages of initiations "*bodika*" and "*gomana*", they are then allowed to enter into another type of initiation known as "*Vuhwera*". Masopha (2012) argues that, in the case of men, if they have not been through the "*gomana*" stage, they are not allowed to enter into the "*vuhwera*" initiation.

Motshekga (2010:165) states that "*Vuhwera*" is a school which marks the end of puberty and the beginning of adulthood. "*Vuwhera*" consists of masked dancing and is held at the same time with "*vyali*". According to Krige and Krige (1980:126), the Lobedu call the initiate "*vyali*" and the initiation school itself "*vuhwera*". Most performers in the "*vuhwera*" initiations are people from the Rabothata clan. During the performance, the "*muhwera*" from the Rabothata clan wears the most spectacular costumes. Sethlabane (2012) reveals that, according to the traditional belief, the performance of a *muhwera* from the Rabothata clan, at the capital marks, the end of the ceremony.

The Rabothata dancers were called “*magogoby*”. According to Krige and Krige (1980:127) “the “*magogoby*” wear exotic costumes with headdress decorated with animal figures and underskirts trailing the ground to create a dramatic effect”. Their initiation costumes originated from the Southern Sotho. The costumes include the use of fibre, covering of the face and crisscross bandoliers of the upper body. At the early stages of the “*vuhwera*”, the Lobedu girls who take part during the performance wear short wraps around their hips (Mangena, 16 July 2012). However, at a later stage, the girls wear bandoliers made of grass. On special occasions, both girls and women wear beaded panels.

When offerings are made in the families linked to the royal family “*gomana*” is associated with the coming of the ancestral spirits (Talbot, 1943:138). Motshekga (2010:163) indicates that the girl’s initiation is linked with the “*Mwari*” who is the God of heaven and earth. The girl’s initiation is known as “*byali*” and an initiate is called “*myali*”. However, Motshekga further explains that both “*byali*” and “*myali*” derived from the goddess, “*Mwali*,” who is a variant of “*Mwari*”.

The Balobedu initiation is also associated with a bird known as “*Raluvhimba*”. “*Raluvhimba*” symbolises the presence of their goddess. The Modjadji rain Queens received the power to conduct rain from “*Raluvhimba*”. When girls attend the initiation school, they are introduced to the goddess “*Mwari*”. In this regard, initiation schools have both moral and social functions (Motshekga, 2010:163).

2.6.1 Female initiation

Mamodjadji (2012) acknowledges that female initiation is a process in which girls who have reached puberty are introduced officially into the next stage of their lives. She further reveals that the current stage is then accompanied by different ceremonies as a way to show that a girl has now entered into woman-hood. The initiation, in this regard can be performed either by a group of girls who are of the same age or it can be conducted individually. However, if the ceremony is to be conducted by the community, various communal ceremonies are performed.

In the Lobedu tradition, if the communal ceremonies are to be conducted the decision is taken by the Queen herself. According to the Lobedu, the initiation covers all the villages around

the Modjadji area. The type of initiation performed in this regard is known “*vyale*”/”*vuhwera*”. The initiation is introduced by the ruling Queen at that time, and her councillors. Mateta (2012) adds that the main purpose in this ceremony is to prepare the next queen who will succeed her after she has passed away. The Queen to be and her counterparts are taught how to behave in each and every situation that they may find themselves in. They are taught moral behaviour, how to conduct themselves in marriage, to respect elderly people, not to be involved with more than one partner, to mention but a few. They are taught by most senior women in the village who have been initiated and they are seen as the custodians of tradition (Nel, 2011:3). This initiation ceremony encompasses all the young girls/boys who have been initiated and the women/men who did not attend the previous “*vyale*”/”*vuhwera*”. “*Vyale*” and “*Vuhwera*” are closely related since they are performed at the same time on the same occasion.

The initiation process in this regard takes place for about a year and it is conducted every day in the evening (Mateta, 15 September 2012). In the Lobedu area, the last “*vyale*”/”*vuhwera*” initiation was performed in 1975 under the leadership of the rain Queen, Makoma, in preparation of the rain Queen Mokohe. During this process, foul language and songs are used to communicate ideas and also to express feelings (Motseo, 17 September 2012). The initiates are generally enclosed in tight structures made up of wood and branches of trees. Unlike the circumcision lodge, the initiation structures where “*vyale*” and “*vuhwera*” are performed are located near the village (Nel, 2011:40).

“*Khopa*” is an initiation done privately to induct into woman hood girls who have reached puberty. At the onset of puberty, when a girl discovers her first menstrual period the matter is reported to the mother who also reports it to the father. In the case of an individual ceremony, the girl’s family may take a decision about when to start with the initiation ceremony (Mathekga, 21 June 2012). The matter is then taken to the queen or village headman. Other girls who have also reached the same stage may also join in the ceremony.

Girls become adults by undergoing a formal initiation ceremony at puberty. However the initiation takes place in a special hut created for the occasion and is situated in or around the chief’s compound. Like the Venda, the Lobedu girls’ rites consist of six days of seclusion in a hut where they experience considerable hardship. Moreover, they are beaten, provided with

unhealthy food, doctored with harmful medicines, and have to enter a river every morning for lengthy periods.

Krige and Krige (1980:113) point out that initiation at puberty involves giving out instruction to girls entering a new life. During this occasion, they are not allowed to mention any male name and anyone who breaks the rule is punished. They are reminded that they have reached maturity and they must be careful when they play with boys. They are strongly urged to have one lover at a time so that they are sure who the father of their child is, should they become pregnant.

Krige and Krige (1980:113) further argue that in the old days a girl was given a calabash doll, which was carried by her bride maids at the wedding. If the girl breaks her virginity the calabash will be pierced. They are also taught rules connected with menstruation. Thus if one was menstruating one was not allowed to enter a cattle kraal, or sick room or to sleep with a man (Mamodjadji, 14 May 2012).

During initiation, the older girls were regarded as leaders and they were expected to insert mealie cobs in the initiate's private parts to show the dangers of sexual intercourse (Krige and Krige, 1980:113). The older girls sometimes treated and hurt the initiates so badly that sometimes they were unable to walk properly. In such cases, the girls' mothers' would report the incident to the Queen, who will, in turn, impose a heavy fine on each of the leaders who took part in the insult.

The initiates are taught to respect their elders and parents. Songs are used to tell initiates that they should honour and obey their mothers (Ramafalo, 15 September 2012). The elders usually express their feelings through songs. The initiates are told that if older people are in the hut, they must first greet them before entering.

Most of the teachings are in the form of songs and mummeries. Krige and Krige (1980:113) point out that the dancing takes place every night when women enter the initiation house they consists largely of movement in a bent position on the haunches, with arms held above the head for better balance. Some dances are usually associated with the lessons of initiation. The last night of the ceremony is the one in which neither the initiates nor the leaders are allowed to sleep (Masopha, 16 July 2012). It is the night of revealing secrets (*dikoma*) or

mummeries and the night one sleeps standing (*khilalaowemi*). Krige and Krige (1980:114) indicate that all the initiated women in the area who wish to attend the ceremony are invited to join them. However, those women are expected to bring along mealies and nuts to roast and eat while there. Their secret (*koma*) is accompanied by a great deal of singing and dancing. The greatest *dikoma* are shown at about 3 a.m. after a period of comparative quiet that sets in towards midnight (Mathekga, 21 June 2012). She further indicates that, that is the time when some people sleep for a while around the fires.

For a few days the initiates are not allowed to speak to anyone. They walk with heads bent, and clenched fists and held to the in breasts. They are accompanied by their leaders to their relatives so that they can greet them. The initiates lie down to allow their relatives to respond by means of a small gift before they can rise (Mateta, 15 September 2012). A month after the ceremony has taken place; the girl's parents should give a grand-beer party to the women of the area. When they are through with their requisite number of ceremonies, they are then taken to the Queen or the wife of the district head to beat them with a stick as a sign of their graduation.

When they have gone through the initiation process they are given new names as a way of showing that they are now inducted into their new status. Some are called Mmabotse, Mmatele, Tshaisa and others (Masopha, 16 July 2012). Female parents buy them new clothes such as shawls, blankets, to mention a few to show them that they are now adults and they are welcome into the world of adults. They are all given the instructions on how to conduct themselves in life, in marriage, on wifely duties, how to take care of their families, and to respect the elders (Motseo, 17 September 2012). They are taught norms and values of their tribes and also to be responsible mothers of tomorrow. Female initiation is a transmission from childhood to womanhood with a good attitude and self-respect.

2.6.2 Male circumcision

Male circumcision is identified as one of the ancient practices across many African countries (Marck, 1997:339). Genhep (cited in Mavundla 2009:397) defines male circumcision as a life cycle ritual that marks the transition of a boy to adulthood. Among most of South Africa's ethnic groups, male circumcision is regarded as a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood (Marck, 1997, 346; Modjadji, 15 April 2012). It is usually associated with age-

grades, age-ranked male cohorts, whose membership is defined in terms of participation in the same initiation schools in the same year. Modjadji (2012) further highlights that as long as the initiates have attended the same initiation school they fall within the same cohort regardless of age group.

Amongst the Bantu speakers, circumcision is expected to take place at the age of twelve or thirteen. Most Bantu groups that perform initiations believe that all men who wish to participate in warfare should have already been initiated (Setlhabane, August 2012). According to the Balobedu culture any man who has never gone through the initiation process is not considered mature no matter how old he is (Ramafalo, September 2012).

All the rituals performed during the initiation process symbolise the end of childhood and puberty, and they introduce the starting point of man-hood (Nel, 2011:39). Among all the African tribes who perform ritual practices, there is a special language used by the initiates to share ideas amongst themselves. The secret language is used to communicate ideas, to express feelings, to teach them lessons on behaviour and their traditions. This language is taught through songs and stories (Mavundla *et. al.*, 2009:397).

Krige (1946:103) points out that in the Lobedu tradition circumcision school occurs within a four or five year interval. This custom is also practiced by other tribes, for example, the Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga, and the Pedi. Mavundla *et.al.* (2009:397) stress that this cultural information is traditionally known and shared by men, and it is orally transmitted from one generation to another.

Traditionally, the knowledge is not shared with women, children and outsiders. It is considered taboo to share the information with the above stakeholders as this will upsets the ancestors which can lead to misfortunes. The Lobedu men believe children and women are not informed when initiates leave their home for the mountains to be circumcised. Among the Lobedu the equivalent of a mountain is the camp or lodge where initiations are conducted. Children and women are strictly forbidden to look at the initiates when they are on the way to the mountain. Tjale and de Villiers (cited in Mavundla *et.al.* 2009:397) point out that initiation is seen as a connection between taboo violation and the occurrence of misfortune or sickness, both of which are assumed to be the punishment of violation of the taboo. However

the information about male circumcision is less known in the public domain and also in other tribes because of its secretive nature.

In the Lobedu tradition, the most important male initiation is “*bodika*” (Krige, 1938:277). The circumcision school leads a young boy towards adulthood. The Lobedu tribe believe that circumcision was established by Thobela, the celestial lion god (Motshekga, 2010:163). When it is about time to go to the initiation school, the boys who are involved gather at the home of the father of the lodge. A bull or ram is slaughtered so that the ancestors are informed about what is taking place. A bull or ram is sacrificed because both are the emblems of a man, while, on the other hand, a vulture (*raluvhimba*) is the emblem of a woman (Motshekga, 2010:163). Their gathering at the royal court is regarded as a religious function at which the ancestors, gods, and God are informed about the commencement of the circumcision school (Motshekga, 2010:163). The gatherers ask the ancestors to protect the initiates throughout the initiation period. They are told by older men on how to conduct themselves while they are at the initiation school.

Motshekga (2010:163) emphasises that at the lodge, their operations are performed by a surgeon and they are advised not to cry or weep. However, when the fore skin is cut the initiate should address the surgeon with the words “I am a man,” and the surgeon will also reply with the words “you are a man”. After their operations, they are smeared with white clay from head to foot (Maunatlala, 20 May 2012). This process symbolises their marginal status. Motshekga acknowledges that the act of circumcision and the removal of the boys from their families to the isolation of the lodge are the part of ritual of segregation. Uncircumcised boys are said to be irresponsible.

The period of seclusion may last for about three or four months in winter. At this stage, two or three men who are regarded as guardians are required to look after the initiates. Moreover, they are expected to visit them daily and check on their health. Motshekga (2010:164) states that during the period of seclusion, the initiates perform special public dances, while dressed in elaborate costumes made of reeds and palm leaves. They are expected to vye with each other in galvanic abandon.

Molokwane (2012) states that when they are finished with their task in the lodge their guardians clear the lodge. All their belongings used during the period of seclusion, as well as

the lodge are then set alight. On their way home, they are urged not to look back as this will reverse the attributes of manhood.

Amongst the Lobedu, when an initiate dies while at the initiation school, the parents are not told immediately (Ramafal, 15 September 2012). However, they are reported by the tutors on the final day when other initiates return to their homes. The parents are visited by tutors in their home; even then, they are not directly informed. On their arrival, they break down the food bowl (*khethepa* in Lobedu) before the family members as a sign to show that their son had passed away. The initiate's body is buried in the lodge without the parents's knowledge (Modjadji, 15 April 2012).

2.6.3 Initiation practices in the Tsonga tribe

The Tsonga tribe is scattered around the Limpopo Province of South Africa and coexists with the Lobedu tribe. The Tsonga initiation school is commonly known as kaMatlala. Their initiation schools are also called "ngoma" (drum), a general word for ceremonies marking a new stage in one's life. Junod (1962:74) explains how initiations take place amongst the Tsonga who are the neighbours of the Lobedu. In Tsonga tradition, the initiates gather at the behest of the chief and council headmen, who would have called for the schools to be conducted. Junod (1962:74) further acknowledges that graduates from previous initiation schools attend to monitor and lead the new candidates. They are capable of giving them instructions, under the supervision of the leaders of the school. The lodge, in which the initiates sleep, is situated far away from the village. The structure is made up of a walled or fenced compound with sleeping huts, other buildings, and ceremonial areas within it.

Like the Lobedu, the Tsonga initiates are not allowed to come into contact with the outside world during the initiation process (Junod, 1962:75-76). Junod further indicates that the Tsonga restrict access to the lodge to initiated persons only. Amongst the Bantu speaking people, the initiates are not allowed to come into contact with women because in some African cultures it is a taboo to allow women to enter the lodge during the process of initiation. Junod (1962:79-80) states that sexual intercourse is strictly forbidden to the candidates, the helpers, and their instructors.

Junod (1962:82-85) explains some of the trials that occur during the initiation period. Those trials are needed to make the initiate a brave and responsible man. The trials outlined by Junod are as follows: The initiates are beaten for an offence against a moral principle, and even if they have committed a small mistake they should suffer the consequences; they sleep naked even though it is a winter time; they are not allowed to drink water; and their parents bring them only food and no other substances are allowed.

Junod (1962:85) emphasises that some of them may die of infection from circumcision wound. Like the Lobedu the death of an initiate is not directly reported to his mother. The mother is informed of the death through a notch cut on the edge of the pot in which she used to bring food for the initiate (Junod, 1962:85).

At the initiation schools, initiates are taught practical skills such as hunting, making household items, and learning chants (Wagner, 1949:361; Junod, 1962:85). However, Junod (1962:85-87) believes that these skills should be taught during the marginal period. In the last stage, the lodge and all their belongings are burnt. With the supervision of the leaders, all the initiates form a procession to the chief's capital, where they are greeted by chants and cheers. Junod (1962:94) concludes that the main aim of initiation schools is to introduce a teenager into manhood, and to remove all his childhood characteristics, with the intention of making him a responsible member of the community.

2.7 Rain-making rituals

Rain making rituals have been documented in different parts of the world (Haland, 2001; Huffman, 2009; Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2004; Murimbika, 2006; Ouzman, 1995; Schoeman, 2006). Most of these studies report that rain-making focuses on medicinal and magical practices. Haland (2001:197) reports of rain-making rituals in Greece in the ancient and modern times. Elsewhere, Murimbika (2006) conducted a study of rain-making among the Hananwa, Tswana and Pedi tribes of southern Africa. The San people have also been reported as believing in the rain-animal, which can be seen in their images and paintings (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2004; Ouzman, 1995). The rain-animal is often substituted symbolically by the Eland during rain-making rituals.

A study by Sanders (2000) reveals yet another rain making ritual at Kirumi village in Tanzania. A male chief performs public annual rites by using medicines and rain stones. If the annual rites fail to produce rain over an extended period, a woman dance would be held as a final alternative (Sanders, 2000:476).

The rain dance is held over two days and is led by the chief's sister. Women, who have given birth to at least one child, would be allowed to take part in the dance and those who are exceptionally fertile would be given special roles. Menstruating women were not allowed to be part of the dance (Sanders, 2000:476). During the dance men, remained in doors as some women danced naked (Sanders, 2000:477). The rain dance involving women was also reported in the Khelobedu culture and will be further discussed in this section.

The Queen of the Lobedu tribe is well known for her rain making powers (Muller, 2008:80). This practice differs from that of Mapungubwe, where the king became the rain-maker who prayed to God for rain through ancestors (Huffman, 2009:46). Among the Lobedu, men rely for their security on the Queen's power to make rain for her tribe and to withhold rain from its enemies. Krige and Krige (1980:271) emphasise that rain-making and its cult are based upon the magico-religious world.

In the Lobedu tradition, it is not only the rain Queen who composes a few magical passes of rain cult but it is a whole complex of institutions through many aspects of tribal life (Setlhabane, 2012). He adds that the Queen is regarded as the changer of the seasons and patron of their cyclic regularity.

However, her emotions do affect rain either positively or negatively. If she is very upset or dissatisfied, she cannot practise her power of rain-making. Krige and Krige (1980:271) further indicate that her rain-making is not strictly restricted to dramatic ceremonies in time of severe drought, but it is believed to fall throughout the year. The Lobedu do not relate every fall of rain to special activity on the part of Queen, but they assume that the Queen exercises some general control or care which may ensure a good season (Masopha, 2012).

If there is no rain in the country, the rain Queen is the one who is approached. She is approached by her great councillors or important relatives who talk to her in person. She is told that her people are crying and asking her to help them (Masopha, 2012). Krige and Krige

(1980:271) give an example of a situation when Mugwena who is related to the Queen through his mother's side used to walk near the Queen's hut complaining with a loud voice believed to reach the Queen's ears saying it is a bad habit when the Queen kills her children by withholding rain.

Certain rituals have to be performed, in order for rain to fall. One of these rituals is the sending of young men to beat 'mofuko' pegs around their area (Molokwane, 2012). This practice was also observed among the Hananwa of Makgabeng (Murimbika, 2006:111). Then it will be followed by dancing for rain, which starts with each headman coming with his male followers to the royal kraal to dance for the Queen. This activity is called '*Go loba khosi*.' If the mentioned activities do not trigger rain, women come as a last resort to perform a special dance for the queen (Molokwane, 2012). The Balobedu people used September to perform their rituals before the commencement of the rainy season.

Krige and Krige (1980:272) state that heads of the districts brought some gifts with them, in addition to the dancing performers, to please the rain-Queen. They eventually perform their dance (*kosha*) as a sign to show sympathy and sorrow to the queen on behalf of those people who performed their dance in summer when they ought to be ploughing. The music performed consists of "*lesugu*" songs sung at the harvesting ceremony, or on the death of important royal people and or at the girl's initiation school.

The most renowned song in all dancing is the "*legobathele*," which is seen as a special kind of song, as it is also sung at the mourning dance of a section of "*Thovolo*" people. Krige and Krige (1980:272) further indicate that during the performance of "*legobathele*," two drums are used, and they are played by only those who have lost one parent. The performance starts in the dim light of dawn before sun rise and stops after a short spell. It is resumed later in the day. When someone in the village has angered the queen and people believed that drought is coming because of the queen's anger on this matter, all the married women from all villages in the royal neighbourhood, assemble every morning after cooking to sing and dance.

The rain Queen does not work alone. She always has a rain-doctor of whom there are many in the tribe. The Queen has the power to choose any renowned doctor. In cases where people complain about the rain procedure, when the rain is insufficient, or when rain is bad or accompanied by too many thunderstorms, the Queen has the power to change the appointed

rain doctor. Krige and Krige (1980:273) acknowledge that the queen was never blamed for disasters caused by rain because the main function of the doctor was to complement the Queen in some of the things she could not do. This was found to be different in the Mapungubwe community who blamed their king for all the problems associated with lack of rain (Huffman, 2009:51).

The doctor, through his knucklebones, examined the causes of drought and identified which forces were tempering with the Queen's power to conduct rain. The doctor was expected to use his medicines to remove all the obstacles that hindered the Queen's power from taking effect. Krige and Krige (1980:273) further indicate that the relationship between the rain-Queen and rain-doctors was premised on the understanding that they were all specialists in their arts, which they had inherited from their ancestors. They worked together, but the rain-doctors were dependent on the Queen. They were employed by the Queen, and, any payments they received were their own. If the Queen was angry, they would never benefit from their powers. If the Queen holds the rain from falling the doctor could not make it fall.

All the powers used by the queen to transform the clouds and the relevant nature of the objects and medicines used to conduct rain are then regarded as the greatest secret which lies upon the queen herself. The secrecy is then imparted to her successor before the death of the rain queen. The medicines used to conduct rain are kept in rough earthen pots (mehako) in a few villages that have access. However it is believed that some of her powers are derived from a woman's skull in the rain-pot, and that there are also horns which are kept in the hut (Krige and Krige, 1980:273).

The use of horns in rain-making was also reported among the Hananwa of Makgabeng, the Pedi of Sekhukhune, the Tswana and San people (Murimbika, 2006; Ouzman, 1995). In the Lobedu traditions, when the rain-horns are placed on the ground, the rain will fall. When they are hung up the rain subsides and gradually stops and the sky becomes clear. It is also believed that when the medicine in the rain-horns is burnt to produce smoke which rises up into the sky to draw and produce clouds, rain is formed. Moreover, Krige and Krige (1980:273), in their investigations, observe that the ingredients that are found in the rain-pots are believed to be the skin of the deceased chief and of important councillors who are her close relatives. When the queen dies, her body is left for some days in the hut in which no one is allowed to enter except the queen's closest relatives and the rain doctor.

Krige and Krige (1980:275) acknowledge that there is no rule that the queen's own rain-charms should be given first preference over others. However it is not only the Queen who controls rain, but her ancestors control with her. The ancestors have the power to hold her hands just as she is also able to hold the hands of rain-doctors.

There are certain things that can cause rain-charms to be weak, and these have the power to stop rain. These things are for example, abortions or miscarriages, women dying during the gestation period or at parturition, twins killed at birth, people who are burned to death, initiates dying at circumcision school to mention a few. However, if such events happened, proper measures are taken to control the impact that could affect the rain-charms. To resolve the matter people who have died must be buried in wet places. All the affected areas must be sprinkled with rain medicines in a ceremony known as '*mofuko*'. If relevant steps are not taken it is believed this would lead to wind which would blow up to the sky and cover the atmosphere. The result of the wind is that it will affect the rain formation process. In the Lobedu custom, during a drought, the heavy rain clouds seem to be dispersed by a strong wind. Krige and Krige (1980:275) indicate that there was a belief that witches used to hang *Asparagus plumosus* (*lefalaja-maru*) to disperse the clouds.

Furthermore, Krige and Krige (1980:276) on their investigations found out that the '*mofuko*' medicine used to remove all the impediments to rain is obtained from the rain queen. Krige and Krige indicate that the responsibility for '*mofuko*' medicine was not hereditary, but it was held by the '*Modiga*' family and handed down from father to son. If the person in charge of '*mofuko*' died, his younger son who, is unmarried is expected to take the responsibility of the office.

However, things changed when the person who was responsible for the office realised that the '*mofuko*' medicines needed special care by the people who used them. Krige and Krige (1980:276) add that the ingredients used to make '*mofuko*' medicine is considered extremely dangerous as it is believed that it robs men and women of their fertility and great care is necessary when working with them.

Table 2.2: Summary of the Lobedu rain-making ritual and agricultural calendar as adapted from Murimbika (2006:142)

Time	Event	Activity	Location	Agricultural Activity
July	Renew rain medicines.	Queen calls rain doctors to assist with collecting new medicines to activate rain pots	Royal rain Kraal	Off season
August	Activate royal rain pots	Queen mixes rain medicines from horns into rain pots	Royal rain Kraal	Cleaning of new fields begins.
August	Regional leaders active local rain pots.	Queen summons local rainmakers/ leaders to activate the rain pots in support of hers.	Rain kraal	
September	Rain Requests	Regional delegations visit queen to supplicate for rain and conduct <i>legobathele</i> rain ritual dance ceremonies	Royal Court	People prepare to plough for new season
October	Summoning the clouds	Queen mixes rain medicines to call clouds	Royal rain Kraal	Planting season
November	Rainmaking rites continue	Queen and rainmakers continue conducting secret rainmaking rituals.	Royal rain Kraal	Planting begins with the queen's field
December	Requests for rain (threats of drought)	If the rain delays, regional leaders will ask the queen to supplicate for rain. Queen responds by conducting additional rain rituals		
December-January	Sacrifices to royal ancestors (only when drought threatens)	Queen summons beer to be brewed; she leads a royal delegation to sacred groove where ancestors are buried; pour libations and sacrifice black sheep - . meat ritually consumed and bones left on burial sites	Sacred groove where ancestors buried	Farming season
February	First fruit Ceremony	Pre-puberty girls collect a sample of new green farm produce and bring it to royal court. Queen mixes them with rain medicines and ritually tests them.	Royal Court	People continue to tend fields and begin consuming new farm produce.
April	Harvest Thanksgiving	Early new harvest used to brew beer to thank royal ancestors for successful farming season. Queen pours libations to royal ancestors at royal graves.	Queen's royal ancestors shrine in the royal residence.	Harvest begins.

Literature revealed diverse rain-making traditions. For instance, the Tswana-speaking people believed that there was a cave and a pool of water found on top of Modipe hill in the Ngwaketsi District of Botswana, which they believed is the habitat of a huge rain snake (Ouzman, 1995:55). The Zulu rain controllers kept the rain-making medicine in caves Berglund (cited in Schoeman, 2006:154). The Lobedu keep rain medicine in the rain pots (Krige & Krige, 1980:273). As much as these differences existed, there were also similarities reported.

2.8 Religious practices

Religious practices have been at the fore front of determining wholeness in many societies. Bruce (cited in Mapadimeng 2009:81) indicates that

...religion could either help to foster or enhance social cohesion by binding people together under the name of God or common cosmology or morality, or could promote change and disruption to the existing socio-political order.

Cultural theories identify religion as one of the sources that trigger change in many societies. In a study by Hadebe (2010), Christianity as a religion, was found to have influenced the change in patterns of masculinity among Zulu men. The findings revealed that because of Christianity, roles played by men and women were changed and constructed in conflict with the traditional demarcation of roles according to genders (Hadebe, 2010:31). In accordance with Christianity Zulu men were forbidden from practising polygamous marriages, consuming liquor, smoking and carrying sticks Vilakazi (cited in (Hadebe, 2010:32). This change in behaviour among Zulu men who were Christians resulted in them being stigmatised (Hadebe, 2010; Lopes, 2004:839). A study on African religions in Brazil revealed that, in some instances, religions of African origin were described as superstitions, criminal practices or mental derangement (Lopes, 2004:839). As a result, the African Brazilian religion was facing inevitable challenges (Lopes, 2004: 858).

One of the sub-questions this study set out to explore is whether religion influences the direction of culture change within the Balobedu tribe. Balobedu have their own way of praising and talking to their gods. In the Lobedu tradition, the rain queens are regarded as the most powerful religious leaders within the Lobedu tribe (Masopha, 16 July 2012). They have their own way of conducting rituals for making rain and the know how to operate during the process is their secret.

During the ritual ceremony, they sit next to a traditional designed circle in their homes and start calling the names of their ancestors to ask for luck (Modjadji, 15 April 2012). The Lobedu tribe believe in ancestral spirits. Krige and Krige (1980:231) state that the gods of the Lobedu are their ancestors, deceased fathers and mothers who guard them on death just as they did in life.

In the Lobedu custom, ancestor worship is founded on the belief that the dead live on and are capable of influencing the lives of those who are still living (Ramafalo, 15 September 2012). However it is assumed that the ancestors are responsible for the blessings and curses for those who are still living. Bogopa (2010:1) emphasises that ancestors have mystical powers and authority and they play a significant part in the world of the living.

Pauw (1969:51) argues that ancestors play an important role in the lives of African people who have migrated to urban areas. Tooke (1994:2) in his argument states that ancestral spirits form the foundation of the Southern Bantu religion. He further stresses that all the Bantu groups have special names to refer to their ancestors, and they are often used in the plural form to show great respect.

However, cultural groups use different terms to refer to their ancestors. For example, the Lobedu tribe use the word ‘badimo’ to refer to their ancestors. Tooke, 1989:59 reveals a point that for an individual to understand who the ancestors are, he must first have knowledge of the kingship groupings beyond the immediate family. According to Tooke, the ancestors are believed to be the deceased members of the family. They are the deceased senior males of the clan, which comprises the descendants of a common great grandfather. Buhrman (1984:27) shows that the ancestors are the living dead who are regarded as the members of the clan and are described by anthropological literature as “shades”.

It is mostly assumed that the ancestors have their favourite places where they meet and form a unity. Such places include the opposite the entrance door of the main hut of the family and another one is the cattle kraal, which is situated opposite to the entrance gate. They are then regarded as their protectors and no misfortune can befall them. Madamombe (2006:11) indicates that the traditional healers are the one who mediate communication between the ancestors and the living, by using bones to interpret the will of the ancestors. The Queen talks to them at harvest ceremonies to put things right.

According to the Lobedu customs, if something terrible happens in society it is a sign that people have not taken care of their ancestors (Ramafalo, 15 September 2012). However, the Lobedu are of the opinion that diseases and evil spirits cannot enter the village and cause sickness if the ancestors are watchful enough and well-disposed. He further argues that by the time when people are affected and killed by smallpox, they believe that there can be no success without co-operation of the ancestors.

They have a practice of appeasing ancestors by pouring beer on a sacred place during a ceremony called '*go phasa*' (Lombard & Parsons, 2003:82). The sacred place where the ancestral offerings are made is put in a shrine in the court yard of the chief's house and is called '*thugula*'. A study by Krige (1938:282) indicates that a shrine may consist of a mound of earth, a stick, and river pebbles at a spot where a lily '*thithikwane*', has been planted. The Lobedu royal family places the bones of a sacrificial goat or ox in the mound, whereas other families bury two black river pebbles and a special ant-heap.

The Balobedu people dedicate beasts or goats to the ancestors (Krige, 1938:282). During the ancestral ceremony, they sit next to a traditionally designed circle in their home. The chosen animal usually bears the name of one of the ancestors, and when the offerings are made, the anointed animal will drink beer given to the spirits. In some instances, people are possessed by the ancestral spirits. These spirits usually possess relatives from the mother's side. If the spirit was a doctor, the person possessed will also become a doctor (Mateta, 15 September 2012).

Sometimes the spirit neglects people, causing those that are neglected to become ill. The illnesses can generally be cured by performing the ceremony of '*go phasa*,' this involves beer being poured over the '*thugula*', while the ancestor is scolded and asked for good health (Lombard & Parsons, 2003:82). Sometimes old beads are used to ensure the health of the one who is wearing them, and these are used for curing many illnesses caused by the neglect of the ancestors (Krige, 1938:284). The family gathered together will call the names of their ancestors to ask for luck.

Krige and Krige (1980:231) describe the situation of a boy whose grandmother had made him ill for two years. A goat was dedicated to the grandmother on behalf of the son who was working in town. In her prayer, the mother of the child asked the ancestors to let the child be

happy and cool. And should protect and give him a healthy life. They were also reminded to tell all the other gods (Mathekga, 21 June 2012).

The words badimolalane (spirit, sleep) must appear many times in their prayers to show respect and lead them all the way. They fear that if their ancestors wake up and stand, they will cause trouble over them (Krige and Krige, 1980:231). Moreover they indicate that there is another phrase that says “wa va le molao, shako la lala” meaning “there was order, the country slept”. For the crops to be fertilised, the ancestors should be responsible because they are the creator of rain. The rain Queen, with the instructions from the royal ancestors, has the power to withhold rain.

Krige and Krige (1980:232) states that the ancestors complain if they tell you to do something and you ignore them. However, Krige and Krige explain the case of Masilu who was asked by her grandmother to bring a goat dedicated to her. Masilu’s mother refused. Masilu became sick because he did not follow what his grandmother had said. The Lobedu accept that it is the right of the ancestors to complain. Krige and Krige (1980:232), in their investigations, discovered that when someone is ill he/she must go to a traditional healer, and the traditional healer will, through bones, reveal the cause of the problem.

Furthermore Krige and Krige (1980:232) realise that, according to the Lobedu, if you are going to look for a job you must first inform the ancestors by appeasing to them so that they open the way for your journey. As a result, you will find a great job that is suitable for you.

In the Zulu culture, the ancestors have the power to complain if they are neglected. Sometimes their complaints can bring dreams to you make you realise that you should appease them, as was the case of Walter who did not appease for his ancestors. Walter’s ancestor complained about the way he has been buried since he had been buried and that he had been buried far away from home. After realising that he is being neglected by the family he used all his powers to attack Walter so that he would bring him back home in a ceremony in which a goat or beast would be killed and eaten and its bones buried as though it were a person (Krige and Krige,1980:232). Krige and Krige further acknowledge that the incident was confirmed by a traditional healer who was visited by Walter and his mother. Walter was a talented young boy who was well-educated, but he failed in his last examination and felt

doubly frustrated. He decided to go to town to seek for a job and nothing was opening up for him. He always dreamt of his dead father, who reminded him that he wanted to come home.

However, the Lobedu tribe believe that if a person wants to be buried in a certain place, he/she must be buried there because without doing so there would be sickness or misfortune, as his/her soul is not resting in peace (Setlhabane, 20 August 2012). Krige and Krige (1980:233) revealed an incident in the Lobedu tradition in which Mampeule asked his entire family to bury him at Khikhutini but they did not. He was buried in the valley in the sun and as a result, he caused sickness in the family. The family was then urged to sacrifice a black sheep on his grave. Krige and Krige (1980:233) cite another incident in the Lobedu where Mulogwane, a brother to the rain Queen who became a Christian, was buried in the Christian cemetery withheld rain because they did not bury him where he was supposed to be buried.

The ancestors desire mainly to be remembered. However, they want their beads worn (Mamodjadji, 14 May 2012). Their names should always be revived, animals such as goats and cows should be dedicated to them, and that is, they should be named after them. They want to be told about any occasion that takes place in the family, such as a journey to be undertaken, marriages, family gatherings, all the ceremonies and so on.

The ancestors never complain of being hungry, but are merely pleased to be given their due. According to Krige and Krige (1980:233) there is no resting secured even though you have done all that is necessary for the gods, you should always be ready for other ancestors who can cause trouble, and you should wait and see what is wanted.

Sometimes a person is punished on behalf of her/his parents. In relation to that, Bogopa (2010:4) reveals the situation in which a boy was punished on behalf of his father who did not pay lobola (bride-wealth) for his mother. He was told by the traditional healer that if he failed to pay the price, he would suffer the consequences. Bogopa indicates that the incident was reported in (*City Press*, 1999:25 and *The Sunday Times*, 1999:1). He was advised that his poor health was a direct result of his father who had failed to pay lobola. The newspaper reports confirmed that the boy's father had died in 1985 without paying lobola. The ancestors are, thus unpredictable in the sense that you will never know what they desire. Objects which were once in the possession of the ancestors are used for religious ceremonies. Those objects are believed to have special powers of protection and healing. Those objects include ancient

beads of glass, native worked-iron or copper, native-wrought assegais, hoes, axes, iron rods with spiked heads. All the objects are handed down in the family and carefully cherished. Krige and Krige (1980:233) indicate that when a girl is married, she is given a few beads to take with her for use when she is ill. She is given the charms known as thugula. Those charms are meant to cure illness caused by the ancestors. However illness can generally be cured by a ceremony known as “go phasa” (Molokwane, 14 May 2012). The objects are then placed around the sacred place where the family usually praise and talk to their gods. When someone in the family is ill, a mixture of ground grain and water is poured over other thugula objects in the presence of the patient, while a prayer asking the spirits to heal the patient is made. After the ceremony, the beads are then worn by the patient for protective reasons (Masopha, 16 July 2012).

However, it is not always the case that for a charm to heal, one should have been in the possession of the complaining ancestor himself or his family. The ancestors, through knucklebones, can mention beads or other objects which are not known in the family at all. They are then regarded as the lost objects (Ramafalo, 15 September 2012). The family will devise some means to procure, them either from someone else or from the Queen, who has many. Furthermore, they will talk about the lost objects and indicate that they are replacing them in their prayer. Krige and Krige (1980:234) mention that sometimes when the offerings are poured on the ground or “*thugula*” objects, the ancestors may desire a shrine or dedicated animal. However, the Queen herself and some others have dedicated cattle, males or females in accordance with the spirits represented. The majority of families have dedicated goats, while some have dedicated sheep. Fowls are dedicated or killed for the gods and their blood may be poured on the ground or “*thugula*” objects (Mangena, 16 July 2012).

According to the Lobedu tradition, some families are linked with a snake, which is dedicated to them. The Relela family was dedicated to a mountain snake which thought to be a mamba. The snake said was to whistle and was described as a dreaded monster. When the vyali initiation starts in the Relela district, the libations are offered at their burial grounds in the depths of the forest (Mamodjadji, 14 May 2012).

However, the use of animals as ancestors is not necessarily related to the wealth of the family concerned; it is traditional. The dedicated animals receive the names of the ancestors, who demand those animals as their fathers or grandfathers according to the head of the lineage. It

is then believed that the complaining spirit that has demanded such an animal has entered into it. Krige and Krige (1980:234) acknowledge that some dedicated animals are powerful since they are credited with abnormal powers by the spirits. They give an example in the Lobedu tribe, in which Malegudu the fiercest bull behaves like the warrior he represents. Malegudu was called from the herd to drink the harvest-beer but he did not go there. Everybody was afraid of him, and the clan throw a beer over him from a distance so that he can take part in the offering (Mathekga, 21 June 2012).

“*Malopo*” are ancestors in Lobedu tradition. They are associated with people that do a particular dance in the gathering ceremony known as “thokola”. Persons who participate in a dance are known as “*malopo*” and they will dance at the said gathering for about two to three days without eating (Maunatlala, 20 May 2013). They must first be visited by the ancestors before the ceremony starts. The ceremony is accompanied by traditional drums known as “*meropa*” in Lobedu language. However, there are persons who are capable of beating the drums (*meropa*). During the ceremony, a “*lilopo*” will start to sing a song using an instrument known as “*tshela*”. She /he then passes, the song to other singers before proceeding to the dance floor to dance. According to the tradition belief what the dancers are doing is an ancestral dance, since they do that when they are possessed by the spirits (Motseo, 17 September 2012). Most dancers are not healers because they are chosen by their ancestors to fulfil the calling. They differ from sangomas who use traditional medicines to treat people. The performance cannot be practiced by each and every person because it is directed by a traditional healer who teaches the dance. In the case where the ancestor was a traditional healer the host will also be required to be healer, but if the ancestor was not a healer the host will also not be a healer.

According to the Lobedu tradition, various ritual ceremonies are conducted as a way of talking or praising the ancestors for what they did in life, whether good or bad (Mampeule, 18 August 2012). For the ritual ceremonies to be successful the performers must first receive instructions from the ancestors. Bogopa (2010:3) argues that if a person is sick some of the ritual ceremonies to be performed must be performed by the patient’s relatives to fulfil certain obligations. Bogopa further indicates that ritual ceremonies are performed throughout the life-span of the performer marking different stages of life.

In stage one, a ritual ceremony is conducted when a woman has a new born baby. During this stage, a woman who has been blessed with a new child is expected to live in her hut for a few days so that the family members can perform their ritual ceremonies. However, this practice differs from one society to another. Bogopa, in his thesis, revealed that, according to Xhosa tradition, after ten days when the mother leaves the house a white goat is slaughtered. The mother is expected to eat the meat on the inside of the right front leg. The ritual ceremony is performed, in order to thank the ancestors for protecting the mother and baby from the gestation period to parturition. Pauw (1994:12) assumes that if the ritual ceremony is not performed, the child will continuously wet the bed and will be disobedient.

The second stage is the maturity stage. During this stage a ritual ceremony is conducted when a young boy or girl reaches puberty. The ritual ceremony commences before the youth can go through the initiation process, and it continuous up until after the initiate has graduated from the initiation process (Mateta, 15 September 2012). However, it is assumed that this ceremony is performed with the intention to thank the ancestors for protecting the initiates during the initiation process.

When a person has passed through the above stages she/he is ready to get married. In this case, various ritual ceremonies are conducted from when the parents start to negotiate the bride-price (*lobola*) and end up when the marriage has been finalised. Pauw (1994:12) emphasises that the ritual ceremony, in this regard, is performed with the intention to establish a bond between the two families and also to introduce the couple to the ancestors.

A ritual ceremony is also performed when a person has passed away. Vilakazi (1965:91) says that it is very important to slaughter the animal for the ancestors when someone within the family has passed away. Various stages of mourning ceremonies are outlined in African culture. Firstly, a cow is killed a day before the burial day. Among the Zulu, a second ritual ceremony is performed a week after the burial day. Furthermore, another ritual ceremony is performed a month after the burial. The last ritual ceremony is performed a year after the bereavement, this is associated with the cleansing ceremony.

However, Vilakazi (1965:92) argues that a failure to conduct these ceremonies causes negative effects on the health of the family members. In the Lobedu tradition, if someone has passed away, the mourning ceremony is not performed, the crops in the fields will also be affected. Nel (2011:3) indicates that death is seen as the last initiation that a person has to go

through. This type of initiation is performed by all the creatures on the universe. He further indicates that it is regarded as the final passage of time that goes beyond the old age. However, he points out that according to the Bantu-speaking people, there is a belief that after death, there is another life. However, in this regard the initiation commences when the deceased is welcomed by his/her ancestors into the world of the spirits. Motseo (2012) makes a point that when a person dies, a long farewell is conducted by the family where various rituals are performed. The family of the deceased starts to establish a new relationship with the deceased person by reminding him/her not forget those whom she/he left behind. The initiation process in this regard should be properly conducted to avoid the ancestor's grievances, which can lead to misfortunes or sickness (Mampeule, 18 August 2012).

In his findings Nel (2011:35), revealed that the Balobedu people have their own technique of controlling the natural forces that can cause a disaster over the society. First, he argues that sacred shrines are used to influence the ancestors not to cause harm and sickness to the people who neglect them. The finger millet (*mphapo*) should be poured on the sacred place to talk to the ancestors to restore order in the family, for good harvests, to give young ones blessings, for their success and so on. Second, the rain queen must always be approached with the idea to secure the regularity of seasonal change. All the things that can cause rain not to fall must be properly controlled by following the relevant procedure. For example, if the rain Queen is dead or a woman has miscarried the ritual practices must be properly conducted. This can be done to avoid negative results such as drought, famine, strong wind and so on. Thirdly the sacred drum to be used during the designated drum ritual to control cosmic forces over rain. Lastly, he indicates that traditional medicines are used by traditional healers to control the health and well-being of the society.

2.9 The significance of beer

Research shows that in some traditions beer has religious, social-political and economic significance (Arthur, 2010; Davison, 1985; Farnsworth, 2001; Haaland, 2011; Krige and Krige, 1980; Krige, 1930; Talbort, 1943). The studies mentioned above show that women are mainly responsible for brewing beer. Lombard and Parsons (2003:81) reveal that one of the common practices among the Balobedu people is the offering of beer (*mphapo*) made from finger millet to the ancestors. This observation was also made by Davison (1985:74) who mentions that beer is taken to be the most sacrificial substance ahead of blood in Khelobedu culture. Religious significance of beer is also revealed among the Tsonga people who like the

Lobedu pour beer on the shrine when they talk to the ancestral spirits. The Magars of western Nepal also consider finger millets to be of ritual importance (Haaland, 2011:20). They offer millet beer to the gods before planting and before harvesting and they are prohibited from using any of the harvest before rituals are performed. The findings of the study by Farnsworth (2001:20) also reveal that beer plays a significant role in rituals and in advancing beliefs.

Apart from beer being used as a tool to communicate with the ancestors, beer has a social significance. Krige (1932:342) points out that the beer brewed from maize and sorghum is as integral part of almost every aspect of traditional Lobedu social life. The social significance of beer ranges from its role in marriage ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, funerals and so forth. During customary marriage ceremonies, beer is the most important beverage, and it also serves as a means of goodwill exchanges and reconciliation during family disputes (Davison, 1985: 74). This practice is also shared by the Tiriki people of Kenya who offer beer as a sign of friendship (Sangree, cited in Arthur, 2010:517). Moreover, Tiriki men gather around the beer pots to discuss social issues and to solve disputes (Arthur, 2010:517). The Balobedu people drink beer, in order to entertain themselves more than anything else.

In some societies, including the Lobedu, beer is associated with communal work. In this regard it can be of social or economic significance. In Lobedu a communal working group is called '*Lejema*'. According to Talbort (1943: 138), '*lejema*' is seen as a form of co-operation where a group of people work together. The group consists of more or less a casual group of workers. Krige and Krige (1980:52) stress that the group can be joined by neighbours, friends, relatives or anyone who is interested may join the group and help in the task. Most work to be performed by '*Lejema*' is agricultural in nature and this is usually done during ploughing, harvesting and during the removal of weeds. The connection of beer with communal work was also found among the Iteso of Kenya (Haaland, 2011:11) and the Koma of Cameroon (Arthur, 2010:518).

Working groups become social events which end with beer drinking (Talbort, 1943:138; Davison, 1985:74), but they are also of economic significance as the labourers save a considerable amount of money for the host. Beer plays an important role between kin and neighbours who often co-operate in economic activities.

Furthermore, Davison (1985:75) reveals that in the Khelobedu culture, beer has economic value as a medium of exchange. It can be offered as payment for specialised craftwork such as carving utensils. Some studies found beer to be of political significance (Arthur, 2010:517; Krige & Krige, 1980:288). In the Khelobedu culture, tributary beer is brought to the Queen from various districts. This tradition is similar to the practice of the Haya of Tanzania who use beer to pay tribute to the kings (Arthur, 2010:517). Offering beer to the heads or chiefs strengthened bonds between commoners and leaders (Krige and Krige, 1980:288).

2.10 Summary

The aim of this study is to illustrate how the Khelobedu culture evolved over time. A theoretical framework which will be used to interpret the findings of this was discussed. Cultural theories were used to conceptualise the findings of this study. Within the theories of culture, the following concepts were chosen to underpin the findings of this research: cultural evolution, culture as an adaptive process, the role of preferences in cultural change and the role of socialisation in a cultural context. The theoretical framework used in this chapter demonstrates how the Lobedu practices have evolved.

Culture, as a concept that this study is embedded in, was discussed. The review presented overview of different practices in the Khelobedu culture and compared and contrasted these with both South African and international literature. The dynamics of marriage and related literature were specifically discussed. The concepts discussed included same sex marriages, marriage of relatives, and payment of the bride price and the practice of giving wives as gifts.

The role of a brother's sister was discussed. Literature revealed the unique position held by a Khadi in the Khelobedu culture. Her roles include, among others that of being a priestess, being responsible for the division of her brother's inheritance, and making other important decisions after his death. She also plays the role of a counsellor for her brother's family. It was further revealed that a Khadi enjoys special benefits from her brother's family.

The practice of initiations was discussed. This included initiation schools, female initiations, and male circumcision. The practice of initiations in the Tsonga culture was also brought to light. Other concepts discussed in this literature review include rain-making rituals, religious practices and the significance of beer. The concepts that were discussed in this chapter served

to highlight the extent of culture evolution among the Lobedu. In Chapter 3, the research design and the methodology that direct this study are discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, it was established how a research purpose points to a research question and how the question informs the choice of method. Subsequently, the main focus in this chapter is to give a detailed account of the selected research design an overview of the research design and location of the research. The chapter also discusses how the participants were sampled in such a way as to enhance a systematic flow of the research process. The research objectives and research questions assisted the researcher to come up with the relevant research strategies used for collecting the relevant data. The main aim of this chapter was to present an ethnographic account of the Balobedu through an exposition of their lived experiences as their culture evolves to meet the social needs of the 21st century.

In this chapter, a variety of techniques, instruments and approaches used to collect data are discussed and their significance exposed. The methods used allowed the researcher to investigate, analyse and interpret various dimensions and problems encountered by the Balobedu people. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the research are also discussed in this chapter.

Table 3. 1: Outline of the research methodology and process

Methodological paradigm	Qualitative approach
RESEARCH DESIGN	Ethnographic case study design
DATA COLLECTION	
Data collection techniques	Unstructured in-depth interviews Semi-structured face-to-face interviews, Focus-group discussions Observations Field-notes
SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	
Purposeful sampling	Selection of different age group participants who are capable of sharing their perceptions. Eleven participants among them older participants who were represented by three educators, one village headman who is also an official, other two officials from the royal family and younger participants who were represented by five university students were chosen to participate in the study.

3.2 Methodological paradigm

As mentioned earlier, the research method employed in this study is qualitative in nature and character. The qualitative approach offers an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the participants. The benefit of a qualitative approach in this study is that it enabled the researcher to focus on learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning that it has for them and how they understand it (Merriam & Associates, 2002:4). According to Patton (cited in Merriam and Associates, 2002:5), “qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and interactions there”. The qualitative method is used to explore the meaning of cultural phenomenon as experienced and perceived by participants themselves (Malterud, 2001:483) in their natural environment. In this study, the researcher looked at human events as a whole with the intention of associating individuals’ performances with their cultural context (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:51). The researcher acknowledged that a qualitative research methodology has valuable characteristics as stated by (Merriam & Associates, 2002:4-5).

Firstly, the researcher investigated how the Balobedu construct their identity and how they derive meaning about their world and their lived experiences in the 21st century. In this study, was done by giving an ethnographic account of the Balobedu and the language communities that influence their culture in their sphere of influence. When a study draws its data from an ethnographic method, the questions compiled are generally related to social and cultural processes and shared meanings within that given group of people, in this case, the Balobedu group.

Secondly, the primary instrument of collecting and analysing data enabled the researcher to illustrate and expand the study through verbal and non-verbal communication. When the process of gathering data is inductive, it allows for the building of concepts, and hypothesis rather than deriving postulates deductively. In this study, the researcher used theories to illustrates and understand the cultural phenomenon that unfolded before her, as the researcher travelled in her journey of the inquiry.

Finally, the researcher chose to use descriptive inquiry which involves words and pictures being used to illustrate what the researcher had learned about the phenomenon. The reason for using a variety of qualitative approaches, reviewed in the literature, was to enhance the researcher’s own research. The researcher included data in the form of quotes from

documents, field notes, and participants' interviews to support the findings of the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002:5).

As a qualitative researcher, the researcher studied the participants in their natural setting, while, at the same time, she attempted to make sense and interpret the cultural patterns in terms of the meanings the participants attach to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). The researcher narrated the experiences, stories and voices of the participants, and the aim was not to generalise the findings of the study beyond the Balobedu tribe.

3.3 The research design

The research design is qualitative in nature; hence, a case study is used, in order to draw from an ethnographic account. As an ethnographer, the researcher studied the case in its natural setting. This allowed the researcher to become part of that natural setting. The researcher deployed a range of interconnected methods and strategies, which helped her to have a clear understanding of people's constructions, their thoughts and meanings, beliefs and actions as they occur in their natural environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:407). To answer the research question the researcher used data collection strategies used in ethnographic design and combined them with those used in case study research design. Furthermore, the researcher captured the experiences of cultural evolution within the Lobedu tribe as experienced and perceived by the people themselves. The researcher was cognisant of the fact that using a case study design alone would not be enough due to the fact that the researcher could not participate and observe at the same time, thus, combining both methods was ideal. In this qualitative ethnographic case study, the researcher personally spent a long time on site and came into contact with individuals, activities and operations of the case with the intention of reflecting the meanings of what was taking place in the Lobedu tribe (Stake, 2005:450).

Ethnographers pay more attention to the study of culture. In this study the Khelobedu culture was studied in detail. The researcher appreciated society through participants' observations by immersing herself in the day-to-day lives of the people. She observed and interviewed the targeted group.

An ethnographer ought to go out to the field to study the meaning of behaviour, language and the interaction among members of a group sharing a culture (Creswell, 2007:70). The researcher visited selected villages where individuals from different cultural backgrounds resided together. The aim was to find out how they dealt with the issue of being in close contact to one another.

The researcher's choice of an ethnographic study was influenced by the fact that the approach would give voice to the participants as they are the ones who are affected by the consequences of cultural change. The ethnographic study reveals how a cultural group works and explores the beliefs, language, behaviours, and issues that affect them as human beings (Creswell, 2007:70).

The strategic inquiry used in this research process allowed the researcher to select relevant approaches and methods to be used to collect and analyse researched data. In this study, the researcher relied mainly on observing and interviewing as primary methodological approaches. This allowed the researcher to stay in the field to review how individuals perform their daily activities. The researcher stayed on the field for a prolonged period of time and observed events performed by the participants on a daily regular basis. The researcher managed to combine observations with asking non-obtrusive questions, a major technique in ethnographic research (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

In this study, first preference was given to the accounts of the participants and their understanding of cultural phenomenon. The views and voices of a number of participants were analysed in depth, and there formed the main findings of this research. The researcher paid attention to the individuals' experiences and perceptions of evolution, but did not attempt to generalise the findings.

The researcher believes that the findings, recommendations and conclusions can be transferable to other settings, which are similar to the one where the research was conducted. Finch (1986:25), in his argument, acknowledges that ethnography is the best approach that can be used to identify and compare the lived experiences of the participants. The experiences and knowledge of the participants in the Lobedu area served the main purpose for ethnographic data collection methods because the researcher stayed in the field for a specified period to observe the participants' actions. The researcher relied on the ethnographic data

collection method and case study to find out the intended and the unintended results of changes accepted by the Balobedu people.

The researcher did not use the traditional ethnographic approach which requires a researcher to be unfamiliar with the culture under study. The researcher is part of the Balobedu tribe. Therefore, the purpose of the study was not to discover cultural patterns of the Balobedu tribe. However, in this study, the researcher intended to get an understanding of how the culture of the Balobedu tribe has evolved over time. The researcher specifically focused on the changing cultural processes and trends. In addition, the researcher studied the broader core values, cultural themes and, most importantly, widespread patterns and processes of cultural adaptation (Wiredu, 1997:15).

3.4 The data collection techniques

Research is defined as a process of collecting and logically analysing data with the intention of achieving some purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:8). The data for this study were collected through interviews and archival searches. The research tools employed in this study include, among others, observations, interviews and document analysis. In addition, other data collection techniques used were the semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews. The reason for employing the three techniques is that the researcher wanted to observe and interrogate happenings in people's lives. Different techniques were used "to provide verbal descriptions with the intention of capturing the richness and complexity of behaviour that occurs in natural settings from the participants' perspective" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:43).

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are important tools used in a research process as they mark an interchange of views between two or more people on a research topic of interest which enable the participants to make interpretations about the world in which they live (Cohen *et. al*, 2000:15). They are important in situations where we cannot observe behaviour or when we do not know how participants experience their world.

Interviews were conducted in person with those participants who were geographically accessible. Interviewees allowed the researchers to obtain important information that they cannot obtain from observation alone (Best & Kahn, 1993:198-199). They are therefore, regarded as a purposeful interaction through which the researcher finds information from the participants. In this study, an agreement was made with the participants about the exact time to conduct interviews. The interviews were scheduled during times that were mutually convenient. The majority of interviews conducted were person-to-person interviews.

3.4.1.1 Unstructured in-depth interviews

Unstructured in-depth interviews allowed for the utilisation of informal conversations during the interviews. In this regard, the researcher was able to ask questions the researcher had not thought of in advance (Berg, 2003:170). The researcher used unstructured interviews, during the course of the study, to expand field observations. In this study, the researcher was equipped with the necessary skill to gain additional information about different phenomena the researcher had observed through asking questions. The data obtained from the interviews consists of direct quotations revealing participants' opinions, knowledge, perceptions and their experiences (Best & Kahn, 1993:184). The unstructured interviews "became useful in the situation where the researcher did not have access to the participants' life styles, religious or ethnic cultures or customs, and similar attributes"(Berg, 2003:170). To supplement the interviews informal discussions were held with various people.

This simply means that questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked in the natural course of things (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, and 2000:271). In this regard the questions were open ended. Creswell (2007:225) attests that open ended questions enable the participants to voice their experiences unconstrained by previous research findings or the perspective of the researcher. Open-ended interviews contain a pre-established set of questions to be asked to each individual with the intention to find out a common knowledge and perceptions about cultural phenomenon. The researcher probed the participants more information.

3.4.1.2 Semi-structured face-to-face interviews

In this study, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. A number of predetermined questions were implemented. The questions were formulated in such a way that the respondents would fully understand and demonstrate their knowledge of the topic (Berg, 2003:170). Each individual was asked questions in a systematic order. The researcher was permitted to probe beyond the answers for the prepared and standardised questions. In this regard, the researcher was given freedom to deviate from the main subject to talk about anything else which was related to the topic. The researcher, therefore, accomplished interviews through unscheduled probes that arose from the interview process itself. Semi-structured interviews allowed for probing and clarification of answers (Niewenhuis, 2007:87).

During the interviews the questions and the responses were audiotaped. This helped the researcher to get an accurate record of the conversations. Apart from that, the researcher also took brief notes which were recorded following the interview protocols. The semi-structured interviews allowed for generated data to be used to compare and obtain common issues, and the experiences of participants could also be coded and themes identified for data analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used as one of the primary data collection instruments in order to cross check the researcher's observations, field-notes and journal reflections.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted during the study. These allowed the researcher to ask questions and record answers from only one participant in the study at a time. In this study, participants were asked questions about the Khelobedu social life. They were asked to provide their knowledge and perceptions of the Khelobedu culture. The participants were asked about the changes that had occurred when modern life interrupted their daily practices.

Although it is demanding and time consuming to conduct this type of interview, it allowed the researcher to interview participants who were not hesitant to speak and were articulate and ready to share ideas comfortably (Creswell, 2007:226). The conversational interview questions allowed the researcher the freedom to pursue emerging ideas. These questions helped the researcher to triangulate her methods because they confirmed facts not covered with other interviewees.

All face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded. Different waves of formal face-to-face semi-structured interviews were planned. The interviews were conducted with community

members who included teachers, officials in the royal family, village headman, students and learners. Interviews were scheduled for approximately 60 minutes for each person.

First wave of interviews: In this study, the researcher first conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with three teachers. The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the three teachers, one at a time. The interviews were held at the school, during their spare time. The three participants were chosen because they were knowledgeable with the day to day running of the royal family. Five university students were also sampled to offer a youthful perspective on the research topic.

Second wave of interviews: Focus group semi-structured interviews were used in this research project with the intention to involve more participants in the study and to allow for a variety of perspectives. The researcher chose this method to gather the views of participants on the cultural experiences and information from those she interacted with on a daily basis. This type of interview provided the researcher with the opportunity to collect information from a group of participants who were reluctant to give information in one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2007:132). The researcher chose to conduct focus group interviews with a group of learners. This type of interview is advantageous when the interaction among interviewees yields the best information and when the interviewees are similar and cooperate with each other. The researcher managed to encourage and monitor individuals who dominated the conversation (Creswell, 2007:134). All individuals were encouraged to participate and share their knowledge. They were also urged to talk in detail about areas of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:43). In cases where the audio-recording did not work, the researcher recorded information using the interview protocol. The researcher audiotaped interviews and transcribed them verbatim.

3.4.1.3 Challenges of focus- group-semi-structured interview

Possible challenges facing this method of data collection are as follows: First, some participants may disagree and it could result in an argument which the researcher cannot control. Second, when focus groups are audiotaped, the transcriptionist may have difficulty in distinguishing between the voices of individuals in the group. Third, it becomes difficult for the researcher to take notes because so much is being said during the process (Creswell, 2007:227).

The researcher acknowledges that, in this study, the historical significance of these interviews made it imperative that they be digitally recorded; therefore all the expectations were met. The participants' responses were very positive because they all agreed to have their interviews recorded and archived.

3.4.2 Observations

The researcher used observations to collect data. Observations represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest (Merriam and Associates, 2002:13). The researcher included both descriptive and reflective notes with the intention of capturing relevant data related to observations (Creswell, 2007:134). The researcher documented informal conversation as field notes, and these were later used as a source of analysing data. Informed by the constructivist's paradigm, the researcher used unstructured observations which enabled her to arrive in a particular setting to witness the importance of context and the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the researched (Mulhall, 2003:306).

In using unstructured observations, the researcher adopted for the role of being a reactive observer (Angrosino, 2005:737). It allowed the researcher to go into the field and observe the performance before the researcher could take any decision on its benefit for the research (Cohen et al, 2000:305). As a qualitative researcher, the researcher was prepared to observe and record on going behaviour of the participants without changing a thing (McBurney, 1994:169).

The researcher acknowledges that in preparation for the commencement of data collection, the researcher knew in advance about what she wanted to observe (Morrison, 1993:80). This assisted the researcher to compare one situation with another, and it was more efficient to go into a situation with an already designed schedule. In this study, the researcher utilised field observational methods to prove whether the participants as they claim they do. The researcher explored an observational protocol which offered her opportunity to record notes in the field (Creswell, 2007:134). This technique afforded the opportunity to record information as events occurred in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007:223). It helped her to study actual behaviour of individuals who find it difficult to verbalise their ideas (Creswell, 2007:222). During observations, the researcher gathered first hand open-ended information by observing the people and places at the research site (Creswell, 2007:223).

The researcher conducted observations during traditional and modern ceremonies. This helped the researcher to observe certain patterns of behaviour and interactions. The observational data used offered the researcher the opportunity to enter and understand the situation that was being described.

3.4.3 Field-notes

Field notes and a video recorder were used to record the observed events. The researcher noted the discussions in field notes so that she could later review what was said. The notes taken during the process constituted detailed written descriptions and interpretations of the events by the researcher (McMillan, 2000:260). The combined data was used to augment notes taken in the interview.

In this study, field-notes (Berg, 2003:198) were completed immediately following every excursion into the field and every-time when the researcher came into contact with participants outside of the boundaries of the research site. Creswell (2002:224), in his explanation, defines “field-notes as texts (words) recorded by the researcher during an observation in qualitative study”. In their roughest form, field-notes are handwritten and, often diary entry-like.

As a qualitative researcher, the researcher therefore transcribed and typed field-notes at the end of each session, a process often as lengthy as the observations they represent. The researcher had to expand the field-notes after each field session. Field-notes were used to describe the physical setting of the research site, knowledge and views of the participants throughout the research process. This helped the researcher to probe for further answers and also to have backup if the audiotape malfunctioned. The use of a voice recorder added to data accuracy because each transcription from voice to written script contained a word-to-word correspondence with what the participant has said and what was noted down.

In this study, the main focus was to “reflect on the complexity of human interaction by portraying in words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to the other” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:202). In this regard materials from data collection were then classified, compared, weighed and combined to extract the

meaning and implications of events and organise them into a coherent narrative (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:201).

This study is situated within a qualitative paradigm which entrenches the concept that the form of data captured, is ultimately in the form of text. The researcher started by transcribing the audio taped data and she then read the transcribed data several times so that she would be able to understand and interpret what the interviewees were saying. Since some of the participants spoke in Xhosa, the data was translated to English and edited for readability. The researcher completed multiple viewings of the video recorded interviews and listened to the available audio recordings. The researcher listened several times to the audio tape and typed what the interviewees said (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:203). Transcribing the interviews forced the researcher to pay attention to what the interviewees said and helped to prepare for the next interview session.

After completing the transcription, the researcher wrote the summary of the contents of interviews. Notes and memos were written to highlight interesting portions and to document external situations that may not be apparent in the transcripts. At this point the data was analysed by systematically organising it and probing into the information that had been gathered in the form of transcripts of interviews, field-notes and other documents. In the final analysis, data sources for analysis included interview transcripts, digital video, the research diary and field-notes. These forms of data formed part of a procedure involving the simultaneous and sequential collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2002:449).

3.5 Sampling

Table 3.2 Diversity within the sampled participants

Participant	Occupation	Age
1	official in the royal family	69
2	Official in the royal family	63
3	Village headman & official in the royal family	75
4	Educator	53
5	Educator	46
6	Educator	30
7	University student	30
8	University student	24
9	University student	24
10	University student	23
11	University student	21
12	Focus group 13 Grade 12 learners were sampled	18-20

In this research project, purposive sampling was utilised. The reason behind the choice of this sampling method is that the researcher did not want to generalise the results of the study to the wider population. According to Merriam and Associates (2002:12), sampling in a qualitative approach is used to select individuals from whom the most can be learnt. Since the purpose of this study is to identify the causes and impacts of cultural change in the Lobedu tribe, the researcher used purposive sampling which allowed only critical participants to be selected.

Only older and younger participants who were capable of giving rich information and could answer the research questions were sampled for the research (Morrison, 1993: 112-117). Older participants who were represented by educators, the village headman, officials from the royal family, and younger participants who were represented by university students, were chosen to participate voluntarily for the first phase. Selected sampled high school students were invited to participate voluntarily in the focus group interviews during their spare time in order to avoid interfering with their studies. Khelobedu and the English language were used

to enable all participants to express themselves freely. Their voluntarily participation allowed the researcher to use a voice recorder during the interviews.

The participants were selected because they are part of the Khelobedu cultural group which shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language. The selection of participants within a qualitative ethnographic study is commonly purposive as the event is explained by those who have experienced the incident. This enabled the researcher to draw conclusions from the sample about the population as a whole. The researcher used purposive sampling in order to select the site which and individuals who will help her to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007:214). The standard used by the researcher to choose participants and the site was determined by whether they were knowledgeable or not (Patton, 1990 in Creswell, 2007:214). The participants' willingness to share, and their ability to gain and facilitate access to others also played a role in their selection (Creswell, 2007:151).

3.6 Ethical considerations

Researchers have the responsibility to preserve the dignity of the participants and to consider the effect that the study will have on them by observing certain ethical principles (Cohen et al., 2007:58). Ethics are therefore, defined as a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others and the respect for human dignity (Cavan, cited in Cohen et al., 2007:58). In a qualitative research, researchers should maintain an ethical balance to promote intellectual freedom and make a contribution to the knowledge of the participants without causing any trouble to the participants during the process (Deventer, 2007:47).

Cohen et al. (2007:382) state that interviews have an ethical dimension which concerns interpersonal interaction, and they produce information about the human condition. In this research project, the researcher utilised ethical considerations and professional codes of conduct with the intention to guide the design process and to avoid potential harm that is avoidable (Deventer, 2007:47). Guillemin and Gillam (2004:263) add that in qualitative research that involves people, the first thing to do during the research process is to complete the application form for a research ethics committee. Throughout the study, the researcher took care of the following ethical considerations:

3.6.1 Informed consent

The researcher has the responsibility to inform participants in a research study that they are part of the study (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The researcher obtained written informed consent from the research participants. Diener and Crandal (cited in Cohen et al., 2007:52) define informed consent as the procedure in which participants have a right to choose whether to participate in a research project or not after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions. Participants are also notified of the right to withdraw even when the process has begun. They further indicate that informed consent involves the following four elements: First, there should be competence among the participants who should be mature enough to make correct decisions and provide the researcher with relevant information. Second, volunteers should only participate in the research project after being informed about the risks involved. Third, full participation implies that consent is fully informed, though in practice it is often impossible to inform subjects on everything. Fourth, participants should fully comprehend the nature of the research project even when procedures are complicated and entail risks.

Nachmias and Nachmias cited in Cohen et al., (2007:52) argue that informed consent will be meaningful to participants if they are exposed to any stress pain and invasion of privacy. However, in this study, the researcher did not anticipate any harm or injury. Participants were informed that if anything went wrong in the research, their rights of self-determination would be respected and protected by the consent (Cohen et al., 2007:52; Deventer, 2007:47). The researcher gave participants information about the study and the details of the study in case they encountered any stressful situations during the process (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Participants were told that the results of the study would be brought to their attention prior to the submission of the dissertation. Participants were required to sign a statement indicating that they are aware of the conditions of the study, and that they chose to participate anyway. They were also informed that the researcher intends to use a voice recorder during the study and, furthermore, it was indicated to them that they had a right to refuse to be recorded. In addition to that, the researcher sought written consent from them so as to eliminate all unobtrusive field observations and informal observations.

3.6.2 Confidentiality and the right to privacy

In this study, the researcher had an obligation to protect participants and their wellbeing by not revealing their identities (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Information given by the participants should in no way, reveal their identity. They were to remain confidential so that the reader could not identify them through the information provided.

Confidentiality entails that the researcher can identify a given person, but essentially promises not to do so publicly. In this research, participants were informed about the meaning and limits of confidentiality in relation to the project (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:65). The guarantees of confidentiality lay upon the power of the researcher and were carried out in spirit and letter. Kimmel (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007:65) argues that if the assurance of confidentiality is weak on sensitive topics, participants will refuse to give information. He further reveals that the usefulness of data may be influenced by the researchers' inability to provide a credible promise of confidentiality, especially on sensitive topic.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the study

Qualitative researchers have an obligation to ensure the quality of their studies. According to Freeman, de Marrais, Preissle, Roulston and Pierre (2007:28) quality in qualitative studies takes into consideration the decisions made by researchers as they interact with the study participants, and as they consider their data analyses, interpretation and presentation. In this study, the researcher took care of four principles used to evaluate trustworthiness of the study (see Lincoln & Guba, 2007). The four principles are: confirmability, transferability, credibility and dependability.

3.7.1 Confirmability

The main technique that the researcher used to establish confirmability is the audit trail. The researcher gave a detailed description of the research process which was recorded through the utilisation of the research journal. Keeping a research journal helped the researcher to document all activities that took place during data collection, and also helped to record data analysis clearly (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 128).

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability can best be achieved by giving rich and thick descriptions. According to Merriam (2009:233) a researcher should “provide enough descriptions to conceptualise the study such that the reader will be able to determine the extent to which their situation match the research context”. In this study, the researcher described the context, the participants and the themes developed so that judgement of the extent of correspondence or similarity may be made by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2007:19).

3.7.3 Credibility

To enhance credibility of the study, the researcher applied the technique of prolonged engagement in the field. According to Creswell and Miller (2000:128), “being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and hunches and compare interview data with observation data”. The researcher also used triangulation, which allowed her to use multiple methods of data collection, namely semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, unstructured in-depth interviews and observations. Moreover, the researcher applied peer debriefing where the research supervisor who is knowledgeable about this field of research provided professional support and feedback. The researcher further conducted member checking. This involved the researcher taking the transcribed interviews and the interpretations, thereof, to the participants for them to verify and add or remove information.

3.7.4 Dependability

Graneheim and Lundman (2003:110) argue that dependability takes into account “both the degree to which data change over time and alterations made in the researcher’s decisions during the analysis process”. These alterations of methods and account of the research process were recorded through the use of the audit trail, which also took into account clear indications of procedural steps (Jasper, 2005:256). The researcher’s supervisor also conducted a thorough check of how the study was conducted and documented. The researcher also tape recorded all the interviews for accuracy.

3.8 Limitations encountered during the research

There are a number of limitations that the researcher encountered while carrying out the research. As an outsider, the researcher was denied access to the royal kraal during the ritual ceremonies. The researcher could only interview a handful of participants, who had their own personal perspectives on cultural issues. Therefore, their views do not represent the views of the Bolobedu population in general.

Some of the participants were too young to give information about the activities which had occurred in the past. Participants who had never attended initiation schools could not give adequate information regarding the activities that were carried out at the initiation schools. Due to these limitations, the researcher did not manage to fully achieve her objectives.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher outlined and explained the reasons for choosing the social-constructivist meta-theoretical paradigm. The researcher further discussed the epistemological and methodological paradigms used to support the investigation. As a qualitative researcher, the researcher chose the qualitative case study which enabled her to select individuals who were willing to participate. The qualitative case study also helped her to design data collection instruments, collect and analyse data with the intention to reach maximum expectations and also to understand how and why the selected participants at the selected research site responded positively to participating in the research process. In this study, the researcher also explained how the selected research samples and instruments used in the data collection and data analysis exercise allowed her to come up with conclusions based on what the participants had said. Furthermore, the quality of the study was ensured by exploring the trustworthiness criteria common in a qualitative approach.

In the next chapter, the findings of the study are discussed and summarised.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study derived from semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The main objective of the study was to determine the scope of change in Khelobedu culture. The study was qualitative in nature. Therefore, content analysis was used as the main method of data analysis. The themes that developed during the analysis of the findings are as follows:

- Phase 1: Semistructured interviews
 - Theme 1: The discourse of culture
 - Theme 2: Celebrations
 - Theme 3: Marriage
 - Theme 4: Initiations
 - Theme 5: The role of khadi
 - Theme 6: Rituals

- Phase 2: Focus group interviews
 - Theme 1: Young people’s perceptions of the concept “culture”
 - Theme 2: The paradox behind the institution of marriage
 - Theme 3: Initiations
 - Theme 4: Rituals
 - Theme 5: The role of khadi
 - Theme 6: Politics

The themes developed during the data analysis addressed the main purpose of this study, which was to understand how the culture of the Balobedu people changed with time.

4.2 Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews

4.2.1 Theme 1: The discourse of culture

The theme, and its categories and its sub-categories are listed in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: The discourse of culture

Theme	Categories and sub-categories
1. The discourse of culture	1.1: Reminiscence of the cultural bygones
	1.2: A culture stained by contemporary fragilities 1.2.1 The influence of Christianity 1.2.2 The influence of western culture 1.2.3 Contact with other indigenous cultures 1.2.4 Politics
	1.3 Valued traits in the Khelobedu culture 1.3.1 Sanctuaries of cultural prudence 1.3.2 Language

Category 1.1: Reminiscent of the cultural bygones

Some of the participants in this study recalled what used to be common practices among the Balobedu people. As they presented narratives of their cultural past, it was evident that there was distinctiveness in their morals, religion, materials and so forth. One of the older participants had this to say:

The Lobedu culture was exclusive. They had their own wealth and fertile land, and did not want to accommodate outsiders. The area was rich and fertile and the weather was good.

The participant further revealed distinctive features peculiar to the Balobedu people:

They were self-sufficient. Rain making rituals, women leadership, the language is neither Venda nor Sotho, change of dynasty from men to women, hardly involved in a war, Tsongas served as their barrier to protect them against war nor they came all the way from Zimbabwe. Their culture was not pressurised by any other tribes.

Some participants also gave testimonies of the experiences from their cultural past and they focused on various practices, including behavioural traits, pertaining to gender relations. They also hinted on the current changes in such behaviours. For instance, the older participants revealed how women behaviour changed. One participant had this to say:

Women would not greet men by shaking hand. Women would not sit on chairs but now they do... Polygamy superseded monogamy.

The Lobedu were more influential. Their style of living has totally changed due to contact with other cultures. Their attire has changed and ladies wear trousers and this was totally forbidden in the history of the Balobedu people.

Another fascinating element distinct to the Khelobedu culture is their way of worship. One of the older participants with ties to the royal family described the dynamics of traditional

worship among the Lobedu tribe. Worship included the use of sacred cows as epitomes of their ancestors.

Yes, even today when we worship we call upon our ancestors. All our cows are named after our ancestors i.e. we have a cow named Makobo which is the name of one of our ancestors. When we address those cows, we address them as if we are addressing our ancestors. When we make ceremonies the cows have to be present as a symbol of our connection to the ancestors. When rain comes after the occasion, we believe it is because our ancestors have answered our prayers.

Another participant explained how and when traditional worship was organised:

Traditional worship is arranged when a family member's life is affected by bad luck, illness etc. Traditional beer is brewed; a male goat is slaughtered for the ceremony. A dance 'malopo' peculiar to the occasion is danced. A traditional healer would have thrown bones, checked with Gods how the occasion will be. The eldest sister (khadi) would take traditional beer in a calabash to a built mound. She would crawl on her knees to reach the mound, sip traditional beer and splash it on the mound, calling names of the ancestors in their chronological order, telling them all those things that are not orderly and asking them not to turn their backs on those still living. The beer that is splashed is for them to drink too. After such oration, she will crawl back to other members.

There is also the impression among the younger generation that the use of animals in traditional worship is tantamount to animal abuse. It is important to acknowledge that this view might have come as a result of modernisation. Use of animals in worship was a norm among the Balobedu people in the past.

Animals that are given human names as their ancestral figures are deprived of their animalistic appeal? They positively identify with given names when called which is good for any pet owner but the unpleasant part is when they are given beer to drink, which I guess would leave them drunk and this equals to abuse.

As the older participants continue to fondly remember their cultural past, they reveal what happened during different ceremonial events.

In the past, there was a ceremony of happiness, and during this ceremony cows were slaughtered and special traditional beer was brewed to enhance the occasion. Another ceremony was the moaning ceremony. For example, when the area was affected by drought, all village headmen were informed about the arrangement. During the process they sang traditional songs, while informing their ancestors about their grievances. One other ceremony was conducted by khadi on behalf of her brother's children when they were seeking for jobs, or for good luck, if they were facing misfortune etc. Various ceremonies were performed as thanksgiving.

...in the past the Balobedu people conducted ritual ceremonies to praise their ancestors. There was a month chosen every year to talk to the ancestors. All relatives

were invited to the ceremony. Women were given a task to brew beer to be used during the ceremony. Every family in the clan contributed to make the ceremony successful. Old men gathered in the royal kraal to discuss the negative things that had happened in clan so that they could inform their ancestors. The traditional healer was approached to show them how to perform their ceremony properly, and he also advised them about who should perform the rituals. Before the ceremony could start, the khadi who was chosen to conduct rituals should abstain from sexual intercourse. After contacting all the stakeholders they commenced, with their ceremony which was accompanied by drinking, eating and dancing.

The views of the older participants showed that modernity had corrupted the khelobedu traditions and this provoked lamentations from the older participants as they yearn for their cultural bygoners. Consider the following views:

Modernity corrupted the humanity of the people and there is no respect at all. In the past, women used to kneel down when talking and giving their in laws food. Nowadays children do not show any respect to their elders. Because of the standard of education and civilization many people are attached to the new environment. That issue of contact with relatives disappeared and there is no time of socialising. Young generations undermine each other and pride also plays a big role in the lives of the people. When you visit your relatives, you need to inform them first.

This sentiment is further expanded by the following encompassing narrative:

Although people were ordered to abandon their culture, they were very defensive and did not allow their culture to be totally destroyed. In the past old people were buried after 12 noon and young children before 12 noon, but now all the funerals in the community are conducted early in the morning. The dead were buried at the family's home, but these days people are buried in common cemeteries. In the past the dead were wrapped with the skin of a cow when they were buried, but today coffins are used. People occupying high positions have become selfish and no longer do things for the benefit of anyone but themselves. The role of royal leadership has shrunk and has been taken over by the queen's children. Group Areas Act has changed the way Balobedu people group themselves. When a young person got employed, the first salary was given to the parents so that they could inform the ancestors about the young person's success. These days parents do not even know their children's salaries.

In this section, the older participants presented their narratives of what happened in the cultural past of the Balobedu people. During the interviews they also revealed their perceptions of how this observed changes affected certain practices. The theme that follows highlights the factors that affected and led to the change in character of the Lobedu traditions.

Category 1.2: *Khelobedu: A culture tarnished by contemporary fragilities*

Almost all the participants agreed that the Khelobedu culture had been influenced by external factors. These include intercultural contact, which included other South African indigenous cultures and western cultures, Christianity, politics and so forth. The acknowledgement of loss of originality by the culture under study comes out as an expression of grief from one of the participants.

It affects me negatively because we have lost our sense of tradition. In the past, we were loyal to our culture and were ready to defend it, but today we have lost that trait. Some people are ashamed of speaking their language and we do not dress like our grandparents. People who earn high salaries have migrated to townships. Parents send their children to model C Schools. You cannot sustain your culture when you support other culture.

I would say we are losing our norms and values. Our culture is disappearing; we are losing it because most of the things today are no longer being practiced in line with the Balobedu culture.

I think people nowadays have turned away or they have forsaken their culture ...to me we are lost, we are a lost generation.

There is evidence that people are drifting away from the culture and this is also acknowledged by young participants. Moreover, some of the younger participants indicated that they are not proud of the fact that they are neglecting khelobedu. However, they believe that it is because of the context in which they are growing up which makes them to adapt to other cultures. The participants expressed their views as follows:

I think it is because of uhm, maybe it is the environment in which we are living in... only to find that you are becoming interested in other people's cultures... I can't feel proud of following other people's culture.

Contact with the outsiders has affected the Balobedu people because... people would want to copy... or would want to imitate others. In cases where they see things that are different from what they have been doing, they try to assess and in that case or in that assessment... some would be absorbed by the activities... and gradually people would be moving away from the Khelobedu practices to the new practices they see coming in.

This theme presents some of the contemporary factors that are behind the change in attitudes and practices of the Balobedu people. The sub-section below discusses how Christianity has led to the adoption of new practices.

Sub-category 1.2.1 The influence of Christianity towards Balobedu traditional culture

The interference of Christianity dates back to the missionary period. The dominant view among the participants is that Christianity played a major role in the evolution of the Khelobedu culture. It was also noted that western civilisation became ingrained among the Balobedu people through Christianity. However, the change was not instant as some people continued to resist the imposed transformation.

In the Lobedu tradition, religion was a system of communicating beyond the physical. When the missionaries came, the change was very slow. Not everybody was affected by the changes. Some people have changed from traditional religion to the western religion... the Balobedu people were more influenced by their religion and in this regard they resisted the religion of the church. The missionaries recruited other tribes like the Shangaans to convert the Balobedu into Christianity. The powerful people of the tribe did not become converts. Only educated people and people who worked in the cities were converted. Some of the missionaries were banished from the community because they were contributing to the disappearance of the culture.

The findings reveal that those who hold Christian beliefs view the indigenous ways of worship as heathenistic and primitive.

Christianity brought a divided attention to the way Balobedu people worshiped. All forms of worship among the Balobedu people were tantamount to heathen. Christianity, though a good form of religion to converts, has sown a seed of inferiority complex in non-followers.

Yes, the religion has... it is has an influence in the Khelobedu culture in that the coming in of Christianity has caused the Balobedu people to undermine their practices in that whatever they were doing as part of their religious beliefs. It was characterised or was seen as being heathen... then those ceremonies they were conducting then are no longer conducted fully because when one uhm... when time has arrived for them to conduct them Christians regard them as being heathen and then we end up having a tribe that has mixed feelings; then one would support uhm... Christianity while others would support the traditional religious practices...

The resilience of Khelobedu as a culture has led to some members of the Balobedu tribe being torn between conforming to Christian values and loyalty to ancestral worship. Some of them find themselves practicing two religions because, on one hand, they want to be seen as part of the new dispensation, while on the other hand, they are still embedded in the strong ties of their cultural religion.

There are those who still cling to the Lobedu worship, so Christianity has not totally changed the way Balobedu people worship their ancestors. Christianity has brought

conflict among the Balobedu and because of this, some members of the tribe both Christianity and the traditional Khelobedu religion.

Some of the people who joined the church still practice Lobedu rituals.

The influence of Christianity was also observed in the royal family. Some participants are of the opinion that even the queen of the Balobedu people could not avoid being changed by Christianity.

After the missionaries came, the Zionist church emerged. A lot of people left the Lutheran church and the traditional practices to join the Zionist church. Queen Modjadji V converted and became a Zionist. She stopped wearing the traditional attire in favour of the Zionist uniform. This is against the rules of the culture. The church banned its members from attending traditional ceremonies. Mourning attire has been banned by some churches.

The participants contrasted the way the Christians communicated with God and the way the Balobedu's worshipped their ancestors. The major issue raised by both the older and younger participants was that Christianity is a monotheistic religion, which advances the existence of one God, whereas the Balobedu people were polytheists, as they believed in many gods, that is their different ancestors. This divergence of views concurs with the argument put forward by Huntington (1993:25) that people of different cultures differ in the way they interact with God. Although the older generation does not deny the existence of the sovereign God, they contest the idea communicating with Him through Jesus Christ. They believe that their ancestors should play a mediating role between them and God.

...but I think we can only talk to God through our ancestors. There is a slogan that states that "Modimo le badimo" (God and gods), which means that they work together. We cannot communicate with the spirit world and we need the ancestors to talk to God for us. When they tell me that I am a heathen, I ask them what difference there is between Jesus and our ancestors, because they were all born of a woman and died and got buried.

The younger participants said that they doubted the existence and the power of the ancestors in protecting and offering them what they believed Jesus Christ could do for them. It became apparent in their responses that their indigenous ways of worship were considered inferior as compared to Christianity.

After the introduction of Christianity most of the Balobedu people were no longer interested in worshipping goats and cows. They no longer visited traditional healers and sangomas. They believed in God for their healing.

Yes, I feel proud because uhm some of these uhm... uhm... what we call... like what we do in our culture like 'amadlozi' (Zulu name for ancestors) I cannot prove that they work and we can sometimes through... they want this and that, some of these things we cannot prove them. This is what I think about that.

Western culture has influenced my life in terms of religion uhm... because I no longer follow ancestral worship but I am a Christian... I will repeat that... I have turned to Christianity rather than worshipping ancestors, uhm... ja.

All the younger participants upheld the benefits of Christianity. The value of respect, faithfulness, praying for others and love, were seen to be constant to their religion. The emancipation of women was also seen as a virtue of Christianity. It is important to acknowledge that in the Khelobedu religion, submissiveness was seen as a desirable quality for Lobedu women.

...has influenced me as a young woman who is a Lobedu because now in the Balobedu tribe, a Molobedu girl cannot stand in front of the people and address people about different things. But in Christianity we can now... we have those programs where girls can just talk, you can talk whatever you want, and you can say your thoughts, and then we can build our society.

The church brings peace to the community. It emphasises the issue that we should love one another as God loves us. So it brings love and peace to the community.

For the younger participants, Christianity influences how they view sexuality and marriage. In the indigenous culture of Khelobedu polygamy was promoted and accepted. The younger generation is turning away from it because it is against their Christian beliefs. The participants revealed that some people now delay their engagement in sexual intercourse as Christianity prohibits them from engaging in sexual relationships before marriage.

Some participants, in this study, revealed that there are members of their tribe who are still faithful to the Lobedu way of worship:

The ancestors play a role in the lives of those people who believe in them. But for those who do not believe in the ancestors, they do not play a role. Those who believe in the ancestors know even the names of their forefathers and their lineage up to the present generation, and together with their children, they worship those ancestors.

No, it does not because in our traditional worship, there is no restriction on what to eat. In our tradition we drink. I eat what I want, I live my own life, and I continue to be myself but... I still respect my culture and its rules.

This section revealed that Christianity changed the perceptions of most of the Balobedu people especially the younger generation towards their culture. This was evident in how the younger generation viewed sexuality, marriage, attire and so forth. It was also revealed some people viewed traditional practices as heathen, unfounded, and primitive. However, it was also found that some people remained loyal to their indigenous forms of worship, whereas others opted to serve both Christianity and ancestral worship. The sub-theme that follows discusses the influence of westernisation on Khelobedu culture.

Sub-category 1.2.2 The influence of western culture on Balobedu culture

Some researchers report that there is a decline in traditional values of Balobedu people due to modernisation. Inglehart and Baker (2000:20) concur with the latter statement and contend that the traditional values of Balobedu will be replaced by modern values. This shows that culture is dynamic and changes with time. In an attempt to learn about modern values, people in developing countries look towards the countries of the West to provide necessary values. The result is that their cultural identities are influenced by the modern trends of the 21st century (Bond & King, 1986:351). Accordingly, this sub-section attempts to understand the views of the participants on how westernisation influenced the culture of the Balobedu people. All the participants agreed that western culture has impacted their way of doing things.

The encroachment of the western culture has made a dent in the Lobedu culture. There is emulation in hair styles, dress code and language. Almost all the Lobedu fundamentals are dwindling. The impact of the influences of the western way is that it wears the Lobedu culture... the Lobedu culture is gradually withering in the sense that one becomes a misfit in his own culture and in the culture he/she is trying to emulate.

For the older participants, westernisation is characterised by more negative effects than positives. This is how one of them illustrated how westernisation has influenced their way of living:

Our culture is not exactly the same because the western culture is here with us. It has penetrated our culture and, as a result, some of our traditional customs are being destroyed. Our children do not show any interest in our culture. They do not avail themselves when ceremonies take place in their villages and they think that these ceremonies are outdated. They do not take their culture seriously. They have adopted the western life and now undermine their culture.

The perception presented above is supported by the responses of the younger participants:

Uhm I think western culture has completely changed our culture. We have lost our values and norms. Nowadays, we do not respect older people; we just talk as if we are of the same age. We do not respect them. We do not respect our culture and so on.

Western culture influenced me a lot as we grew up, there were many things that we were doing daily. The clothes that we wear are not our traditional clothes; we wear western clothes now. And also the technology that is used nowadays, enable us to communicate with one another whether near or far. So it has changed me a lot, it makes life easier to live in this modern world.

Of course the western culture has influenced my traditional customs in terms of the things we do in our tradition. So I am no longer doing those rituals as I do not believe in those things.

This section reveals that western culture has influenced the way the Balobedu people conduct themselves in the 21st century. The magnitude of the influence of westernisation can be seen in how people dress, how women address men and so forth.

Sub-category 1.2.3 Contact with other indigenous cultures

Besides the role played by Christianity and westernisation, the findings show that contact with other indigenous cultures influenced the way the Balobedu people used to conduct their daily affairs.

People now marry out of the tribe, and this may lead to disagreements between the family and the in-laws due to the cultural differences. The extended family relationship has deteriorated because of the outsiders.

The collapse of the boundaries between the different indigenous tribes encourages the young Balobedu generation to appreciate diversity. They no longer view their neighbours, the Tsonga, as an outsider, who in the past were barred from penetrating what, was considered to be a sacred space in the past. In the past the Tsonga people were denied access to certain areas in the royal family. They were also barred from intercultural marriages with the Balobedu people. This study reveals that changes in perceptions have brought an appreciation of others among the Balobedu people.

Uhm today as we are mixed with the Tsonga and the Zulus ehh I will start maybe by the music, the music which we are listening to today the Tsonga music has built us, as most of it contributes to our social life because it educated us; it has a message for us, ehh because if you can check today all cultures today are united, they are coming together as one. Today you can find Balobedu people wearing the Tsonga attire. It seems as if you practice other people's cultures more than yours.

The shift towards the acceptance of other cultures was seen in how one of the participants expressed her appreciation for the Tsonga cultural attire and what it signifies. What is worth noting is that tribal identities are dissolving as participants now use the inclusive identity 'Africans' to refer to other different indigenous tribes. This minimised the value of 'we' vs. 'them'.

...they wear shibelane (Tsonga cultural attire for women) hey I like their attire the way they dress shows that we are African and I am proud of the Africans because they try to show the world their culture and where they come from.

This sub-section revealed that the Balobedu people have learnt to tolerate the Tsonga people who were previously regarded as the outcasts. Being in prolonged contact with other tribes has taught them to get rid of their prejudices and learn to embrace diversity.

Sub-category 1.2.4 Politics

After the eradication of apartheid in South Africa, the agency of politics became apparent. This ushered significant changes in how traditional affairs were run as political leaders differ significantly from traditional leaders.

Leadership in the traditional sphere follows a genealogical pattern, and the ordinary man has no power or right to question how the day to day affairs are run. The advent of western forms of governance influenced the cultural pattern of leadership. Western culture puts emphasis on codified laws, whereas cultural leadership is based on customary law. The powers are vested in the leadership and different of opinions has no place in cultural leadership. Western... uhm does challenge issues and where there is dissension opinion polls are conducted to access the majority reaction. This practice is unacceptable in cultural leadership. Western forms of leadership have terms of office as opposed to cultural leadership which are life long term.

These days, politics reduces the powers of leaders as they brought about structures that reports progress to senior structures and the ordinary people pay more attention to political structures than to the cultural leadership.

The autonomy of tribal authority was also affected by decentralised political leadership which interfered with the day-to-day running of villages.

The coming in of politics has changed how is monitored or how culture is to be directed, in the sense that, in terms of culture, there would be a chief or there would be indunas and then all the citizens within the area or within the village would be under the control of the chief.

The coming in of politics has changed the way things are run. People now go to court to resolve community issues. The magistrate becomes the adjudicator. Politics, again, has led to people not respecting the induna or the chief as the most superior persons in the village.

The paradox between traditional leadership and democratically elected leadership can lead to confusion of roles and misunderstanding in the community.

The chiefs and indunas do not have power because you find that if they want to build a tarred road, there is a situation where they won't go to the chief or induna to consult. They will just do it without consulting which means most of the power is in politics today. Most of the decisions are up there, they are influenced by politics.

Politics took us away from our culture because nowadays when it comes to... as a girl who grew up in the village, nowadays when we want permission for something... we no longer go to the headmen; we just go to the civic leaders. They just write a letter. If I want to open an account, I go to the civic leaders and they write a letter and give me to open an account. Unlike before, when one wanted something they would go straight to the headman to get a letter to show that they are a resident of the village.

Some participants perceive political leadership in a positive light:

The Balobedu people on one hand participate in the new political dispensation, while, on the other hand, carry their culture forward. Leadership is supported by the current situation. The economic power of the Balobedu people was destroyed by apartheid. They were recruited to work under the white government; they were too lazy to work. In order to pressurise them, tax was introduced by the government of the day... The current political system is welcomed because it empowers the Balobedu economically. The ANC (African National Congress) does not threaten the traditional leadership: instead it provides development opportunity. The Balobedu people support the new approach but also, to a certain extent carrying forward the old one.

Uhm I think uhm... if the councillor comes here and does whatsoever he wants without informing the village leaders, I think that it is not what they have been told by the head of the municipal. I think the municipal... if it sends a person... they send a person directly to the indunas. They tell the person to go and introduce uhm this work to the indunas before anything is done so that the indunas are aware of what they should expect.

In terms of constitutionality, the government policies protect the traditional leadership and cultural norms even though there are individuals within the government who might spoil that. Some people think that the Traditional Court bill introduced by the government is discriminatory because it seems to be oppressing women and the disabled people. To me it is fine because it directs leaders not to judge in a canonical way, but that they must be in line with the democratic dispensation of today that is why the traditional bill of rights is brought forth.

Most of the participants expressed that political leadership must co-exist with the traditional leadership, as both are important. Some of them believe that political leaders must be overseers and intervene where necessary:

What I think they should do is to get common ground of how those cultural practices should be conducted and find a common way to let them proceed then taking into consideration that human morality is not been neglected on the way... I would not encourage them (politicians) to take a greater role in dictating how traditional leaders must direct their activities.

I support both of them (traditional and political leaders) because some of the crimes that are being committed in villages cannot be taken to court because they are minor things. For example, if our cattle jump the fence and eat the maize in someone's field you cannot report them to the police; you can simply go to the indunas. If you take them to court, that will involve a lot of money for state to deal with that issue. It would be cheaper for indunas to deal with that issue. I do support both of them...

Of course on matters of traditional governance, the chief of the community is the one who is in charge. But, on issues of government, this democratic government, which we voted for every five years... local councillors, are the ones who represent the communities in the municipalities.

Participants in this study showed that politics has brought an improvement in the handling of issues of equality and human rights. Participants were of the opinion that, traditionally, the Lobedu leadership was less inclusive and that it oppressed the views of the commoners. This, most of them think present day politics has granted them freedom to be heard.

Politics has built our society. It has built our communities. Politicians have opened a platform where all can speak and be open on the issues that are affecting them.

Democracy needs to be infiltrated into tradition which might be good in terms of human rights, but in one way it tarnishes that value of respect. Everyone has got his/her rights. I can claim my own rights while forgetting that others have their own rights.

Though most of the participants believed that political changes are developmental and necessary, there was concern by others that some politicians tried to convince traditional leadership to deviate from their ways and become politically-oriented. It was further revealed that some politicians did not approve of the way the Lobedu tradition put restrictions on certain conducts:

Politicians want to come to traditional leaders and convince them that they should tow the line of politics. Some politicians in the Lobedu tribe convinced a leader of the tribe, promising him a price and he thought of deviating from the normal cultural

traditions but the tribe managed to stop him. National politics of the country should not destroy the traditional community setup. A local community under traditional leaders has its own cultural laws and ethics which must be followed by the people.

Some politicians think that the Lobedu are discriminatory because they do not allow the Tsonga to enter the royal kraal. The reason is that they do not know why that stipulation was put in the first place. Politicians can destroy the culture of the people because they are looking for money. Politics comes with a price and people are bought. They call meetings with communities without the knowledge of village leaders. They misuse politics to destroy traditional cultural patterns and, as a result, they erode the culture.

This section revealed that politics plays an important role in the current leadership of the Balobedu people. The views of the participants highlighted both positive and negative influences of politics on the indigenous culture.

Category 1.3 Valued traits in the Khelobedu culture

The findings of this study reveal that the Balobedu people still value some of what they consider to be appealing traits within their culture.

Sub-category 1.3.1 Sanctuaries of cultural prudence

Reserves of cultural prudence were described as a source of pride and means of maintaining one's identity by some of the participants. The younger participants fondly spoke about the lessons that they learnt from their culture. This is what some of them had to say:

...if ever I want to know myself better, I have to know where I come from. I have to know my history and if I don't know... it means I will no longer know where I am going or who I am.

Okay, what I can say is that as a molobedu young person, I am proud of who I am and where I come from. I am actually proud of this culture and I am certainly not ashamed or embarrassed of my roots or where I come from.

The value of respect was widely emphasised by all the participants.

I have mentioned the issue of respect uhm... It defines who I am as you can see me I am a person who respects people... as much as I know myself and that respect emanates from my culture.

When you approach people, you need to treat them with respect. That is one thing which I respect about my culture.

But there are some things which we cannot change. Issues of respecting each other uhm... when we meet each other we greet each other uhm... and those values are the values and they will never change.

However, older participants seemed to think that there is an erosion of the value of respect among the younger generation. Concern is largely on the belief that the youth have no respect for adults. This is seen in the way they interact with adults. Furthermore, the older participants were of the opinion that young people do not take into cognisance the restrictions put forward by their culture. In a typical Selobedu culture, an individual's desired behaviour was well defined according to age.

...cultural change has made or has caused a dent in me... pure respect no longer prevails. In a sense, you would not uhm be able to differentiate between a young person and an adult in terms of their morals. People have loose morals because of the coming in of these other activities. It becomes an offense to me when a person breaks down the cultural habits of our people. Children lend into trouble because of breaking down these cultural norms. They do not respect their elders and they drink with them. When you advise them, they reason academically. For example the prince as a young man took for granted certain burning issues since he did not understand them. These days, children can go to burial places which they were not allowed to do in the past. Originally, there were certain things that were associated with bad luck. People believed that if you do certain things, there would be repercussions. Children were taught about cultural norms.

Some of the younger participants stated how they valued the traditional attire of the Balobedu people. However, it was observed during this study that the young generation restricted the wearing of traditional attire to special occasion only.

Uhm I am a Molobedu girl and I am happy to be a Lobedu girl because in Bolobedu there are so many things which we practice. Like when we have our parties or when we have gatherings, we do practice Sekgapa (Traditional Balobedu dance). We wear our traditional attire, which we use uhm we have beads that have different colours like colour blocking.

Nowadays we just wear different attire but when we have gatherings we wear our traditional attire. We show other people what we wear and we teach young ones to dance.

What is worth noting, is that even though it is evident that the culture of Khelobedu is evolving, there are still attempts to instil norms and values through various institutions. It was also revealed that a simple gesture such as greeting another person whether you knew the

person or not, was valued among the members of the tribe. Moreover, the art works that Balobedu people have, for example, the making of clay pots, make the culture unique.

Sub-category 1.3.2 Language

The language spoken among the Balobedu is also known as Selobedu. Though Selobedu was considered to be a dialect spoken mostly among the members of the tribe, most participants are aware of its value as a language. Considering that Selobedu is neither a language taught in neither schools nor part of the official languages in South Africa, its syntax is influenced and altered by dominant languages.

Then one other thing is the question of language, language also is gradually changing. People imitate other languages and that is undermining the Balobedu language and it is destroying the vocabulary because the selobedu being spoken is not pure.

Language will make a culture unique even if it has not been taken at a national level to be recognised as an official language. There are people who are trying to bring it to the level of other languages.

One of the older participants stated some of the features of Selobedu. From his narrative it could be detected that what could be considered to be vulgar language in other cultures is viewed differently among the Selobedu speakers. Consider this extract:

Selobedu has vulgar words used during communication. For example, calling someone stupid is formal... it is not a problem. The people use strong language to sing many of their songs.

However, participants acknowledge that the use of dominant languages, especially English puts boundaries as to where and when the language can be spoken.

Ja in cases where it is necessary for me to speak my language, I do speak my language but in most cases I use English. We use English when we are in other Provinces but because I never went to other provinces too much except in the University... So if there are situations where I am with people from Bolobedu I speak khelobedu.

When I am working in class, I speak English because it is the rule that we need to speak it at work. But, generally, I speak my language with any people. I do not feel ashamed but when... but whenever... for example let me say at the university we met different people from different cultures... whenever for I am with my colleagues I speak English, but whenever I am angry... whenever I am angry I speak my language. I don't care.

For some participants language was seen as a vehicle for social cohesion.

Ja like any activity... how we socialise, how we interact with other people, especially same language speakers.

No I don't feel ashamed; I even speak my language in public. I listen to songs that are sung in my language.

The findings of this study reveal that not only is Selobedu influenced by other cultures but it has also affected the cultures it has come into contact with. This increases the sense of pride and value for identity among the young generation.

Being a Lobedu is a privilege just because if you are a Molobedu everybody wants to know the language which we speak. If you speak from a distance somebody will just turn and listen to the words, the lyrics, and the voice which you are using. The way you talk people will want to know more about it.

Uhm being Molobedu is good because most people want to know about our culture. They are more interested in our culture. They want to learn even the language we speak, they think it is good. I feel proud to be a Molobedu.

This subsection revealed that there are cultural traits that are valued by the Balobedu people. However, these traits are continually being influenced by external factors and, according to the older generation, they face some kind of cultural extinction. For instance the value of respect for the elders and the preservation of Selobedu as a language, have been influenced by external factors.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Celebrations



Figure 4.1 The Sekgapa dance performed by the Balobedu women at the inauguration of a village headwoman

The theme, and its categories and sub-categories are listed in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Celebrations

Theme	Category and sub-categories
2. Celebrations	2.1 Diversity in celebrations 2.2 Contributors to the changing face of celebrations

Category 2.1 Diversity in celebrations

Some of the older participants in this study expressed their views on how celebrations were conducted in accordance with Khelobedu. They presented various types of celebrations which placed the Balobedu people in an intriguing cultural web. They fondly recalled what celebrating in their culture entailed and one of them indicated the following:

They conduct their celebrations during the inauguration of queens, when they harvest, and to show appreciation and so forth. During their celebrations, they perform religious ceremonies. The ceremony is accompanied by singing and dancing. This special ceremony is called ‘mosebetho’ in Selobedu language.

It was further revealed that some celebrations occur when young people move from one stage of their life to another. This is done with the intention to inform the ancestors about the young person’s progression and to welcome him/her to the new world. The participants

further indicated that a special type of ceremony is conducted by family members in which all members are allowed to participate in the rituals that are conducted.

The second celebration symbolises the admission into adulthood. This shows that you have graduated from one stage to another... During the ceremony family members go to the grave of their ancestors to pour beer and sprinkle snuff on the grave to inform the ancestors about the graduation. This is a joyous celebration and everyone who wants to participate is welcomed.

To elaborate on the variety of celebrations, one participant gave more examples of celebrations.

The third celebration is performed during the start of the harvest season. The Balobedu people take sacred herbs, fruits and vegetables and burn them till they become ash. They then dip their fingers in the ashes and lick them. They perform this ritual, in order to prevent sickness that could be caused by eating the food they have harvested... The celebration also takes place annually to celebrate the 'marula' season. The fifth type of celebration is performed by the whole community. The celebration takes place when rain has fallen; they celebrate to show their appreciation. The celebration can also be done to ask for rain from their ancestors, if there is no rain.

One participant who is a member of the royal family described how rain rituals are accompanied by celebrations.

When the participants celebrate, traditional beer is served only to men. Men celebrate without pausing and the only short break they take is when they drink beer. When the traditional beer is finished men who participate will sing a song "re kgalegile masogano re kgalegile" meaning boys are thirsty. When they sing this song, women will notice that they are running short of beer so they provide more. When the rain falls, another celebration follows. The belief is that their ancestors have heard their request and provided them with rain. They celebrate to show that they are happy and they appreciate what their ancestors have done for them.

The significance of beer and the slaughtering of animals during celebrations were also brought to light by the participants in this study.

...elders will brew beer. Then after brewing the beer, a day will come on which that celebration has to be carried out and that day people will come together.

There will be some form of dancing, showing that people are happy... and then a beast would be slaughtered and everybody would be catered for.

Category 2.2 Contributors to the changing face of celebrations

Some of the participants revealed that many people distance themselves from the way their elders used to do things. The implication is that some people did not see the necessity of following their traditional norms and values. This attitude has affected the Lobedu celebrations, to some an extent. Most of the older participants insisted that the factor that has contributed the most is the interference of Christianity. They agreed that Christianity coupled with education, created a huge impact which has led to the deterioration of the Lobedu's cultural way of life.

The first negative impact was caused by the role of the church which succeeded, to a certain extent. Schools were introduced in the Lobedu tribe. The schools were introduced via the church. In the beginning, some people resisted the church, but accepted the school. Going to school was conducted via the church, via the confirmations and via baptism. Schools also contributed because most of the schools were under Christian laws and were controlled by the missionaries. So even though some of the people resisted Christianity, they still came into contact with it in the schools. Christianity has contributed to the scarcity of these celebrations. As a result, the church has played a bigger role in watering down the Lobedu culture

When the majority of people became more advanced that issue of contact with relatives disappeared and there is no time of socialising.

Those who joined Christianity were restricted from performing cultural activities. When education became a country-wide phenomenon, many people were affected by the changes. They became reluctant to play most of their cultural roles.

The voices of the young participants exposed how Christianity influences their choices of which celebrations to take part in and which ones to avoid. What is evident from the findings of this study is that the Selobedu culture is being shunned as young people turn away from what used to be typical ways of celebrating among the Balobedu. The excerpt below shows how a young participant embraced Christianity as part of who he is by using the pronoun [we] and distancing himself from traditional celebrations by using the pronoun [they].

As I have said before I think my No.1 is Christianity or religious celebration where we go to church, we pray and we celebrate. These traditional celebrations where they still put beer and snuff down there... That one I do not attend.

The sentiment was shared by another young participant who indicated that the way the celebrations were conducted was against Christian values.

...but there is uhm... beer, either they sell it or they give it to them. But it usually happens during the Sekgapa dance... there is traditional beer. I do not drink traditional beer and the fact that there is traditional beer, I won't attend. They dance,

and they drink because in most of Balobedu celebrations, there is no celebration that is not accompanied by traditional beer but in our religion there is no alcohol. But in this Balobedu tradition beer is always there.

Some of the young participants acknowledged that they used to go where Balobedu celebrations were taking place only to witness the ceremonies because they are part of the Balobedu, but they do not take part. Consider the following acknowledgement.

So if I am a Christian... since we are living in a democratic country I can go there but it does not mean that I have to do everything they are doing there. If they drink their traditional beer, it does not mean I must do that. I can go there to witness what they are doing.

The tendency of young people to play the role of a spectator rather than that of a participant when traditional celebrations were taking place was also affirmed by older participants. The tone of the elders was that of disappointment as they did not approve of the way young people resisted taking part in most of their traditional activities.

The attendance would not be that much, such... would be guided or directed by curiosity or they would like to see and know what is it that the older people were doing in the past and not that many would not attend them because of the interference of other modern day technologies.

They do not want to carry on with their culture because they practice others' culture.

Some participants also revealed that contact with other cultures has played a bigger role in destroying some of their traditional customs.

The disappearance of the celebrations was also brought forward by cultural changes that were brought in through inter-marriage. The mixing of people from different cultures was brought in by the church, the school and when people moved to the Townships to look for jobs, this affected the Lobedu culture in a big way. If you attend some of the celebrations you will realise that celebrations lost their dignity.

The findings also reveal that some young people were selective when it came to which celebrations to attend and which ones to avoid. From this revelation, one can deduce that some young people do not advocate for the total eradication of the Lobedu celebrations in favour of Christian or modern ones.

Uhm... traditional celebrations where... uhm like Sekgapa those are celebrations which I can participate in. When they dance, they expose their culture and those are the kind of celebrations I can attend. Uhm on the issue of... of course if somebody went to a traditional school, if he came back and there was a celebration I would just

go there and just observe and see how things are done. It is not wrong for me to go there. These are celebrations where I can participate.

Some older participants acknowledged that the leadership of the tribe also contributed a lot to these changes because in the past there were rules and restrictions to be followed during the performance but today these were no longer followed.

Today the members of the royal council allow the ceremony to be recorded because they always receive prizes and T-Shirts from the recorders. It has been watered down to such an extent that even if I did not attend the ceremony I do not feel guilty.

They also highlighted that the dignity of the celebrations and how they were being staged were extremely affected.

In the ceremony what they do is drinking beer and dancing and the type of dance is modern dance. When the white people had to pay a visit to Queen Modjadji IV sometimes they did not find her in the royal house. They were forced to go to Mkwakwaila and they brought along the wines, in particular Smirnoff which they gave to the queen and she started to drink regularly. This affected the culture and the way we were celebrating.

Some participants highlighted that in the past the Tsonga people were not allowed to enter the royal kraal during their performances because the Balobedu people regarded them as low caste. The participants pointed out that, today, the Lobedu celebrations were accompanied by a Tsonga celebration known as shiseveseve. Nowadays, many families sing and dance to Xitsonga songs during their celebrations. The Balobedu people are more influential because they are attracted by Tsonga celebration which they call shiseveseve.

Due to the change in the way things were conducted.... Shangaan people were being invited to certain Lobedu functions, which would not have been allowed in the past.

They brew home beer known as 'umqombothi,' they assemble and dance. They dance sekgapa that is where women and men wear in beats dress for the dance. There is also a shiseveseve dance. When celebrating this dance, women and men gather gifts and give to their families.

Most of the young generation agreed that they are no longer interested in attending the traditional celebrations because they are now Christians. They do not see the necessity of attending them because they are outdated and demanding. The majority of young participants confirmed that they attend Christian celebrations. One of the participants said that he did not tolerate the killing of animals during the traditional celebrations because it made the celebrations expensive.

Like I said, so many times, the way we celebrate. We pray and that is how we celebrate unlike in our culture where we have to slaughter a cow. I can spend more money just to slaughter a cow, just to celebrate. Now I pray, and that is how I celebrate.

Some other participants confirmed that the government is now influencing the inauguration of queens. Most of the arrangements are done in a political way. The celebration is no longer performed as it was in the past. There are now many changes. The celebrations were full of more political elements than cultural ones.

The inauguration of kings or queens is now political because the government interferes with these celebrations.

Yes, okay, it is like they will set a date, a venue, we go there and there will be lot of delegates from the government. There would also be delegates from the surrounding villages, the indunas and the so called kings. What they do is that they will announce that from now on this is our king or queen or leader. From there, they celebrate and drink modern beer, and eat traditional food.

Some of the participants acknowledged that the initiation celebration is also affected as it was no longer following tradition. The celebration has more modern elements than cultural one. Some people conduct this celebration for their benefit because money and presents are given during the celebrations. The preferred meals are modern foods and modern alcohols, not traditional ones.

When they come back, the parents organise a celebration and say 'khekomathukhu khe boile' (the initiate is back). So... uhm members of the family, relatives and friends are invited to that celebration. They throw a party for the boy or the girl so that they can celebrate. They make some drink... traditional beer. They buy even these modern beers. They celebrate and then those who have come eat the food. If the family of the initiate is rich enough they can even kill a beast or a cow so that they can celebrate. Presents will be given, to the one who has just come back from the initiation school.

Some participants confirmed that their celebrations are modernised due to contact with western people. Young participants also highlighted some of the celebrations that they take part in. They said that those celebrations have no traditional rituals. This theme allowed the older participants to share their experience as to how the Balobedu people conducted their celebrations in the past. The young generation also expressed their views on the changing face of celebrations. The section that follows discusses the institution of marriage and how it has evolved with time.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Marriage

The theme, its categories and sub-categories are listed in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Marriage

Theme	Categories and sub-categories
3. Marriage	3.1 Cross cousin marriage 3.2 Arranged marriages 3.3 Same sex marriage 3.4 Payment of bride-price (Magadi/Lobola)

Category 3.1 Cross cousin marriage

Some of the older participants outlined and reacted positively to how marriage was practiced in the past. They highlighted that cross cousin marriages were mostly preferred by the Balobedu people. Participants regarded cross cousin marriages as a way to strengthen the relationships amongst family members. They also acknowledged that, traditionally, the Balobedu people did not see the benefit of marrying outside their clan as they wanted their wealth to be shared amongst themselves rather than with outsiders.

They expressed their views in this way:

...there would be some uhm intervention by the elders when a marriage was to take place and what was encouraged was blood line uhm marriage, because... if the husband passed, away then all the inheritance that the husband had left would not go to the outsiders but it will remain as part of the family. Such blood line marriages also strengthened relationships because people would be of the same clan or of the same family.

Let me start by saying, in the past, there was a Balobedu saying that said that, "Balobedu ke maotlo madiana", which means that the Balobedu people have to marry in the family, just like a rat... When you marry in your uncle's family, cattle are used to pay "lobola", the daughter from that family is going to be married in her aunt's family to return the cattle used in the first marriage.

Some participants further highlighted that when the Balobedu people took a decision, about who their children should marry, the first preference was a cousin.

Normally the first option would be in your uncle's family. The most preferred groom or bride was a cousin. Even if you marry a lot of wives, your uncle/aunts' daughter is regarded as the 1st wife, even if you married her after the rest. The negotiations would be handled by the 2 families, with the uncles being the main negotiators.

Some participants stressed the point that the parents do not feel comfortable when their children take a decision to marry outsiders. However if that happens, they will first explore the history of the family, in order to know them better.

...If the boy decides to marry outside the clan, we need to sit down and find out whether the girl's family was never accused of witchcraft. Otherwise sons and daughters are instructed to marry each other.

However, the responses from the young generation were very negative as they do not approve this type of marriage. They do not see the benefit of it and they regard it as worthless, more like marrying your brother or sister. Some of the participants were of the view that marriage between relatives can trigger off family feuds instead of strengthening family ties. Some of the participants had parents who are cousins, and they were of the opinion that these relationships had numerous deficiencies. Some respondents had this to say:

I treat her as my sister and I expect that she should treat me as her brother. No, no, I can't because I take my cousin as my own blood. So I don't think it will work because I see her as my relative. My own blood, so I must respect that. I don't think it is a good idea.

... No, I don't want my father and my aunt to fight if our marriage does not work. I just want my family to share and to have that love and to care for each other. In hard times and good times, we must be together but if I consider marrying my cousin there will be times when we will fight because of our problems because marriage does have problems. I will never have feelings for my cousin because my cousin is like my brother, my blood brother.

All young participants were against cross cousin marriages. They totally discredited this practice and, as a result, are not prepared to have such marriages.

Category 3.2 Arranged marriages

In the past, most of the Balobedu marriages were arranged by parents for their children. When a son was ready to marry, the parents would start negotiations with the family of a prospective wife. This would be a family recommended by the parents. Family members further agree on the bride-price and other necessary arrangements. The older participants seem to understand and promote this practice. Here are some of the views expressed by some:

...If you want to marry, you would have to tell your mother and your mother informs your father and your father would then inform your uncle. Let me tell you that marriage was not between two individuals, it was a family arrangement. You do not

have to tell them about who you want to marry. The family will then take a decision about who you should marry based on the quality of the candidate and the wealth of the family.

Some of them, especially the young participants, were not impressed with the practice of arranged marriages. They argued that arranged marriages were not a good idea because they were the young couple. Some of the participants expressed their views in this way:

... Uhm they just can't choose a partner for me. I have to choose for myself and I think I am in the best position to know what I want. So no one should choose my partner.

... Uhm from my point of view I think it is sad for family members to arrange marriage for their children. Firstly, we have to consider the happiness of the child. If ever my happiness is not considered, then it means I will not be happy in the marriage.

Young participants did not hesitate to express their views about the phenomenon of arranged marriages. They were of the opinion that everyone has a right to choose his/her partner in marriage.

There is no need for your parents to arrange your marriage... so they cannot choose your partner. As a responsible person, you know what you want, what kind of partner you want... in our language they say 'mmapelo o ja serati' meaning (follow your heart) so you cannot allow your parents to choose a person you do not want or you do not love. You must choose for yourself

This subsection reveals that the practice of arranged marriages is no longer popular among the Balobedu people. The findings show that young people are of the opinion that choosing a life partner is personal, and parents must only play a supportive role.

Category 3.3 Same sex marriage

Some older participants outlined how same sex marriages were conducted in the past. Participants maintained that same sex marriages were a recommendable practice in the Balobedu tribe, and these were not similar to the same sex marriages that are practiced in today's global society. One of the participants gave a detailed narrative of what same sex marriages entailed for this tribe:

Today we are talking about gays and lesbians. No, the same sex marriage which was practiced in the Modjadji head kraal was like, it was not exactly same type of sex marriage. The Balobedu kingdom consists of the Mampeule, Molokwane, Modjadji and Mathekga clans. They brought their daughters to be servants of the rain queen.

These clans are closely related. Although women marry women, there is no homosexuality involved in these marriage practices. Young women brought by the clans are known as “Vatanoni”. These “Vatanoni” are regarded as the queen’s wives. The queen’s relatives are allowed to mate with the young girls, in order to impregnate them. The offspring of these ladies refer to the queen as their father. They do not take the surname of the biological father. Instead, they take the surname of the queen because she is their father in terms of marriage. Female herbalists who are barren are also involved in same sex marriages. They can marry young girls to become their wives but there are men who will come and mate with those women. It becomes similar to what was the case in the example I have given about the queen’s wives “vatanoni”

They also argued that a woman who is unable to bear children has a right to be cared for. In this regard, the woman’s family will not have to die down. A woman, taken as a bride will be expected to sustain the family by bearing children for the barren woman. They further highlighted that the purpose of this marriage was to maintain the surname of the husband for the coming generation.

Same sex marriages have taken place where one was unable to bear children or one was barren and because of that she would not live alone. Then there would be negotiations to find a wife and that wife would be regarded as the wife of that barren woman. The family would arrange for her to bear children and they will be under the care of her and the barren woman would be regarded as the husband.

The woman was given to the female’s husband or anyone within the family to impregnate her. This was done with the intention of getting male’s descendant, so that the family name would not disappear completely. The children who resulted from such relationships called the female “husband” their father.

The younger participants’ description of same sex marriages was different from that of observed in the Balobedu tradition. Their lack of knowledge in this regard proves that same sex marriages are no longer a norm among the Balobedu people. Most of them are of the opinion that the dynamics of relationships between men and women have since evolved. As observed in the extract above, men who impregnated women involved in same sex marriages were only treated as sperm donors and were not allowed to be attached to their children.

...Uhm I think I have a negative attitude about this because since I was born I never saw this in our culture. I have never experienced a situation where a man marries another man, because if we... like marriage or a family involves a man and a woman and kids. And the other thing is that if a man is going to marry another man... they are not going to have children, which means that the surname is going to die ‘because they are not going to have children.

I do not support it because there are rules and regulations. The way the Balobedu people practice their marriages, the way they give you rules is difficult. You can

allow them now but as time goes on, you can face problems just because nowadays when a man gives you a child he wants to play a certain role in that child's life. If a man gives you a child and is not allowed to make contributions to his child's upbringing it is another problem just because that man can take you to court or to the social workers.

This subsection revealed that the attitudes towards same sex among the Balobedu people have changed in accordance with the different times. The older generation mentioned the benefits of same sex marriages which were between women. The younger generation were of the opinion that same sex marriages would not work, and that marriages should only be limited to people of different sexes.

Category 3.4 Payment of the bride-price (Magadi/Lobola)

Some respondents highlighted that in the past, cattle were used by the Balobedu people to pay the bride-price. They emphasised that using cattle to pay for the bride was a good idea because those cattle would rotate amongst family members. Initially the Balobedu people were not allowed to marry outsiders. The respondents further indicated that this was done with the intention of protecting their wealth, which would then be shared amongst themselves. They do not want to see their wealth moving out of the clan. The respondents expressed their views as follows:

...Let me start by saying, in the past, there was a Lobedu saying that "Balobedu ke maotlo madiana", which means that the Balobedu people have to marry in the family, just like a rat eating its own family. When you marry in your uncle's family cattle are used to pay "lobola", the daughter from that family is going to be married in her aunt's to return the cattle used in the first marriage. The cattle were used again to pay "lobola" in the same family for the second time. The cattle were also taken to the family where the man's sister was married so that she would not suffer. The daughter's parents-in-law were told that they must use those cattle to cultivate their fields, to cultivate others field who will pay for the work done.

They further indicated that:

There were few things considered before the commencement of lobola (bride-price). When the two families began marriage arrangements, there was a certain amount (matshwara) that had to be given to the bride to be. You would never be given the opportunity to marry a girl if you did not pay that money (matshwara). The money was not included in the bride-price. Therefore, it was not refundable even if the wedding was called off... The woman was also given beads and necklaces and they were all non-refundable. The bride-price was between the relatives and not the couples themselves... Other things were also demanded after the payment of the bride price. Those things were a knife used to flay the skin of cattle, the grandfather's overcoat, the grandmother's shawl, the kraal where the cattle are kept and a shepherd who will take care of the cattle.

Some participants do not feel comfortable with the fact that cattle are no longer used to pay the bride-price. Their unhappiness stems from the fact that arranged marriages are no longer followed. The arrangement of marriage is now between the couples themselves. Parents are no longer involved in the arrangement, and also the purpose of the marriage has collapsed. One participant put it in this way:

...traditional marriage of paying lobola has collapsed. Therefore it is becoming an individual matter. The emphasis is on individual relationships rather than family to family relationships.

Many of the younger respondents do not support the issue of using cattle to pay the bride-price. They think that today cattle have lost their value. They argued that money should be used instead. They emphasised that today we live in a developing country where technology is the norm, and because of that, they prefer using money to pay for the bride-price rather livestock which has a low lifespan.

...Uhm currently... as we know, it is no longer used. We use money to pay lobola. We use money of course. The payments nowadays are high as compared to those in the past. Of course it is matching with the economy. So if we are to go and marry we are going to be charged money and if a man comes to our family to marry a woman, we are also going to charge him money. It is about money nowadays. Cows are no longer used for lobola.

...Nowadays, there is drought and there is no rain. Cattle are going to die and it is better to pay in cash rather than livestock. Those cattle nowadays are not a good investment...

This theme revealed mixed perceptions with regard to the payment of the bride-price. Some of the participants are of the opinion that the prices are inflated, with some parents of the bride feeling that they should charge the bride-price in accordance with the level of education of their children. Some of the younger participants are of the opinion that the bride-price should be scrapped, whereas others are of the opinion that it should be maintained as it is part of their culture. The section that follows discusses the theme of initiation.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Initiations

The theme, its categories and its sub-categories are listed in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Initiations

Theme	Categories and sub-categories
4. Initiations	4.1 Female initiation 4.2 Male initiation

The findings of this study revealed that initiations include both female and male initiations. Some of the participants outlined how initiations played an important part in the lives of the Balobedu people. Although there is much interference that has diluted the role played by initiations, the participants still think that initiations are relevant for moulding responsible and dedicated Balobedu people who love and respect their culture. Initiation is regarded as an old custom which was highly valued in the Balobedu tribe. The custom has been transferred from one generation to the next. One of the older participants stated that:

...Perhaps I should start by saying initiation is an old custom of the Balobedu people which they brought in from Zimbabwe. It is not only meant for men, even women conduct them... Firstly, traditionally, there was no initiation introduced without a child from the royal family. If they introduced the initiation all the initiates would have to accompany the child from the royal family. That was the practice until 1920. In the past the initiation school was introduced by the Queen...

In the following two sub-sections, female and male initiations are discussed.

Category 4.1 Female initiation

Some respondents revealed that in the past, female initiations were highly practiced in the Balobedu tribe. Two types of female initiations were conducted, namely vyale and vohwera. To transit from girlhood to womanhood, a girl should have gone through the initiation process which lasted for approximately one week. Some of the older participants shared their knowledge about how girl initiations were conducted.

...for girls, it was a shorter period of about 8 days. They do 1,2,3,4 and then perform their secret 5,6,7,8 they come out and start to display and perform their traditional dance. In the initiation school, those who are from the royal family were beaten before they graduate.

Some of the participants indicated that initiation played a very important role in the lives of females because it taught them adulthood life. They expressed their views as follows:

...A woman would be taught womanhood and how to handle a crisis in the family. They would never get married until they had gone through the initiations.

...Second they were taught the law. Third, it was meant to mark the point where a girl as a child have and came back to you as an adult. It was a transition.

One of the benefits of going to an initiation school for girls is an opportunity to get married. Participants highlighted that in the past when girls graduated from the initiation school, men would attend the ceremony, in order to choose wives. Participants shared their knowledge in this way:

One of the eight days was very interesting. When those women arrived it was a big ceremony. The old men and women who had sons attended the ceremony to choose their daughters-in-law... If parents do not have money to pay for their daughter's initiations they would arrange with someone to pay on their behalf. That is the starting point of the relationship. The girl was then taken to that family to replace the money. The relationship and the arrangement of marriage start with initiation. When the girl comes back from the school, she belongs to those who have paid the money.

Some of the participants acknowledged that they do not see the benefit of initiation in this current age because children who are too young children are taken to the initiation school. They argue that female initiation is a waste of time because those who have graduated from those schools no longer display good qualities. They are of the opinion that there is no difference between the graduates and the non-graduates. The following excerpts explain:

...As a Christian following the commandments of God, I think it is a sin to be initiated. Secondly, as a female I don't see the benefits or the reason or the advantages of being initiated. I think it has been found that most girls who have been initiated tend to misbehave. They no longer follow the norms and the values of the society but they turn to misbehave.

... For girls I don't see the benefit of being initiated because from what I have seen and what I have realised, most girls who have been initiated when they come back from the initiation school they start to misbehave and they become delinquents

...I did not go just because in our village they are no longer practicing that kind of a school. And I do not have interest in that kind of school, more especially because I am a woman. Maybe if I was a man, I would go but because I am a woman I do not see any difference.

This theme revealed that female initiation is facing extinction in the Selobedu culture. Although one can still find some pockets of such schools, all of the participants in this study indicated that initiation schools for females should be eradicated.

Category 4.2 Male initiation



Figure 4.2 Young initiates on their graduation day

Villagers welcome their children from the initiation school. They were accompanied by their leaders and other graduates from the previous graduation schools. Women were ululating and clapping their hands as a way to show their happiness.

Some participants argued that, normally, three types of initiations were conducted for men, namely bodika; komana and vohwera. The queen intervened to ensure that the initiations were successful. The participants emphasised that normally the initiation period for man was six months or more than that.

...In the past the initiation schools were introduced by the king/queen and there was no private person allowed to introduce the school. The person who was responsible for the initiation process was elected by the queen. The ceremony was then regarded as a public ceremony which was conducted after every five years. The initiation period was six months and above. Normally three types of initiations were to be conducted. The first one was "bodika" which teaches young children adulthood life. This type of initiation was seen as the most important initiation in the Balobedu tribe because it taught young children how to live. The second one was "komana" which was not so much important as "bodika" because the initiate from "bodika" was allowed to enter into "komana", but an initiate from "komana" was not allowed to enter into a "bodika" initiation school. "Komana" taught young children respect. The last initiation was "bohvera" which was performed by both men and women

The respondents mentioned the main aims of male initiation.

...The main purpose was to lead them towards adulthood. It was not only a matter of circumcision but also to teach them responsibility. You must be mature to be taught. For example, sex and married life will never be taught to young children. These were taught in the initiation school. When the initiates come back they knew how things were done. They were taught critical knowledge to survive. When the royal leaders introduced initiation after five years, they gave young children enough time to grow properly.

However, all the participants agreed that the aim and purpose of initiations have changed. Participants further emphasised that initiations are no longer serving their purpose as they did in the past. They claim that the behaviour of the initiates is totally unacceptable since they go to initiation schools when they are too younger. The views from the participants are as follows:

But nowadays they just take those children of about 9, 10 and 11 years and they are still young. What kind of norms and values will be taught to young children? When he comes back from the initiation school he thinks that those who did not attend initiation are nothing. He decides to leave the school at an early age as he thinks that he is old enough.

Some participants argued that the value of initiation has collapsed. They believe that people are no longer following their tradition because initiations have become a business. Participants cited lack of commitment by those who run the schools as they are no longer bound by traditional rules and regulations. The purpose has shifted from teaching manhood to money-making institutions.

They cannot keep a secret and besides that leaders were supposed to stay in the initiation school until the last day when the school is burnt down. The old man who introduced the school attends the initiation school every morning and in the afternoon he comes back home. In the past, when you circumcised the initiates, you must stay there, until the last day. The initiation period for men was six months, but now it is three weeks because of school. They introduce initiation a week before school closed and they burn the school the very same week when the school opens. Some attend the school today and tomorrow they are released... In the past there was a courtyard where they tell those who want to go to initiation school when the initiates are about to go back home that it is too late you are not allowed to enter into the school. Today because the rush is for money, they will never turn you back.

To answer the question whether secrecy was still observed as was the case in the past, participants said that there was no secrecy anymore. Young children are taken there, medical doctors have to visit initiation schools and mothers have to take care of their children when they come home unhealed.

...Uhm there is no secret because the boys who... attended would be found talking about those things... they would be found even singing the songs that were sung in the initiation school in the villages. This means that there is no secrecy.

Today there is no secret. I do not think there is any secret about the initiation. In the past, women were not allowed to visit the house where initiates were accommodated. But today, when the initiate comes back home with wounds to be cared for, it is the mother who looks after him.

Nowadays, initiates are monitored regularly by the medical doctors. Some of the initiates are taken to hospitals in cases of emergency, and they are cared for by female doctors.

This sub-section has revealed that the purpose of initiations has changed. Initiation schools no longer focus on teaching good morals and manhood. The time spent on initiations has been reduced because of formal school. The people who run these schools are more concerned with making business transactions than tradition and, as a result, they admit under age boys.

4.2.5 Theme 5: The role of khadi

The theme, its categories and its sub-categories are listed in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: The role of khadi

Theme	Categories and sub-categories
5. The role of khadi	5.1 Khadi as a priestess of the family 5.2 Khadi as a counsellor

The respondents expressed mixed views about the role of khadi. Some of them responded positively as they see khadi as the most important member of the family. Others, however, questioned the powers that are vested on khadi by various clans within the Balobedu tribe.

...Yes, Khadi is the only person empowered to talk to the ancestors on their behalf. Khadi is still khadi in the royal family because she is the one who conducts rituals. Where there is peace in the family, the paternal aunt has played her role. The role of khadi is still intact and her role in family matters where she belongs is still valued. When there is a crisis, they call her and she is irreplaceable. In the case where the family is much more enlightened than her, she is rejected. The rule is that she should intercede; she is the one who can be heard by the ancestors.

Category 5.1 Khadi as a priestess of the family



Figure 4.3 Khadi communicate with the ancestors on behalf of family members.

Family members who needed blessings and healing kneel around the shrine as khadi performs a ritual.

Participants who view the role of khadi positively believe that she has to be given centre stage, especially in her brother's family. She should always be invited during ritual ceremonies as a negotiator who can talk to the ancestors on their behalf. Some participants assume that as the most important person chosen to perform rituals in the family, she should be treated with utmost respect; no one should make her angry because this will make the ancestors angry. However, participants revealed that in this age khadis are no longer afforded the respect they commanded previously.

...No, in the past "khadi" was respected as she was playing a major role in the family, but today there is no respect because she is undermined. Some people are Christians and do not see the importance of "khadi". In the past people were not allowed to make her angry. If you made her angry, the ancestors would be affected.

...Yes, today in some traditional clans, the smaller shrines are still performed by the paternal aunt even though on some occasions some families do not recognise the aunts. My mother is a paternal aunt in the... family; she is the one who performs rituals.

Participants who question the role of khadi argue that some khadis misuse their positions as they think that they have the authority over other family members. As a result, some people disengaged themselves from her. The following statements reveal this:

...This is caused by the issue that sometimes these paternal aunts spoil their position as they think that they have authority over things. As a result, those who do not tolerate her behaviour disengage from the paternal aunt. Some paternal aunts misuse that authority for their advantage.

...They are given a platform to a lesser extent. There are those who would subscribe to the activities to be carried out by khadi or to be done by khadi and in such a case khadi would be given a high status in cases where the attention of a khadi would be required. Like if one in the family is not well and family subscribe to traditional cultural beliefs, the khadi would come and perform some mephaso, then things might go well, and in such a case because of traditional beliefs, a khadi will be roped in to take that role.

Most of the participants do not see khadi as a special person. They emphasised that a khadi should be treated equally as all the other members of the family. Those who believe in Christianity are against the responsibilities taken by khadi, especially her role as a priestess.

...To perform rituals is not going to be in line with my Christianity because uhm if I have a problem. They cannot say go to your aunt to perform those rituals so that I can be okay. Me I can go to church, they will pray for me... I respect her; she is my father's sister, but the things that come from tradition I am not going to tolerate since I am a Christian.

...I think people nowadays have turned away or they have forsaken their culture. So in that manner like many things have changed and we no longer view khadi as being someone who is important or vital. Because we have forsaken our culture, we no longer view khadi as being someone who can be a representative or mediator between us and our ancestors.

Some participants expressed the feelings that they are not sure that when a khadi is interceding in the shrine on their behalf she is actually doing that for them or not. Their point of view is that there are no longer good relationships between family members. The interactions between family-members are characterised by jealousy and tensions. Some participants questioned the credibility of this kind of intercession.

...Aah since well she believes in rituals when she is praying, I don't know whether she involves us or not. Maybe she might pray for me, I don't know since... well I do not participate in those things. I don't know much whether she prays for me or what.

...I am not sure because these are things that I cannot prove. I cannot prove that while she is putting her snuff there, she is doing it for me. I cannot prove that even if she goes to the church, she is praying for me. I cannot prove that, so I am not sure.

...No, I think we do not trust each other. I do not believe that when she prays for me, she will pray with her whole heart to give me blessings because I know that jealousy is there in the families.

This sub-section revealed that the role of khadi as a priestess has changed. Young participants feel that her powers are overrated and she should be treated like any other member of the family. However, older participants still believe that a khadi has a role to play as a mediator between ancestors and family members.

Category 5.2 Khadi as a counsellor

Some respondents acknowledged that the role of khadi as a counsellor in her brother's family is no longer appreciated as it was in the past. She is no longer seen as a person who can take a leading position in most family issues. Some of the participants indicated that they did not miss her presence if she was absent from most of their occasions.

...but nowadays people can solve some problems even if there is no khadi in their home. But it is still working.

The role of khadi is limited. What limits the role of khadi is how people are being structured and how we are living. You will find people who decide... to go and live far away from their relatives... because they might be some scrambles in the families and these are limiting the role of khadi...

Some people no longer invite khadi during marriage negotiations because they are capable of arranging their marriages even if a khadi is not there. Most participants believe that some khadis, instead of making things better, make them worse. Therefore, they do not see the reason why they should be invited. Where a khadi is invited, she plays a role equal to other members of the family.

...Uhm today because there are a lot of problems in the families... I do not see the role of khadi. I just see her as khadi... families are different and there are a lot of problems

...Uhm of course on the issue of solving some conflicts, uhm khadi and other members of the house will be invited and they try to sort this problem collectively. They participate equally to make sure that they solve this problem.

One of the elderly participants was of the opinion that some khadis do not take their work as a calling. He further argued that they take advantage of their positions and they think that they have authority over everything. They do not consider the fact that they were chosen to represent their families, and not to mislead them. He explained the following scenario in painstaking detail:

The case study that I want to give you happened in Leretseng. A khadi was married in Maake's family. Her daughter who belongs to the Maake family had more influence over the headman. The headman Zambia Mahasha died and therefore Zambia's children must succeed their father. The paternal aunt refused and said we do not know them. She argued that their mother was divorced. Khadi recommended the one she loved for the position but she was not the headman's child. The headman's children wrote a letter to the royal house complaining about their aunt's behaviour. She was called to the royal kraal to account for her behaviour. When she was asked about the circumstances she indicated that her brother and his wife were separated. When asked as to whether the children were not his brother's biological children, she talked ambiguously trying to defend her argument. In this incident do you think those children will still respect their aunt? Even if there will be an occasion that needs her performance, they will never call her. This really shows that some paternal aunt misuses their authority for their advantage. But the role of khadi is still there is just that it has been diluted a bit in some instances.

When answering the question that, can your paternal aunt bless or curse you? The participants expressed mixed perceptions:

...Yes, I think an aunt can bless or curse you because we all know that uhm from what... Uhm it is believed that whatever word she utters or speaks, it comes to pass. If ever she speaks a curse in your life you will be cursed but if ever she blesses you, you will be blessed.

...This one is very debatable because I cannot prove it if they can bless me or curse me, but me, I have chosen to adhere to Christianity. So this one I cannot prove.

...I think my blessings are with God, so I don't believe that somebody can curse me to the extent things can't go well with me. I believe that God will bless me. So if maybe she wants to bless me she can bless me but in terms of cursing me she won't succeed.

...It has taken as two prongs or two sides depending on the relationship. If the relationship between khadi with the brothers is good, it is believed that the khadi would bless the children of the brother, but if the relationship is sour or is bad, the belief is that khadi would not wish everyone in the family good luck.

This sub-section revealed that the role of khadi as a counsellor is questioned by most of the participants. It was also highlighted that she is no longer the sole arbitrator in the family as her authority is fading. Most of the younger participants feel that she should be given respect similar to that of other members of the community.

4.2.6 Theme 6: Rituals

The theme, its categories and its sub-categories are listed in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Rituals

Theme	Category and sub-categories
6. Rituals	6.1 Exclusive rituals of the royal family 6.2 Rituals as performed across the tribe

Findings of this study revealed that rituals are performed by both commoners and the royal family.



Figure 4.4 Villagers and members of the royal family
Officials from Modjadji head kraal accompanied by villagers in one of the villages in Modjadji area attended the inauguration of village headwoman.

Category 6.1 Exclusive rituals of the royal family

Some of the participants in the study view rituals as a good way to communicate with their ancestors. They expressed that family members are invited to attend the ritual ceremonies, regardless of where they stay. The gathering is attended by all family members with no exception. Some of the participants were from the royal family. As a result, they have witnessed more of the Lobedu ritual ceremonies. They made a point that during ritual ceremonies, traditional beer is prepared before hand by the elders, and a cow named after one of their ancestors is brought forward. The participants outlined the ceremony in this way:

...Rituals consist of five elements. The first element is that we must make sure that the animal is ready so that it can drink 'mphapo' finger millet. The animal named after a person we respected, was provided with beer. The second element is that the finger millet must be prepared in the royal family. The third one is the ceremony of giving the animal a finger millet. The young boys lead the cow into the royal kraal. They use a cultural broom to smear the cow with a finger millet. It is smeared the finger millet from the horns to the tail. The mass proceed to the kraal into the courtyard. The queen leads the people into the courtyard where the shrine is situated. In the past, the ceremony known as "mosebetho," was performed in the night. The queen is the first person to pour the finger millet over the shrine. She tells her ancestors about the good and the bad that has happened in the tribe. When she is finished the people start to drink the finger millet. When we drink the traditional beer, the container is placed next to a person who then takes it and drinks the beer and then puts it down for the next person to pick it up. The container is not handed over to some. If you finish drinking you put it down. Our ritual ceremony is held every year and four weeks in succession.

...What happens is on the very same day of the ceremony when the rain queen has finished pouring the sacred beer on the shrine, placing all the equipment they brought along from Zimbabwe in Monomotapa's place. Traditional beer is brewed for the ceremony. The beer is known as Madumela, meaning that they believe that their ancestors will agree to help them. The ceremony starts at the head kraal. The sacred beer is given to the cow named after one of the ancestors in the family and the other one is smeared with a sacred beer on the back and the tail of the cow. While the beer is being given to the cow, the women will be praising it because it was named after our ancestors. The main purpose is to show our ancestors great respect. As soon as this has been done, the spectators cheer and ululate. After we are done with the process the cow is led out. On the day of the ceremony the Queen pours the beer on the sacred place. On this sacred place, there are spears and beads which were brought from Zimbabwe.



Figure 4.5 Sacred cows waiting to partake in the rain ritual ceremony. A cow named after one of the Balobedu ancestors is led into the kraal to be given the ritual beer on the day of the ceremony.

Some of the participants highlighted how the rain ritual ceremony was conducted in the Lobedu tribe. The participants indicated that the ceremony was conducted by four families, which were closely related to the rain Queen.

This ceremony is conducted in four Lobedu clans, namely Mathekga, Molokwane, Mampeule and Modjadji families. Each family has a cow named after their ancestors. The ceremony is held every year because its main purpose is to ask for rain from their ancestors. The finger millet is prepared and given to the cow named after their ancestors to drink. The remaining one will be given to the people to drink. All the family members and people who have been invited attend the ceremony. The celebration starts in the head kraal when a cow is given a finger millet, and then it proceeds to the family yard. The Queen will lead the people by pouring the finger millet on the sacred place. Then snuff would be sprinkled there in the shrine.

However, the sacred rituals performed in the family are also affected by the changing environment. Some participants confirmed that in the past, there were places where traditional ceremonies could not be held but, today, the young leaders who are responsible for rituals are not observing the restrictions.

The leadership of the community has been affected and this shows in their handling of ritual ceremonies. When they conduct rain rituals ceremonies, they do so at Maolwe,

Pakone and Matshwi. The ceremony performed by Mmampeule and Mathekga family stopped but it has been resumed now after a long rest. They spend the whole night drinking beer and dancing in the place that was mostly not meant for ceremonies in the past.

The participants confirmed that song and dance are at the centre of ritual in the Lobedu tradition. The songs are considered to be sacred as they serve as a medium of communication which can be understood by both the ancestors and the living.

The songs they sung were slow paced songs. One of the songs they usually sing in most of their celebration is [‘Nonyana di mo soding la Tlatša di epa dikofì ka eka motho’] which translates to ‘Birds are in the forest of Tlatša singing just like people’]

The ceremony is accompanied by singing and dancing where the traditional drum is beaten. They dance all night long. When they celebrate they sing the song “Ahee Mmangwawwana khookhoo le mo re kwago re moloko mong”.

This sub-section highlighted how some of the rituals were conducted in the royal family. It was also confirmed that these rituals have also been affected by the changing times. However, attempts are being made to ensure that they do not become extinct.

Category 6.2 Rituals as performed across the tribe



Figure 4.6 The malopo dance

Family members gathered for malopo dance during a traditional worship ceremony. It is performed by people who are in a trance and are led by ancestral spirits. The dance is accompanied by the singing and beating of traditional drums.

Some of the older participants revealed that the main intention of rituals is to inform their gods about something good or bad that has happened in the family. They further expressed that rituals are conducted as a way of showing appreciation for something good that has happened in their lives or to show grievances for something that is not going well. They believe that if their gods are not happy about their behaviour, they punish them. Therefore, rituals are conducted to ask for forgiveness, to show appreciation, or to ask for something.

The rituals... Those who do these rituals believe that they bring them closer to the ancestors and there is no way in which their things will be okay in life if they do not do those practices. They pay much allegiance to the ancestors. Whatever goes wrong, they believe if one does the rituals things will change for the better.

One other ceremony is conducted by khadi on behalf of her brother's children when they are looking jobs, for good luck, in the case of misfortune etc. The boys will go to their paternal aunt to ask her to perform rituals, especially when he has decided to look for a job. The aunt will conduct rituals to inform the ancestors about the decision. During the performance the aunt will hold water using her mouth and spit it on the shrine. If the boy gets a job he is expected to come back again to the aunt to inform her about the success. The aunt will perform rituals again to inform the ancestors about the progress. This is a joyous celebration as the ancestors are appreciated for their blessings and the aunt is also thanked for negotiating with the ancestors. Sometimes, the rituals are performed so that the boy who is employed gets promotion. If he is promoted to the highest position, he will come back home to inform the paternal aunt. The aunt will be given presents and money as a way to thank her for a job well done. The ceremony is attended by every member of the family. Various ceremonies are performed as thanksgiving.

Younger participants are against rituals and they do not support them. They are reluctant to attend them because they believe in God. They emphasised that when they pray in Jesus' name, their requests are answered. Some of them confirmed that when they grew up, they never witnessed rituals performed in their households.

In our family we do not conduct rituals, we just pray, we go to church and we pray. There are no rituals, as far as I have observed there are no rituals. We go to church, we pray. When a child is born, we pray for her, and church members are invited into the house, they celebrate, they pray unless if you can call those rituals.

...I must be honest because the western culture is here with us. It has penetrated into our culture and as a result some of our traditional customs are being destroyed. Yes like now in our case you can find that our children do not show any interest. On Saturday when we are conducting our ritual ceremony, they do not join us. They do not avail themselves when the ceremony takes place in their village as they think that these are outdated. They do not take their culture seriously. They adopted the western life and undermined their culture. They do not want to carry on with their culture because they practice others cultures.

Younger participants argued that worshipping ancestors is like worshipping idols. They emphasised that God is the creator of everything, including people who have died. They see the worship of ancestors as a waste of time and they assume that it is better to approach God through Jesus Christ, rather than go through the ancestors.

Some of the participants stressed that rituals work for those who believe in them. When the Balobedu people conduct rituals, their belief is that they will work for them. Most of the participants acknowledged that when the rain ritual is performed, for example, it rains because they all believe that their request will be answered. In this regard, when they have problems or when they are happy they inform their ancestors all the time. Some of the older participants confirmed situations where they have witnessed the powers of the ancestors.

...and people would come together to conduct the rituals because they think that, they are trying to dispel all the mishap that they might be having and also in their thinking... if blood is shared from a beast during that ceremony their thinking is that their gods have been invited and if their gods had been invited, things will go well for the rest of the family.

...When I was growing up the request was always granted. If you request things by faith, they will happen. When there is no rain, people go to the grave of Makobo, the old ancestor, and conduct their rituals and their request for rain gets answered. Today's generation believes that there is no dignity in performing these rituals. Sometimes when a child is affected by sickness, the elders will go to the traditional healer to find out the cause of the problem. They come back and take the child to the shrine to perform rituals and the child becomes healed. That one I do believe that it happens.

Some of the young participants were divided in their acceptance of both rituals and Christianity. Sometimes they think these two works, but at times they discredit them. Some see Jesus as the answer, and as such, they do not see the reason for worshipping other gods besides the almighty God.

Uhm I think sometimes they do apply but on the other hand I can say they are misconception from our elders. They are in two ways. They are applicable sometimes, but not other times.

So I was never involved in the rituals, I can't say they are working or not working for me.

This section presented the data that was derived from semi-structured interviews with older participants and youth who were students at tertiary institutions. The section that follows presents data from focus group interviews which were conducted with high school students.

4.3 Phase 2: Results from the focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions of young Lobedu high schools learners on culture.

4.3.1 Focus group theme 1: Young people's perceptions on the concept of culture

The focus group participants emphasised that their culture has played an important part in their lives. Although the participants were young they acknowledged that they had learnt many things from their culture. Some of the participants indicated that Khelobedu has equipped them with the opportunity to know things that were forbidden in the past and the consequences of failing to follow the commands from the elders. However, they admitted that, nowadays, youth do not listen when their elders are trying to advise them. Some of them do not follow the instructions from the elders because they think that they are outdated. The participants expressed their views as follows:

I do appreciate my culture because it teaches youth to respect themselves and their parents as well. It gives them the opportunity to know things that were forbidden in the past and their consequences. It teaches people how to avoid them, so that they may live longer.

In the past, our culture taught people humanity, but today many youths do things the other way round. They totally distance themselves from their cultural events and they are misled by their unacceptable behaviour. In the past our elders respected their dignity which allowed them to be responsible adults. Our culture teaches us how to live with our elders, how to respect them and how to become responsible adults of tomorrow.

One of the participants expressed negative perceptions as he does not understand what the elders tell them. He argued that they were not explicit about certain things especially, when asked to clarify certain issues. The younger participants felt that their knowledge base lack authenticity as information was ingrained in oral tradition.

I think our culture misleads us as youths because when the elders tell us about things that happened in the past, we do not understand. If we ask them to clarify certain things they tell us that they have been told by their forefathers about things not to be done. So we end up being confused.

It was evident from the focus group interviews that most of the young participants attribute the morals and values that they hold to their culture.

I know that elderly people must be respected. I have been taught that when visitors arrive at home I must kneel down and shake hands with them as a way to show respect. When my parents accuse me falsely using harsh words, I must calm down and show them respect. I know that you do not have to exchange words with your parents, especially when they are angry. You must keep quiet and listen to what they are trying to emphasise because their intention is to show you the way.

My culture taught me that when I meet people on the street, I must greet them. I must always respect any person who is older than me. Every adult of the same age with my parents must be regarded as my mother or my father. If I meet an elderly person on the street carrying a load I must help him to carry the parcels to his/her respective home as a way to show respect.

Some of the participants confessed that they are more influenced by western life. They insisted that western culture offers more opportunities and many developments. Furthermore, they acknowledged that people have access to certain things which were not available in the past. They believe that, today, technology is readily available and it is rooted in the minds of most young people as they strive to be part of the modern life.

In my opinion, western culture is good because it brought civilization to many people, especially the Balobedu. In the past, women were restricted in many different activities. They were not allowed to go to school; they did not have access to drive cars. They did not have the right to get jobs and they were barred from eating certain things. Today men and women are equal. There is no restriction about what we should wear.

Not all the participants were keen about the changes brought in by western culture. Some of the participants emphasised that western culture has ruined their lives. They argued that the coming generation will lack knowledge about their origins. They added that the negative impact caused by civilisation has led to the disappearance of some of the cultural norms and values. They expressed themselves as follows:

I think western culture destroys our traditional culture because today young people do not even know their totems and their praises. During wedding ceremonies, they fail to say their praises from its beginning to end. They do not even know how to express themselves because their tradition is gone.

It is clear from the above that high school learners interviewed in this study have mixed perceptions of their culture. As much as the participants hold their culture with high regard, they also acknowledge that it has been affected by westernisation.

4.3.2 Focus group theme 2: The paradox behind the institution of marriage

The theme and its categories are listed in table 4.7

Theme 4.7: The paradox behind the institution of marriage

Theme	Categories and sub-categories
1. The paradox behind the institution of marriage.	1.1 Perceptions on the practice of arranged marriage
	1.2 Perceptions on same sex marriage
	1.3 Perceptions on cousin marriage

This sub-section reports the views of the focus group participants on the dynamics of marriage, and their attitude towards traditional marriage practices of the Lobedu.

Category 4.3.2.1 Perceptions on the practice of arranged marriage

Some of the participants did not like the practice of arranged marriages because they believe that love is all about feelings. They argued that marriage is a long term commitment between the couples themselves. Furthermore, they indicated that their parents do not have a right to choose husbands/wives on their behalf because they do not know what qualities they want in a partner. Their voices concur with the Sepedi expression ‘‘Mmapelo o ja serati’’ (a heart chooses for itself).

I do not support that ideology in the sense that my parents can be attracted by a person because of the family background. If I do not have feelings for the person, there is nothing I can do. What I believe is that love is the only thing. It is only God who can decide about any arrangement between two persons. Beauty or a family’s wealth cannot buy love. It is only your feelings that determine how far you love a person, not your parents.

The issue of choosing a partner for someone is not fair because love is all about feelings. If you do not have feelings for someone, there will be no true love. In Sepedi there is a saying that ‘‘namakgapeletsa e phuma pitsa’’ meaning that if you force a person to do something without his/ her interest, the thing will be destroyed. It is a burden to live with a person whom you do not love.

The participants highlighted that they will never let their parents choose their spouses. In their view, love should be the only factor and no one should be entitled to choose for others.

No, I will never allow them to choose on my behalf because it is my life. I know that my parents love me, but this does not mean that they have a right to choose a partner for me.

Some of the participants, however, approved of marriages that are arranged by parents. The participants emphasised that parents know the criteria to be followed during the process and they will know the history of the family, and that this will enable them to choose better.

I support the marriage arranged by parents because our parents love us. They care much about our future and they are always available to support us. When they take a decision to choose a partner, it is because they know the person thoroughly. To me

this is a good idea because we go to townships and meet people from different cultures and within a short time we decide to marry each other... That is why there is a high rate of divorce.

In my point of view, there is nothing wrong when my parents choose a spouse for me. I will appreciate it when they make a choice because I believe that they would never let me down. Their process of making a choice, they will follow an appropriate procedure. They will first trace the life history of that family before they can establish a relationship.

The responses above reveal mixed perceptions. However the majority of the participants indicated that they have a negative opinion as far as arranged marriages are concerned.

Category 4.3.2.2 Same sex marriages

Some of the participants acknowledged that they do not support same sex marriages because they believe that God has created man and woman. When it comes to their perceptions on marriage, these are influenced by Christianity. The following comments made by some of the participants reveal this:

I do not support this type of marriage because it is immoral because God created man and woman. It is against the word of God.
I am against that marriage because marriage is the relationship between husband and wife, and the intention is to bear children.

On a different note, one participant highlighted that there is nothing wrong if a woman who is unable to bear children is provided with a daughter-in-law to take care of her.

I do support same sex marriages which were practiced in the past because women who fail to bear children must be cared for. They were provided with daughters-in-law who had to perform duties on their behalf.

Category 4.3.2.3 Cousin Marriage

Some of the participants indicated that they do not support cousin marriage because they see their cousins as their brothers or sisters. On the argument that marrying within the family strengthens family ties, they were of the opinion that it fuel animosity within the clan if things do not work out between the partners.

I cannot marry my cousin because we are from the same family. I do not want to cause any tension between my father and my aunt. If we start to fight, the two families will be affected.

It was evident from some of the participants that they have positive opinions on cross cousin marriage. They stressed the point that it is possible for one to love their cousins. Some of them highlighted that it will also strengthen the relationship between their parents. In their opinion, it enhances the possibility of family members resolving matters in a peaceful manner.

I support it because it will strengthen the relationship. When they perform rituals, it will be easy for them because they know one another.

Yes, I can marry her/him as long as I have feelings for him/her. As long as we are meant for each other, there is nothing that can stop us.

4.3.3 Focus group theme 3: Initiations

Almost all the participants expressed negative perceptions about going to initiation schools. Participants argued that initiations affect formal school attendance because of time lost. The effectiveness of the lessons learnt at initiation schools was questioned by some of the participants because, in their opinion, there is no difference between initiates and non-initiates.

I think going to the initiation school is a waste of time... Normally initiations are conducted during winter times. While you are in the initiation school other learners will be attending winter enrichment classes. Initiations do not help because you will never benefit from them.

There is no difference between initiates and those who did not attend the initiation school. Some initiates do not show any respect, they do not listen to their elders. They use strong language when talking to their parents.

Some of the male participants agreed that they did go to initiation schools. Ironically, they are of the opinion that other boys should not go to initiation schools. They revealed that in the initiation schools initiates were ill-treated and they were incited to attend on false information by their peers. Almost all the participants were concerned about the safety of initiation schools.

...many people are after money. The experienced people are no longer with us. Everyone has the right to introduce a school as long as they have money. Even the people who do not have experience are allowed to introduce the school. Today, there is a high death rate of initiates because people who circumcise them do not have knowledge.

I went to initiation school because of the influence that I got from my friend. I was 10 years old then. They told us that there is delicious food in the school. We went there in big numbers but we were young. It is not good to attend the school, especially in

winter time when you will be affected by cold temperatures. There are many terrible things happening in the initiation schools. You are always beaten...

4.3.4 Focus group theme 4: Rituals

Most of the participants stressed the point that they do not attend rituals because they are Christians. The participants acknowledged that only family members who are not Christians attend ritual ceremonies. The dilemma faced in this culture is that some of the younger people who are entrusted with the responsibility of mediators between other family members and their ancestors are not submitting to their calling.

I do not support rituals because I do not believe in them. I believe that Africans and their faith are outdated. You can perform rituals and do everything in your power to approach your ancestors, but only to find that nothing changes.

In my family, I am the one who is chosen by the ancestors to conduct rituals. I am the one who is named after my grandparent who died many years ago. As a Christian, I cannot perform the rituals because it is against my belief. My grand-mother performs rituals on my behalf.

In accordance with the above responses, some of the focus group participants expressed doubt in as far as the reliability of rituals was concerned.

No, because in my family they were conducting rituals every year but my father was unemployed. He decided to go to church, but now he is employed.

However, findings reveal that some of the younger participants still believe in the effectiveness of traditional rituals.

I am an African who believes in ancestral spirits. It helped me when I repeated the same standard. The ritual ceremony was performed for me. My parents advised me that although the ritual ceremony was conducted, I should read books. At last I did it I am now in Grade 12.

Yes, they work as long as you believe in them. If you believe and act according to the instructions from the ancestors, things will happen. Let us take our culture and move forward. I encountered many problems in my life, but after the rituals were conducted, I am now relieved.

Most of the participants confirmed that their religion is Christianity. They indicated that Christianity taught them many useful things in life. They know how to conduct themselves before they can get into a marriage. Some of the participants highlighted that when they have problems, they approach God themselves rather send someone to talk on their behalf.

I believe in Christ because my religion offers me the opportunity to talk to my God face to face, not to ask someone to talk on my behalf. You are the one who knows all the problems you want to share with your lord. If you send someone he/she might forget on the way and deliver the wrong message.

4.3.5 Focus group theme 5: Politics

Some of the participants expressed the view that politics have changed the way the Lobedu conduct their cultural activities. What is notable is that high school learners interviewed in this study did not support the interference of political leaders on tribal issues. They believe that political leaders are influenced by western laws, and that this would impact on their culture negatively. Participants stressed the point that, today; journalists attend cultural ceremonies to record and take photos of sacred activities with the intention to make money. Participants indicated that political leaders must stay away and let the traditional leaders do their duties themselves.

I do not support the interference of politics in the Lobedu customs. Politics have changed the way the Balobedu people operating their cultural phenomenon. Today there is no secret because in the past many of their events were attended by the royal members only. Nowadays, there is no restriction because political leaders attend even though they are not from the royal family. They come up with their tape recorders, videos to record and take photographs each and every activity that is taking place in the royal kraal. Journalists also attend with the intention of making money.

The focus group interviews revealed mixed perceptions with regard to the themes were discussed. It became apparent that most of the young people who are in their teens are influenced by westernisation and popular culture. However, they still value their culture as a reservoir of indigenous knowledge.

4.4 Summary

Cultural evolutionists purport that changes in technological, environmental, demographic or socio-political conditions can lead to individuals and groups adapting to new practices (Chipnik, 1981:257). Accordingly, the findings of this study reveal that the culture of the Balobedu people is not exempted from the above mentioned assumptions.

Older members of the Lobedu tribe felt that their culture had lost its essence due to contact with external factors. In this regard, the findings revealed that Christianity and intercultural contact were among the major factors that propelled changes in the Balobedu culture. Although most of the older participants thought that because of these external factors their

culture has been impacted negatively, findings show that some of the participants acknowledge that there are positive outcomes as well. It was further revealed that some Balobedu people, especially the younger generation, were no longer interested in practicing what used to be common occurrences in Balobedu culture. Practices that are affected most are traditions like rituals, initiations, marriage practices and so forth. Older generations constantly cautioned against the dangers of people rendering their own culture insignificant, by adopting foreign cultures.

The findings of this study also revealed that the younger generation feel that Selobedu has to evolve with time so that it can be relevant to the changed religious, socio-economic and political context. Although they valued some of the cultural traits of Selobedu, they contested the significance of some of their indigenous practices. For the youth and young adults, Christianity was held with high regard, and became the main point of reference for most of their behavioural practices. Chapter 5 presents the discussion and contextualisation of the findings.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data gathered from participant interviews and focus group discussions. From the data, themes, categories and sub-categories emerged. This chapter presents the discussion and analysis of the findings of the study. The findings are corroborated with findings that emerged from the theoretical framework and the literature review outlined in Chapter 2. Specific attention is paid to the similarities and differences between literature review and the findings of this study. Furthermore, the chapter provides a summary of the major themes, and positions them within the research question and the cultural theories which form the theoretical framework of this study.

5.2 Findings on the discourse of culture

Participants and focus group interviews revealed related and different findings on the concept of culture. The participants differed in terms of age and world view and therefore, their cultural knowledge was also different. The overexposed participants and the religious group had a tendency of bending towards the western culture and interpreted the Balobedu culture as being backward.

Your faith is what influences the way you live your life. Intervention comes via our belief system. The main request we have is asking for rain. When I was growing the request was always granted. If you request things by faith they will happen. When there is no rain people go to the grave of Makobo, the old ancestor, and conduct their rituals and their request for rain gets answered. Today's generation believes that there is no dignity in performing these rituals.

Yes, in one way or another because western civilization has penetrated into our culture. Some of our people regard this traditional worship as heathen. They do not participate in the practices because they believe that they are uncivilized.

5.2.1 Findings on the reminiscences of the cultural bygones

The above theme mostly reveals the views of older participants who, in this study are considered to be more aware of the Balobedu culture and can, therefore, remember their cultural past. Selobedu is portrayed as a distinctive culture in terms of its language, rain-

making ability, religion, morals and so forth. In this regard, the findings show that the people were united by what they considered to be their unique cultural traits. This presentation of Khelobedu supports the definition of culture as given by Mazumdar (2000:2), who defines culture as a group of mutually interacting people with negotiated, shared values, understanding, norms, ideals, ways of life, and ways of looking at the world and their place in it.

The findings, in this study, revealed that, in the past, the Selobedu culture was mainly characterised by norms which were accepted as major determinants of the life of the Balobedu. Therefore, in this study, older participants seemed to be unhappy with the disturbance of the status quo as seen in the changing behavioural patterns. This sentiment echoes the argument by Harris (1975:3) who argued that culture is the acquired lifestyle of a group of people which consists of patterned, repetitive ways of thinking feelings, and actions that are characteristics of the member of a particular society or segment of a society. The manner in which the participants recalled how women used to act in relation to men and how they still held that as the normal way of behaviour confirms that certain characteristics were seen to be what anchors typical Balobedu people. It was found in this study that the older participants longed for their cultural past.

In the past ritual ceremonies were attended by people sharing the same surname but today there is no exclusion everybody attends. The Balobedu ritual ceremony is attended by people from different tribes. Daily ceremonies are recorded. Their marriage practice, attire and language are influenced by other cultures. Deceased pictures are displayed in public. Many cultural ceremonies have disappeared.

Literature reveals that culture evolves. This implies that during the cultural process, members of the community are able to improve their culture gradually by preserving and changing developments brought by previous generations (Mead, 1999:37). For example, the older participants in this study fondly remembered how they used animals as totems. In their view, the animals were treated with the respect deserved by their ancestors. The sacred animals would be present during traditional worship and given traditional beer, as if the beer was given to their ancestors.

However, as the culture evolves, the practice is now being questioned by younger participants who see it as an exploitation of animals and an infringement of animal rights. Perceptions

like this give an indication that the new generation considers it very important to change the practice that was once cherished by the older generations.

In the past each and every headman in the village had to have a large pot which contained water, which helped make rain. Rituals consist of five elements. An animal named after a person we respected, was provided with beer. The beer was then prepared in the royal family. In the past the ceremony known as “mosebetho” was performed in the night. This is the ceremony of giving the cow ancestral beer. Beer is smeared on the cow’s head. The queen leads the people to the family where there is a shrine. The beer is poured over the shrine as the people talk to their ancestors being the instrument of choice.

In this study, the narratives of older participants recollected memories of the different ceremonies and rituals that were part of Khelobedu culture. Some of them were repeated at fixed intervals, whereas others were performed whenever it was necessary. As they fondly recalled the past, they revealed that their ceremonies were inclusive, with different people performing what used to be well-defined tasks. For example, the traditional healers advised the elders about the procedures that should be followed during a particular ceremony. Every family was expected to contribute to the success of the events. Men and women discreetly played their roles. In this regard Selobedu culture conformed to ‘Hierarchy or Collectivism’ as stated in Douglas’ (1982) model of four cultures as cited in Wildavisky (1987:6).

In accordance with collectivism culture, Selobedu advocated decisions that were descriptive and binding to all members of the society. Inequality of roles between men and women was justified. In that regard, the social ties were stronger as members played well-defined roles. The state of affairs that existed was never interrogated. However, participants widely expressed that westernisation tainted the wholesomeness of Selobedu culture. The next finding discusses the extent to which Selobedu was stained by external factors.

5.2.2 Findings on a culture stained by contemporary fragilities

Research reveals that there are external factors which influence other people’s cultures (Bond & King, 1998:353). This study, therefore, agrees with this claim. Participants were unanimous that the Selobedu culture has been influenced by external factors. Those factors included issues like Christianity, other indigenous and foreign cultures, politics and so forth. The findings show that because of the invasion by the various external factors on Selobedu, members started drifting away from their usual way of living.

Contact with the outsiders has affected the Lobedu people because... people would want to copy... or would want to imitate others in such cases where they see things that are different from what they have been doing they try to assess and in that case or in that assessment... some would be absorbed by the activities... and gradually people would move away from the Lobedu practices going to the new practices they see coming in.

This study appears to support the argument by cultural theorists that religion is one of the sources that triggers change in most societies. In the case of Selobedu, Christianity was found to be one of the major invaders. The findings of this study reveal that as a foreign religion, it brought with it a peculiar concept of God to the Lobedu people. In Christianity, there is only one God who is made up of three different persons that is, God the father, God the son and the Holy Spirit. This was found to be in contradiction with how Balobedu perceived the concept of God. The findings of this study appear to agree with those of Krige (1980:231) who states that the gods of the Balobedu are their ancestors. In this regard, the gods are their deceased mothers and fathers who protect and provide for them even after death.

...western civilization has penetrated into our culture. Some of our people regard this traditional worship as heathen. They do not participate in the practices because they believe that these are uncivilized. They believe in the Holy Trinity.

The understanding that has been obtained from the findings of this study especially among the younger participants is that because of Christianity, the indigenous ways of worship are primitive and heathen. One participant commented that:

I think religion has influenced me in a way that I no longer follow African traditional worship but I have turned to western religion which is Christianity. I don't... like I am no longer considering these things of ancestors as real or applying nowadays.

This comment is similar to findings of the study based on African religions in Brazil which revealed that in some instances religions of African origin were referred to as superstitions, criminal practices or mental derangement (Lopes, 2004:839). This indicates that African religions like that of the Balobedu are depicted as inferior even by the indigenous people. Consequently, the legitimacy of such religions becomes disputable beyond their boundaries.

The tendency of doubting the authenticity of indigenous religion by younger participants in this study stand in contrast with the argument presented by Bogopa (2010:1) that ancestors have supernatural powers and authority, and that they play an important role in the world of the living. Findings of this research show that most of the younger participants' perceptions

show that ancestors do not play any role in their lives and this confirms that change has taken place the religious practices of the tribe.

This study revealed that some members of the Lobedu tribe consciously chose to neglect their religion and follow Christianity. According to cultural theorists people are inclined to make fundamental decisions which, in turn, are cultural (Wildavsky, 1987:5). These choices are said to be emanating from preferences and interests of the people. Findings showed lack of interest on worshipping their ancestors by most of the younger participants. Furthermore, they showed preference for Christianity.

However, it was also revealed in this study that some members of the tribe adopt Christianity while they are still clinging to their traditional ways of worship. Even, so Christianity was found to have propelled the cultural evolution of Selobedu in greater depth.

I am a Christian... so there are customs and activities in the Lobedu culture which I no longer follow due to Christianity. Issues of consulting with traditional healers... issues of sending children to initiation schools... so there are things which I can say Christianity influenced me. Unlike how they do it when they put snuff 'mo fase' (down) and then 'ba thoma go rapela' (they start praying) those who have died a long time ago.

Apart from Christianity, Western cultures were also found to have influenced the culture of Khelobedu. All the participants in this study revealed that Western cultures had an impact on their outlook to life. Although most of them feel that the invasion by Western cultures is eroding the substance of their culture, they highlighted many benefits of integrating Western culture in their daily living. The benefits include exposure to technology, fashion trends, economic network and so on.

Uhm Western culture contributed a lot because today we are living in an industrialised society whereby technology is too much. Today we have cell phones which were not there in the past. We have computers. We have internet. The clothes which we are wearing today... they are from all over the world because of globalisation, and most of the things I believed in my culture I no longer believe in some of them because of Western culture. Uhm... uhm cultural ceremonies like family rituals no longer exist because of Western culture.

The excerpt above is a demonstration of the notion that culture is an adaptive process. Keesing (1974:74) argues that human beings have the ability to adapt to various environments. In line with cultural theories, the participant above revealed that systems like

technology facilitated how people interacted with their environment. The changes brought about by such interactions are changes of culture. The cultural change caused by adapting to the new environment is also confirmed by older participants who complained of the immensity of change brought by Western culture on their society.

It was revealed, in this study, that contact with other indigenous South African cultures also influenced the manner in which the Lobedu people perceived intercultural relations. Participants confirmed that in the past, contact was not condoned between the Balobedu people and the Tsonga-speaking South Africans, whether in marriage or even allowing them entrance to the royal premises. However, findings of this study brought to light a shift in perceptions among the younger generation. They started interacting with the Tsonga speaking people positively and advocated the concept of a common identity which is 'we are all Africans'. This correlates with what cultural evolutionists call an 'evolution of minds', which implies that as new generations come to contact with the world that supports learning, their actions become more varied and less stereotyped (Sternly, 2011:816).

Moreover, it was also discovered, in this study, that politics changed the way legal affairs were conducted among the Lobedu people. Traditionally, Selobedu culture put more power on the tribal authorities. The decisions taken in traditional courts were not mandated by equality and inclusivity. Situating this assumption in Douglas (1982)'s model of four cultures as cited in Wildavsky (1987:5) the decisions were prescriptive and inequality was justified. Commoners did not appeal decisions taken by the authorities and were obliged to honour the verdicts taken. However, the findings show that after the inception of the democratic government, ordinary people became empowered and were included in decision-making.

On the issue of governance in our communities... in the past traditional leaders or chiefs were in total control of the area and of the community, but now due to this new developments of democracy and Westernization we see government having control... a shared control with traditional leaders in our constituencies. So in the past it was traditional leaders taking charge of the communities. Traditional leaders of course will have that small role of seeing how things are happening but government is in charge.

It was also revealed in this study that politics encourage a relaxation of some of the Selobedu cultural practices. Places which were inaccessible for some people became accessible and some restrictions were removed.

5.2.3 Findings on valued traits of Selobedu culture

In spite of the older participants' views that the younger generation had lost the essence of what it means to be a Molobedu, it was found in this study that almost all of the younger participants appreciated the lessons that they had learned from their culture. The findings show that the value of respect especially for the elders was highly emphasised among the Balobedu people. However, this respect is also being challenged as older participants argued that lack of respect prevailed among the young people. It was also revealed that attempts to infuse norms and traditions were done through various institutions, for example, initiations and the wearing of traditional attire during certain events.

When we grew up... ourselves... and when we were at the head kraal resting, there was an old lady who was a Queen's servant. When we noticed her arrival we will realize that the queen was coming. We will all lie flat facing down until they are gone. Today children who are of the same age to Prince Mpatatla do not respect him. When we grew up we were respecting the Queen's children even if we were older than them.

Another appreciated feature is the peculiarity of Selobedu language. It was indicated in this study that the Selobedu language was good for social cohesion. The findings show that Selobedu was a language of choice for most of the participants, whenever they were around people of their own culture. They were socialised to cherish their language. Therefore, these findings support Arnett's (1995:618) view that socialisation cultivates sources of meaning like what it is to be valued, what is important, and what to lie for. However, participants also revealed that the use of the Selobedu language is restricted as they cannot use the language in schools or formal situations. Most of the older participants were concerned that many young people preferred to use English over their own language.

5.2.4 Results of the focus group: Young people's perceptions on the concept of culture

Findings of this study indicated that most of the participants who took part in focus group discussions appreciated the role played by the Selobedu culture in their lives. For these young people, awareness of their culture meant that they had an opportunity to know about valuable things of the past. These included their humanity and sense of African pride. The findings show that focus group participants cherished the value of 'concern for others' and the significance of maintaining healthy family relations, whether with one's immediate family or with the extended family.

My culture enables youth to know how to respect their parents and also shows us how to survive in life. It teaches us about which customs to follow and what should be forbidden and avoided.

This study also revealed that negative perceptions towards Selobedu culture have since emerged. Some of the pessimistic attitudes on Selobedu were observed by the participants. In this regard, the view is that some of the young Balobedu people are drifting away from their culture, and that this threatens it. For some participants, their views were innate. They felt that their elders failed to justify why certain cultural behaviours were significant. Moreover, the fact that most of their information is disseminated orally makes it to lose value as it is transmitted from generation to generation. The findings of this study revealed that the focus group participants were personally influenced by other cultures. That happened because of greater access to mass media and technology. They argued that dominant cultures offered more opportunities, and some of them did not see the importance of being limited by the restrictions of their culture. It was evident in this study that some participants viewed cherishing their culture as being stuck in the past.

I am not comfortable about my culture because today many people live a modern life. We need to change from our cultural belief.

I do not feel alright because many people in Bolobedu are still lacking behind. They are not yet civilized because they are more influenced by their culture. Today we live a modern life. Let us change and do what is good for us because gone are those days.

Almost all the participants acknowledged that Selobedu culture has evolved, and the majority of them interpreted that as a positive attribute. Moving away from one's culture is interpreted as an indicator of civilisation by most of the focus group participants.

5.3 Findings on celebrations

Some of the older participants revealed a variety of celebrations that used to take place in the past. The findings of this study show that the culture of the Lobedu people is sacrificed as young people display lack of interest in some of the celebrations. It was further indicated that most of those who showed some interest in Selobedu celebrations were not eager to be active participants.

The attendance would not be that much, such... would be guided or directed by curiosity or they would like to see and know what is it that the older people were doing in the past and not that many would attend them because of the interference of other modern day technologies.

Krige (1932:342) argues that traditional beer has always been a significant part of Selobedu celebrations, during marriage ceremonies, initiation ceremonies and so forth. The findings are in line with Krige's (1934) argument and they show that the serving of beer has always been an integral part of celebrating the accomplishment of rain rituals and various occurrences in Selobedu culture. However, findings of this study revealed that factors like Christianity, education and intercultural contact changed the way the Balobedu people now perceive their celebrations.

5.4 Findings on marriages

5.4.1 Findings on cross cousin marriages

Some of the older participants responded positively to the issue of cross-cousin marriages as they believe that they strengthened the relationships between family members. This finding concurs with an earlier study by Shaw (2001:315) which found that British Pakistanis favored cousin marriages and disapproved of marriages across the social divide. In the case of Balobedu people assume that if the husband passes away, all the inheritance should be part of the family, rather than move outside the clan. This tendency of wanting to keep wealth within the family has been reported widely across societies that practice cross cousin marriages. For example, among the Muslims in the Middle East (Khuri, 1970); in Kurdistan (Barth, 1986) and in Saudi Arabia (Warsy et al., 1995).

The participants of this study extended their argument by stating that, in the Balobedu tradition, people who marry outsiders will contaminate the royal blood. Some participants stressed the point that parents do not feel comfortable when their children take a decision to marry outsiders, but if that happens they will first explore the history of the family, in order to know them better. One of the older participants hinted on the changing attitudes towards marriage between cousins.

In the past parents made the decisions themselves. These days girls are no longer forced to marry their cousins because they are educated enough to know that they have the right to choose who they want to marry. Marriages arranged by the parents

do not bring any tension because they are family and they have a mutual understanding.

Although some participants feel content with the practice of cross-cousin marriages some are not comfortable with this practice. The young participants, in particular expressed negative opinions in as far as cross cousin marriages are concerned. They revealed that it is like marrying one's brother or sister. This sentiment also prevails in the Northern part of India where cousin marriages are seen as incest (Bittles, 1991:791; Kumar 2000, 127). The findings of this study showed that marriage between relatives can trigger family feuds instead of unifying the clan. Almost all the young participants in this study were against cross cousin marriages.

5.4.2 Findings on arranged marriages

A study by McAvoy (2008) asked the question, whether arranged marriages for teenage girls should be allowed? In traditional communities, arranged marriages were found to be common. Young people were coerced into submitting to a marriage or a partner they did not want. They abided by this because they believed that following the commands of parents was morally acceptable and culturally important (McAvoy, 2008:9). Young people in the study by McAvoy (2008) were conscious that by rejecting marriage arrangements made by their parents they would face total isolation. It was considered shameful and often, damnable to defy one's parents.

In the same vein most of the older participants, in this study, are in favour of marriages being arranged by parents for their children. They suggest that parents should be involved in the arrangement of everything during the process of negotiation and the finalisation of the marriage for their children. This view emanates from Selobedu's cultural past, which restricted grooms or brides from choosing their own partners. The practice of arranging marriages by parents and relatives was also observed in Shaw (2001:324).

Marriages arranged by the parents do not bring any tension because they are family and they have a mutual understanding. When the couple fights their parents who are brothers and sisters will just want to build them. In the past many families were caused to grow because of these marriages. Today when people choose husband they do not need co-wife and that thing has led to lack of respect in the families.

It is revealed, in this study, that most of the young participants do not support an arranged type of marriage. They assume that practicing this would not be a good idea because it becomes a burden to young couple as the union is not founded on the concept of love. They indicated that everyone has a right to choose his/her partner so that their relationship would last. Their response totally discredited arranged marriages. They interpreted arranged marriages as interference by parents in their children's personal matters. The findings of this study highlight that the practice of arranged marriages is no longer popular among the Balobedu people. It was further revealed that young people are of the opinion that choosing a life partner is personal and parents must only play a supportive role.

5.4.3 Findings on same sex marriage

It has been highlighted, in this study, that in Selobedu culture, the practice of same sex marriages existed. The understanding that has been obtained during this study is that same sex marriages occurred mostly between women; and none have been reported between men. This absence of same sex marriages between men in Selobedu culture differs from the findings of the study by Eskridge (1993:1457), which revealed that in some Native American Cultures some boys were raised to be berdaches, and these were destined to marry men and be called wives and perform duties that were traditionally meant for women.

It was further revealed in this study that same sex marriages in Selobedu culture did not include intimate sexual gestures between partners. This gives the indication that a concern raised by Catholics and Protestants that marriage must be a union between a man and a woman and it cannot be extended to two people of the same marriage as a matter of morality (Eskridge, 1993: 1428) was curbed in the case of Khelobedu culture because it emanated from it emanated from a verse in the bible which reads thus: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Leviticus 18:22). It is necessary to indicate that the command in this scripture does not affect the Lobedu people as women who marry women did not engage in sexual intercourse.

It was revealed in this study that male partners were found to impregnate women who were married to other women. These men were not allowed to have relationships with their children. One of the participants showed appreciation of same sex marriage.

In the past same sex marriage was seen as an approved type of marriage preferred by the Lobedu people. It was no wonder in the community and became an acceptable norm. It was usually practiced in the royal family when the wife of the tribal chief from whom the Prince has to be born was barren. A bloodline woman was given to the tribal chief mainly for the purpose of child bearing. Same sex marriages were also practiced outside the royal house. A woman would be married to a woman and be given to her husband for child-bearing.

The findings show that most of the older participants seem to understand and promote same sex marriages as practiced by the Balobedu people. The participants are of the opinion that same sex marriages benefited those women who did not bear children. They also argue that, since in the Bolobedu tribe most leaders are women, this practice afforded them an opportunity to have maidens who looked after them.

...same sex marriage has taken place where one was unable to bear children or one was barren and... because of that she should not live alone. Then there would be negotiations to find if there would be a wife and that wife would be regarded as the wife of that lady. And they would arrange that she should bear children and they would be under the care of the barren woman and she would be regarded as the husband.

However, this study revealed that in the present day, same sex marriage is no longer practiced among the members of the Lobedu tribe. All the younger participants did not support the practice because they believed that marriage should be between a man and a woman. They further emphasised that children deserve to know and be raised by their biological parents, and that they should not be compromised for whatever reason.

5.4.4 Findings on the payment of the bride price (magadi) and the practice of wives as gifts

There is a proverb in Khelobedu which says ‘nwana malome nnyale dikhomo di boele shakeni’ meaning that ‘my uncle’s child, please marry me so that the cattle should come back to the Kraal’. This proverb gives a better understanding of why the Balobedu people preferred cousin marriages. In line with the above proverb, it was found, in this study, that the Lobedu people initially used cattle as a currency to pay for brides. The practice was beneficial since the cattle were circulating among the clan members. Accordingly, their wealth was protected as their children were not allowed to marry outsiders.

When a boy marries in his uncle’s family, he uses his family’s cattle to pay magadi. The cattle don’t leave the clan because the family does not marry outsiders.

However, it was revealed, in this study, that the dynamics of marriage have since changed. Arranged marriages and cousin marriages are no longer preferred. The dynamics of bride-price have also evolved. It was found, in this study, that younger participants did not support the issue of using cattle to pay the bride-price. Unlike in the past, cattle are no longer perceived as the main symbol of wealth among the Lobedu people. Consequently, the bride-price transactions are made with money which is considered to be more valuable.

However, participants were concerned with the tendency of some parents to charge very high bride-prices claiming that their daughters were educated. This argument can be linked to research findings which describe the bride-price as an indicator of a person's social status (Frakenberg & Thomas, 2001:4; Kaye, Mirembe, Ekstrom, Kyomeihondo & Johansson, 2007:301; Wendo, 2004:716). Some of the participants, in his study, were of the view that the bride-price should be abolished. This sentiment is supported by findings of studies conducted by Kaye *et al.* (2007) and Wendo (2004). These studies raised some concerns such as women being subjected to physical and sexual abuse as result of being treated like objects since their husbands claimed that they had bought them. However, in the case of the Balobedu people, some participants are of the opinion that the bride-price should be maintained as it is part of the Balobedu culture. Moreover the practice of women as gifts was also abandoned

...the practice started to change its real direction during the reign of queen Mokope, when the western culture started affecting our people. In the past girls were not allowed to attend school. Girls started to attend school and became more independent which affected the practice negatively, because they now know their rights, they can choose who they want to marry. They started to rebuke their culture and refused to be given to the queen to satisfy the family's needs

5.4.5 Results on the focus group participants: The paradox behind the institution of marriage

There were mixed perceptions on marriages of close relatives. Some of the participants in the focus group indicated that they do not support cousin marriages because they see their cousins as their brothers or sisters. The idea that marrying within the family strengthens family ties was rejected by participants who claimed that it fuels animosity within the clan if things do not work out between the partners.

I cannot marry my cousin because we are of same blood. I take her/him as my brother/sister.

The majority of the focus group participants rejected arranged marriages. They argued that such marriages are not based on love or personal feelings. The findings revealed that most participants preferred to choose their own partners as they believed that some of the criteria used in arranged marriages can be deceiving. For instance, family history or the parents' reputation does not mean that their children will always turn out well.

Your family can lead you into trouble because sometimes children are not the same as their parents. They do not resemble their parents. Some families are well-known for their good behaviour, but only to find that their children do not behave like their parents.

The findings revealed that those who supported arranged marriages believed that parents followed correct procedure to find good partners for their children. They further argued that getting involved in traditional marriages strengthens family ties, as significant family members get involved from the initial stages of recommending partners, and they also play an important role of teaching couples about Khelobedu customs and what is expected of them.

I support the marriage arranged by parents because your parents love you. They care much about your future and they are always available to support you. When they take a decision to choose you a partner it is because they know the person thoroughly. To me this is a good idea because we go to townships and meet people from different cultures and within a short time we decide to marry each other. Sometimes you marry a person from Kwazulu-Natal whose relatives you do not even know. After some time when the person the person starts to show his/her true colours, there is nothing you can do because you are already engaged. That is why there is a high rate of divorce.

Most of the focus group participants rejected same sex marriages. They argued that Christianity considers same sex marriages to be immoral. Participants confined their definition of marriage to a union between a man and a woman. One of the participants expressed the view that people of his culture should not base their views of marriage solely on Christianity. The belief is that Christianity is influenced by foreign cultures. Therefore, people should be cautious when they decide to shun their own marriage practices because of Christian teachings. The results from the older participants, younger participants and focus group participants reveal that on the whole the institution of marriage has evolved. However, some of the participants still showed their appreciation for the traditional marriage practices.

5.5 Findings on initiations

Cultural theorists believe that the socialisation of individuals in a community comes from different sources which help people to acquire the behaviors and beliefs of the culture in which they live (Arnett, 1995:618). It was revealed, in this study, that in the Selobedu culture, initiation schools served as one of the sources of socialisation. In this regard, such schools served as transmitters of cultural knowledge and what was considered to be the traditions of the culture under study. This approach therefore is in line with Mavundla *et.al.* (2009:397) who argue that cultural information is traditionally known and shared by men, and it is orally transmitted from one generation to another. The findings further revealed that initiation schools were not co-educational; males and females were initiated separately.

5.5.1 Findings on female initiation

The findings of the study indicate that the trend of female initiation has declined among the Balobedu people. The older participants revealed that in the past, initiations were valuable as they taught girls lessons of womanhood. However, it was also revealed that the value of initiations has since declined and, for this reason, many girls were no longer participating in such practices. Almost all the voices of the participants in this study echoed that female initiations should be eradicated as it taught girls to endure physical and sexual abuse.

I cannot encourage one to go there... because I don't see it as important as I have mentioned. It is not important. In my opinion and my Christian makeup of course, it is not important.

5.5.2 Findings on male initiations

From the current study, it would seem that the purpose and value of male initiations has evolved. It was disclosed that, initially, the purpose was to lead young man to adulthood and to teach them important survival skills. This statement concurs with Nel's (2011:39) argument that all rituals performed during the initiation process symbolise the end of childhood and the starting point of manhood. However, findings show that, in recent years, initiations are more of an economic institution one than morals which teaches the young children the traditions of society. This means that the focus of initiation schools has drifted from teaching manhood to money-making endeavours for those who initiate the boys.

The initiation is conducted annually and people pay a lot of money. Some children are attracted by the campaigns and in three days they are released. How can you teach a 10 year old child manhood or womanhood?

One of the concerns raised by the participants was that initiation schools are no longer completely bound by traditional rules and regulations. They are now more commercialised, and they ignore what used to be their purpose. Previously, initiation schools were renowned for their highly guarded secrets. First, women were not allowed to be anywhere near the initiates or enquire about things that took place during initiations. Second, men who did not go to initiations were regarded as not being man enough and were excluded from accessing any information regarding what happens during initiations. However, it was revealed in this study that the secrecy that surrounded Selobedu initiations has been compromised. This emanates from the fact that younger children who cannot even keep a secret, are taken to the initiation schools. It was further revealed that every incident is reported and sensationalised through the media. Both older and younger participants expressed negative perceptions regarding the role of male initiation in the advancement of Selobedu culture.

Today the rush is for money that is why they do not take that long. The little that remains is that they smear them with red polish and they celebrate. The status of initiation is eroded by taking young children to the initiation schools.

5.5.3 Results of focus group interviews on initiations

Almost all the participants expressed negative perceptions about male initiation schools. To start with, they argued that initiations affect formal school attendance because of time lost. Moreover, they were uncertain about the effectiveness of the lessons learnt at initiation schools. The findings of this revealed that participants could observe the attribute of respect for the elders from those who went to initiation schools. Apart from that, they believe that lessons learnt at initiation schools are no longer relevant for today's young men.

I do not support things like dikgopa (girls' initiation) and bodika (boys' initiation). In my point of view they do not help and they are valueless. Some of the people who attend them do not want to go back to school. Girls who have been initiated when they come back they start dating men. They do not even follow cultural norms taught in the initiation school.

Some of the male participants revealed that they went to initiation schools. They, however, indicated that they would never advise other boys to go to initiation schools. They revealed

that in the initiation schools initiates are ill-treated. They claimed that they were encouraged to attend initiation schools because of the false information given by their peers.

Boys who attended the initiation school used to tell me that in the initiation school they are always beaten with no valid reasons. They are always given instructions and if you fail to observe the rules you are beaten. They instruct you to eat all the food if you fail to finish them all you are beaten. They use long sticks to punish the initiates.

Almost all the participants were concerned about the safety of initiation schools. They support the idea that boys must go to hospitals or clinics for circumcision. In a similar vein, Junod (1962:82-85) explains some of the trials that occur during the initiation period. He argues that there is a belief that those trials are needed to make the initiates brave and responsible man. The trials outlined by Junod are as follows: the initiates are beaten for an offence which is perceived to be against a moral principle, and even if they have committed a small mistake, they suffer the consequences, they sleep naked even though it is winter time, they are not allowed to drink water, their parents bring only food and no other substance is allowed in the school. Junod (1962:85) emphasises that some of them may die of infection from circumcision wounds.

However, one participant was of the opinion that young people should be encouraged to attend initiation schools.

Yes, I say yes boys or girls should attend the initiation school because in the school they are taught manhood and womanhood. Everyone is taught how to handle a crisis in the family. Men are taught how to take care of their wives and children. All men should know that they are heads of the family. They must never neglect their responsibilities in their families. Women are taught that men are the heads of the families they should love and respect them. They are taught how to take care of their husbands and children.

In this study, most participants discouraged attendance at initiation schools. One can safely say that there is change of attitudes towards the practice of initiations, which was at some point cherished by the Balobedu people.

5.6 Findings on the role of khadi

Krige (1974:16) observed a special bond that is shared by a uterine brother and sister. It was also revealed in this study that in a typical Selobedu culture, a uterine sister (khadi) holds a

special place in her brother's family. The findings show that in some families she is still very important as she acts as both a priestess and a counsellor.

5.6.1 Findings on the role of khadi as a priestess of the family

The findings reveal mixed perceptions on the role of khadi as a priestess of the family. The older participants revealed that khadi is the only person authorised to converse with the ancestors on behalf of her brother's family. As a result, a khadi is worthy of respect, and this should be shown by all members of the clan. Respondents who perceive the role of khadi positively, expressed widely that no one should make her angry because any negative atmosphere around her would provoke the ancestors, and that can result in anguish and ill-health in the family.

This study, findings therefore agrees with the findings of the study by Lombard and Parsons (2003:81) which found out that a khadi is the one who has been anointed to intercede with the spirits on behalf of her brother's family. Another important issue that was raised by the participants is that a khadi plays a vital role in the royal family because she is the one who conducts rituals. She should always be invited during ritual ceremonies as a negotiator who can talk to the ancestors on behalf of the living.

Yes in one way or another yes because in the past shrines activities were performed by the paternal aunt. She was the one who led the ritual ceremony and all the responsibility was laid upon her shoulders. In the past like I indicated that Masopha and Khesethwane are Makobo's children and Masalanabo as their mother in law. In the Modjadji's clan there is no shrine, the shrine is in the Masopha's family but it was conducted by paternal aunt Khesethwane. That is why even today they are still following the same sequence.

A significant number of younger participants had a negative view towards the role of khadi as a priestess. As result, the findings reveal that there is a decline in the practice of affording the act of respect to khadi as was the case in the past. This declining status of the father's elder sister is mostly attributed to the majority of the Balobedu people leaning towards Christianity, which devalues ancestral worship. In this regard, many young people believe that they can pray for themselves, in order to receive healing, prosperity and so forth. Most of the participants denounced the position of a khadi as a special mediator, and believed that she is an ordinary person like everyone else, and that she cannot order any supernatural being to bless or curse them. This finding differs from what was mentioned in an earlier study that

indicated that a khadi is authorised to scold the ancestors for the misfortunes of the family and to further ask for good health (Lombard and Parsons, 2003: 82).

5.6.2 Findings on the role of khadi as a counselor

Literature revealed that a khadi played a significant role in her brother's family. Krige and Krige (1980:144) show that a sister whose marriage-cattle have been used by her brother to marry a wife has considerable control, particularly on the whole family in general and her brother's family in particular. For instance, it was established that in Selobedu culture, a khadi is responsible for the division of the inheritance on the death of her father and also to allocate her father's wives to men who would enable them to raise the family numbers by impregnating them (Mampeule, 18 August 2012). However, this study revealed that the role of khadi has deteriorated in most families. Some of the participants were suspicious as to whether a khadi can handle family problems in good faith. They also questioned if she was the most relevant person to solely shoulder other people's fate.

It has been mentioned, in this study, that some khadis take advantage of their positions as they think that they have more power to arbitrate over the family issues. As a result, some families no longer call for a khadi when they have matters to resolve. They treat a khadi like any other member of the family. Some participants revealed that they do not believe that making a khadi happy or angry will have an impact on their lives. This finding, therefore, contradicts the finding in literature, which showed that if a brother in, any way, ill-treats the Khadi of his family, the gods are liable to make his children sick until the brother humbly apologises to his sister, who will openly express her cause of distress openly (Krige, 1938:276).

5.6.3 Results of focus group participants: The role of Khadi

What is worth noting from the findings of the focus group discussions is that there were mixed perceptions in as far as the role of khadi was concerned. Some of the participants viewed the khadi as the most important person who is chosen to communicate with the ancestors on behalf of her brother's family. The participants further indicated that a khadi cannot be replaced by any other person. Accordingly, she deserves to be given respect and honour by those that she mediates on behalf of. It was revealed, in this study, that if a khadi is ill-treated, the ancestors will be angry and that will lead to illness and bad luck for the members of the family she intercedes for.

Some of the participants argued that a khadi is relevant because she can negotiate and mediate for her brother's family. This implies that she is entrusted with resolving conflicts and imposing decisions. However, some of the participants revealed that some khadis may be devious at times. For instance when the brother's family is not in good standing financially, the khadi may sometimes ignore her brother's call for support and help.

In my family our paternal aunt does not want to give us support. When we want to share our problems with her she just ignores us. She does not want to give a helping hand because she undermines us. In my father's younger brother's family she plays her role and she always gives a helping hand.

5.7 Findings on rituals

Literature has reported substantially about rain making-rituals in Selobedu and in other tribes (Haland, 2001; Huffman, 2009; Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2004; Murimbika, 2006; Ouzman, 1995; Schoeman, 2006). However, this study revealed that rituals played an integral part in both the royal family and the commoners' religious practices. The belief is that rituals allowed them to show appreciation for good things that had happened to them, and also afforded them an opportunity to raise their grievances with their ancestors. The findings revealed the significant processes that were undertaken during rituals. These involved the importance of beer, the use of animals as totems and so forth. The study revealed that in the past, Selobedu rituals were indisputable. For example most participants acknowledged that after the rain ritual has been performed there would be a change in weather, the much awaited rain would fall.

...an old person actually will be the one who should be selected to take a leading position. She has to prepare the traditional beer. In the morning we do not bath and we go to the sacred place at the corner. We go to that place to worship our gods and we have to put our money and put it there. They take a goat to be the first one to drink "mphapo" finger millet.

Participants revealed that, in modern times, most people are shunning the rituals. This was evident in the fact that some of the younger participants claimed that they had never witnessed rituals being performed in their families. Others showed that they were reluctant to attend rituals as they lacked faith in them. In this regard, Christianity played an important role in the changing perceptions towards the performance of rituals. However, it was also revealed that

some of the members of the tribe are participating in both traditional rituals and Christian worship.

5.7.1 Results of focus group interviews: Rituals

This study revealed that most of the younger participants did not attend rituals because they are Christians. The participants acknowledged that only family members who are not Christians attend rituals. One of the challenges revealed by the participants, in this study, is that some of them are entrusted with the duty of performing rituals for other family members. However, they choose not to execute their duties because they are Christians. The findings showed that most of the focus group participants doubted the reliability of rituals.

In my culture I am against the issue of conducting rituals. It is better to pray because if you pray God answers. You can perform rituals but only to find that your requests will never be answered but with God nothing is impossible....

One other thing I do not support is the fact that when they perform rituals they slaughter animals such as goats, chickens and cattle. They will tell you that one of your ancestors is angry and turning his/her back on the family. We need to perform rituals so that things must go the right way. If you check you will realise that your uncle or your aunt or whatsoever did not have any goat or chickens instead he died poor. How can he demand things that he did not leave behind? They also pour beer on the shrine to give the ancestors, but only to find that the person did not drink any beer when he/she was still alive.

On the other hand a younger participant revealed that he believed in the effectiveness of the traditional rituals.

I am an African who believes in ancestral spirits. It helped me when I repeated the same standard over and over again. The ritual ceremony was performed for me. My parents advised me that although the ritual ceremony was conducted I should read books. At last I did it; I am now in Grade 12.

From the findings of this study one can deduce that there is a change in the manner in which people view Khelobedu rituals. In the past the Balobedu people used to be an integral part of tribe's well being and gave meaning to their way of life. In spite of being held with high regard, by some of the participants, the majority of the people who participated in this study indicated that they would not take part in rituals.

5.8 Summary

The study set out to investigate and interpret the nature, direction and magnitude of cultural evolution in the Balobedu culture. To answer the research question, the following objectives were formulated:

- f. To investigate how the culture of the Balobedu tribe evolved over time;
- g. To explore whether contact with other tribes has contributed to the changes observed;
- h. To ascertain whether the spread of Christianity has, in any way, affected how people respond to certain cultural practices;
- i. To determine whether western culture and globalization influenced the local culture; and
- j. To find out how the political affairs of the country influence the cultural patterns practiced by tribes in a given time and space.

During this research study semistructured interviews and focus group discussions utilised to collect data. Since the study is qualitative in nature, data assembled was mainly in the form of narratives. Accordingly, content analysis was used to analyse the data. During the data analysis textual codes were used to indentify particular concepts, and these were later recoded. Categories were identified and these led to the compilation of emergent themes. The following themes were identified from both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions:

- Theme 1: The discourse of culture
- Theme 2: Celebrations
- Theme 3: Marriage
- Theme 4: Initiations
- Theme 5: The role of khadi
- Theme 6: Rituals
- Theme 7: Politics

The study was based on the assumption that culture is a process. It evolves over time and can be affected by the environment in which it exists. First, this study set out to investigate how

the culture of the Balobedu tribe evolved over time. The findings of this study reveal that the Selobedu culture has evolved. The culture which was initially distinctive has now changed its practices. All the participants who identified themselves as bonafide members of the Balobedu tribe attested that their conduct and appreciation had shifted from what their ancestors considered to be authentic Selobedu norms and standards. Their claims were justified by the way the older participants saw the younger generation, which was seen as neglecting the ways of their forefathers. In contrast most of the younger participants felt that most of the Selobedu practices needed to be reformed as they considered them to be primitive and alienating. However, there was also an indication that some of the values and practices were still valued by members of the tribe. For example, the Balabedu language was respected.

Second, the study set out to explore whether contact with other tribes had contributed to the changes observed. The findings revealed that contact with other indigenous South African cultures also influenced the perceptions of the Balobedu people. It was revealed that in the past, contact was not condoned between the Balobedu people and the Tsonga-speaking South Africans, whether in marriage or even allowing them entrance to the royal premises. The assumption was that the Tsonga-speaking people were of low standing.

The findings of this study brought to light that the intercultural interaction between the two tribes brought a shift in perceptions, especially among the younger generation. The youth viewed the Tsonga-speaking people positively as their equals and they emphasised the common identity of "Africans". The restrictions that were put in place to alienate other tribes have since been relaxed and intercultural interactions are promoted, whether in friendships or intercultural marriages.

Third, the study set out to ascertain whether the spread of Christianity has in any way affected how people respond to certain cultural practices. The findings showed that Christianity is one of the major factors that propelled the evolution of The Balobedu culture. Most of the participants described themselves as Christians and they demonstrated a lack of interest in traditional marriage practices like the marriage of close relatives and arranged marriages. Moreover, they described traditional ways of worship as primitive and illegitimate. Accordingly, this impacts human relations among the Balobedu tribe. For instance, a Khadi who was seen as a link between the family and the gods is now viewed, by many, as just any

other human being without sacred powers. The Balobedu people rejected the institution of initiations and rendered it ineffective. The findings show that as Christianity continues to spread, Selobedu culture will be strained in different aspects of its practices.

Fourth, the study set out to determine whether the western culture and globalization influenced Selobedu culture. The findings of this study revealed that appreciation of western culture has increased among the members of Balobedu. It was highlighted that the wide spread of technology and mass media makes western culture easily accessible and more appealing. For most young people, embracing western culture was equated with civilisation. In this context, civilisation means changing from Selobedu culture to adapting to the changes of culture brought by contact with western culture.

The evolution of Selobedu culture due to westernisation and globalisation was confirmed by some of the participants who complained about the immensity of changes observed in their society. These changes can be observed in how people conduct their daily practices, for example, they eat modern foods, how they dress, their mannerism and so forth. It was confirmed in this study that the invasion by Western cultures is eroding the substance Selobedu culture. However, the invasion was seen by many to have brought many benefits to the way the Balobedu people conducted their daily practices. Globalisation and intercultural contact allow Balobedu people to have access to the latest developments in technology, fashion trends, economic networks, and so on.

Fifth, the study set out to find out how the political affairs of the country influence the cultural patterns practiced by tribes at a given time and space. The findings of this study revealed that politics has brought a change on how the Balobedu people conduct their legal and communal affairs. To begin with, Bolobedu was initially seen as an autocratic kingdom. Decision-making processes to be less inclusive and oppressive to women and commoners. As a result, this study revealed that changes brought by politics were seen as necessary as they improved human relations and brought equality among community members. Because of politics, the Balobedu dynasty now has democratic processes in its administration.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study showed that politics has changed the way the Balobedu conduct their cultural activities. This includes the interference of political leaders

in tribal issues. The findings seem to indicate that politics is heavily influenced by western ways, and, as a result most of the traditional laws are rendered insignificant.

Politicians get involved in the affairs of the Balobedu people and, as a result, the privacy of cultural ceremonies and some of the rituals which were held with high esteem have been compromised. It was also revealed that because of interference by politicians, most traditional leaders have deviated from their conventional ways and have become politically-oriented. There seems to be a feeling that political leadership must co-exist with the traditional leadership as both are important.

Title of thesis:

KHELOBEDU CULTURAL EVOLUTION THROUGH ORAL TRADITION

Key terms:

Balobedu; Celebration; Christianity; Culture; Culture change; Initiation; Marriage; Rituals; Rain Queen; Role of khadi;

5.9 Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged within the context of the study of the evolution of the Balobedu culture:

- **Recommendation 1**

This study entrenches culture as a significant discourse which is fluid and adaptive. It is, therefore, recommended that to curb extinction of cultures belonging to small tribes, the Department of Art and Culture should establish centres and projects in various villages and in urban areas where people can go and learn about their indigenous cultures in detail.

- **Recommendation 2**

To manage and control the loss of the Balobedu language and other indigenous dialects, it is recommended that the Department of Education should incorporate non-official languages

endorsement in schools for mother tongue speakers. Teachers and members of the community who are knowledgeable about indigenous languages can be involved in the implementation thereof. This can be done with the locality of the unofficial language.

- **Recommendation 3**

Community leaders and parents should promote the dissemination of local artifacts and language usage. Young children should be encouraged to appreciate their culture instead of completely replacing it with dominant cultures.

5.10 Suggestions for further research

The present study was qualitative in nature. It has uncovered a number of possible areas to study. For example,

- How can initiation schools in Bolobedu be supported to ensure that they serve the expectations of the communities?
- How does the older generation of the Balobedu people interact with the Tsonga speaking people?
- How do Balobedu men view the role of women in their community?
- How do children born out of marriage between relatives view cross cousin marriages?
- What are the attitudes of Balobedu youth towards speaking Khelobedu in official gatherings?

5.11 Conclusion

This study set out to understand how Selobedu culture has evolved with time. It is evident from the findings that the participants of the study acknowledge that most practices in the Selobedu culture have evolved. While older participants lamented the observed changes, most of the younger participants embraced the benefits of cultural change. Factors like Christianity, westernisation, intercultural contact and so forth, were found to be major influencers of the Selobedu culture.

Fornäs (1995:1) explains that culture is not constant; it moves and it is dialogic in nature. He further argues that no one can get away from being influenced by culture. Cultural experiences are shared with others because they are a means of inter-subjective intercourse and communicative action. The findings of this study showed that the Selobedu culture is also influenced by other cultures, which it interacts with.

Utilising cultural theories in this study added to the expanding literature of cultural studies. Contact with external factors contributed to cultural evolution in Bolobedu. The habits and practices that made Balobedu people to be peculiar are gradually being eroded because of contact with other cultures. Some aspects were affected more than others. In this regards, the explanation given by Fornäs (1995:1) became apparent. He is of the opinion that culture is a network of streams. It can increase, and like streams, it can converge and cross. Some cultural networks are explicit, whereas others are inhibited (Fornäs, 1995:1). As individuals adapt to their changing culture, they become less stereotyped and are able to eradicate and deal with their prejudices. What describes their in-group becomes less significant as they endeavour to embrace the cultural other. Popular culture and mass media are effective sources of socialisation. They become effective platforms of preparing people for their new roles and teaching them what is to be valued, and what is important in their lives (Arnett, 1995:618)

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