

**THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL
PRACTICES CONDUCTED AT BIRTHS,
WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS IN LESOTHO**

By

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Dedicated to my wife and children

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at finding out the religious significance of Basotho ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals in Lesotho. The researcher combines literature review of scholars who have studied the Basotho socio-cultural life, with personal field study through dissemination of questionnaires, interviews and personal observations. Through this approach he finds out the various ritual practices that dot the Basotho life through the rites of passage, and then studies their religiousness in terms of traditional beliefs. He also finds out how these ritual practices have persisted in the face of Christian influence and western education, and how far they have been influenced.

There is also an attempt to look into the importance of ancestor veneration in connection with Basotho beliefs and practices. The study reveals that the religious connotation of the ritual practices lies in how people seek transcendental meaning to life through the ritual practices.

Title of dissertation:

THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL PRACTICES CONDUCTED AT BIRTHS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS IN LESOTHO.

Key words:

Ritual practices: pregnancy; birth (labour); naming; pre-wedding; wedding; post wedding; on the point of death; death; burial; after burial; effect of the ritual practices; the religious connotations; Basotho concept of an ancestor.

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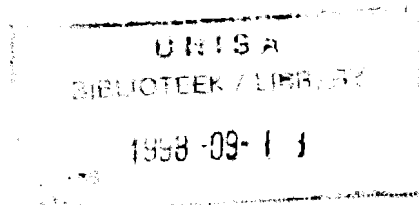
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

.....	1
1.0 SETTING THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY	3
1.2 METHODOLOGY	5
1.2.1 HISTORICAL APPROACH	5
1.2.2. EPOCHE	5
1.2.3 INTENTIONALITY	6
1.2.4 ESSENCE	6
1.2.5 HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH	6
1.2.6 THE STUDY	7
1.3 DATA COLLECTION	8
1.3.1 APPROACH:	8
1.3.2 EXPERIENTIAL PARTICIPATION	10
1.3.3 RITUALS AT BIRTHS	10
1.3.4 RITUALS AT WEDDINGS	10
1.3.5 RITUALS AT FUNERALS	11
1.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	11
1.4.1 QUESTIONNAIRES	12
1.4.2 PERSONAL INTERVIEWS	13

1.4.3 LIMITATIONS.....	14
CHAPTER 2	
2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL STUDY.....	16
2.1 RITUAL PRACTICES : REVIEW.....	16
2.2 RITUAL PRACTICES AROUND BIRTH.....	22
2.2.1 PREGNANCY.....	22
2.2.1.1 THE RELIGIOUS CONNOTATIONS OF PREGNANCY RITUALS.....	24
2.2.2 CHILDBEARING.....	25
2.2.2.1 NAMING.....	29
2.3 RITUAL PRACTICES AT WEDDING: REVIEW	31
2.4 RITUAL PRACTICES AT FUNERALS: REVIEW	38
2.4.1 SOME GENERAL FUNERAL RITUALS	39
2.4.2 BURIAL RITUALS	41
2.4.3 RITUALS AFTER BURIAL	44
CHAPTER 3	
3.0 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED	46
3.1 MODE OF DISTRIBUTION	46
3.2 MODE OF RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES	46
3.3 RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON BIRTH	51
3.3.1 PREGNANCY	51
3.3.2 LABOUR (CHILD BEARING)	52
3.3.3 NAMING CEREMONY	54
3.3.4 EFFECT OF PREGNANCY RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY	55
3.3.5 EFFECT OF LABOUR RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY	56
3.3.6 INTERPRETATION OF THE NAMING RITUALS	57

3.4 RITUALS AT WEDDING (MARRIAGE)	58
3.4.1 PRE-WEDDING RITUALS FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL	58
3.4.2 RITES PERFORMED FOR THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM DURING THE WEDDING.....	59
3.4.3 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS ON THE COUPLE	60
3.4.4 RITUALS AFTER WEDDING	61
3.4.5 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS AFTER THE WEDDING	62
3.5 FUNERAL RITUALS	63
3.5.1 BURIAL RITUALS	65
3.5.2 RITUALS AFTER BURIAL	66
3.5.3 EFFECT OF FUNERAL RITUALS ON THE DECEASED	66
3.5.4 SOURCES OF PUNISHMENT WHEN RITUALS ARE NOT PERFORMED.....	67
3.5.5 TYPES OF PUNISHMENT FOR FAILURE TO PERFORM THE FUNERAL RITUALS	68
3.6 INTERVIEW RESULTS	68
3.6.1 BIRTH RITUALS	69
3.6.1.1 PREGNANCY RITUALS	69
3.6.1.2 LABOUR RITUALS	69
3.6.1.3 NAMING RITUALS	70
3.6.1.4 EFFECT OF THE BIRTH RITUALS	70
3.6.2 WEDDING RITUALS	71
3.6.2.1 PRE-MARITAL RITUALS FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL	71
3.6.2.2 THE WEDDING RITUALS	71
3.6.2.3 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS ON THE COUPLE	72
3.6.2.4 RITUALS AFTER THE WEDDING	72
3.6.2.5 TEST OF VIRGINITY	73
3.6.2.6 THE BUILDING OF A NEW HOME FOR THE COUPLE	73
3.6.3 FUNERAL RITUALS	73

3.6.3.1 RITUALS FOR A DYING PERSON	73
3.6.3.2 RITUALS FOR A DEAD PERSON	74
3.6.3.3 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS	75
3.6.4 THE CLASSIFICATION OF AN ANCESTOR	75
3.6.5 FUNERAL RITUAL FOR A TWIN BROTHER OR SISTER	76
CHAPTER 4	
4.0 FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION	77
4.1 INTRODUCTION	77
4.1.1 THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION	77
4.2 FINDINGS	79
4.2.1 THE LITERATURE SURVEY	82
4.2.2 THE QUESTIONARIES AND THE INTERVIEWS	83
4.2.3 QUESTIONARIES	84
4.2.4 INTERVIEW	84
4.2.5 PERSONAL OBSERVATION	85
4.3 SUGGESTIONS	87
4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	88
4.5 CONCLUSION	88
4.5.1 FINAL CONCLUSION	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92
ADDENDUM A	94
ADDENDUM B	98

LIST OF TABLES AND DIAGRAM

TABLE 1.	SEX DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS	47
TABLE 2	RELIGION OF RESPONDENTS	47
TABLE 3	AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS	48
TABLE 4	RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS	49
TABLE 5	MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS	50
TABLE 6	RESPONSE TO THE PREGNANCY RITUALS	52
TABLE 7	LABOUR RITUALS	53
TABLE 8	NAMING RITUALS	55
TABLE 9	EFFECT OF PREGNANCY RITUALS	56
TABLE 10	EFFECT OF LABOUR RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY	57
TABLE 11	THE INTERPRETATION OF NAMING RITUALS	58
TABLE 12	PRE-MARITAL RITES FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL	59
TABLE 13	RITUALS FOR THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM DURING WEDDING	60
TABLE 14	EFFECT OF WEDDING RITUALS ON THE COUPLE	61
FIG. 1	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE OF AFTER WEDDING RITUAL	62
TABLE 15	EFFECT OF POST WEDDING RITUALS	62
FIG. 2	PIE GRAPH OF THE RESPONSE	63
TABLE 16	RITUALS FOR A DYING PERSON	64
TABLE 17	RITUALS PERFORMED FOR A DEAD PERSON	65
TABLE 18	RITUALS FOR BURIAL	65
TABLE 19	RITUALS AFTER BURIAL	66
TABLE 20	EFFECT OF THE FUNERAL RITUALS ON THE DECEASED	67
Fig. 3	SOURCES OF PUNISHMENT	67
Fig. 4	TYPES OF PUNISHMENT	67

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 SETTING THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Lesotho is a country in the south east of the Republic of South Africa. It is a country within a country, bordered on all sides with the Republic of South Africa. It is basically a Basotho sovereign land. Hugh Ashton (1952:11) states:

The boundaries of Basutoland are defined for the most parts by clear natural features and are politically significant in that they should not be crossed without special formalities. Within this 'enlisted seclusion' the Basotho are subject to legal, political and economic institutions which differ from those existing in the union of South Africa. . . The national unity is based on a common history and there are only a few minor dialectal differences.

According to Pula (1990:332) its area is 30,355 square km; and the bigger part of it is mountainous. And that its altitude is from 1,500 to 3,482 metres.

The nation is essentially a political group and is composed of all tribes and clans under the authority of the king. It includes all those living in Lesotho as well as those living outside the country who pay Lesotho taxes.

Hugh Ashton (1952:10) again adds: "Children automatically acquire their father's nationality. Others may acquire it through admission into the country, the formal grant of a residential site and payment of local taxes. It may be lost through residence elsewhere combined with failure to pay local taxes."

In actual fact the nation cannot be rightfully called an ethnic group because not all the nationals are purely Basotho and not all Basotho are nationals. There are many Sotho speaking people in the north and south of the Republic of South Africa. The nation includes members of other tribes. There are two groups of those who were not originally Basotho.

Ashton (1952:11) goes on to say,

One group is that of Natal Nguni which includes the *Phetla*, *Polane* and *Phuthi* . . . The latter collectively called *Matebele* by the Basotho and Zulu by Europeans, are scattered throughout the country, with concentrations among the *Thokoa* with whom they mingled at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in the Leribe and Butha-Buthe districts where they were stranded before and during Chaka's wars. They have now become more or less completely absorbed and are practically indistinguishable from Basotho . . . The second group consist of other *Natal* Nguni, such as the Mahlape at Butha- Buthe, and of Cape Nguni, such as the Fingoes, Pondoos and Thembu, collectively called *Bathepu*.

They have maintained their own cultural identity and language and are regarded as "Basotho" solely by virtue of their political attachment.

Pula (1990:332) also gives a historical records of Lesotho. He says,

Lesotho, as a nation, was historically formed by many tribes and refugees. The process of this nation-building is believed to have started by Moshoeshoe 1 between 1800-1824. The focus of that process was on a special mountain called Thaba-bosiu (Night mountain). King Moshoeshoe I believed that he was inspired by his *balimo* to come to this mountain.

Pula (1990:335) goes on to say that the first missionaries came to Lesotho at the invitation of the founder of the nation, King Moshoeshoe 1 in 1833. He wanted them to help promote peace and school-education for his people. The first missionaries who responded to the king's call belonged to the Paris Evangelical Missionary society and they founded the Lesotho Evangelical Church. The catholics followed in 1862 and later the Anglican church also followed.

It could be said that Lesotho and Botswana owe their sovereignty as independent nations to the influence of the early missionaries. Setiloane (1976:1-2) says:

Over the years the missionaries exercised considerable influence on the nation. They were the political advisors to the chiefs and advocated their cause at home and abroad. It was

due to their labour that Lesotho and Botswana developed as British protectorates separate from the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal and ultimately, as independent nations over against the Republic of South Africa.

The early missionary activities and the colonial administration had a great effect on the internal social and cultural affairs of the Basotho. One area the researcher feels was most affected is their traditional religion. The traditional Basotho religious practices were influenced by Christianity and Western culture but they persisted and were practised by the people, sometimes in adulterated form. Some social and cultural practices such as initiation school have been documented.

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to attempt to bring out the religious relevance of some of these socio-cultural practices and to find out how far the Basotho ritual practices, like other African rituals, reveal their religiousness. In African perspective religion is lived, it forms part of the socio-cultural life; therefore it has no history and no founder. A proverb in Akan (in Ghana) says: '*Obi nkyere abofra Nyame*' which literally means nobody points out God to a child. This means, to the Akans, the knowledge of God is innate. Among Africans in the West, the knowledge about God and for that matter their religiousness is found in their languages (proverbs) and their socio-cultural activities through rituals. The researcher, in this study, wants to find out how far this prevails in Basotho culture. It is therefore his primary objective to ascertain the religiousness of Basotho ritual practices. In African context, religion cannot be studied outside social activities because it forms part of the socio-cultural life of the people. It falls in line, therefore, to study Basotho religiousness in their ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals.

The religious researcher, the anthropologist and the sociologist could use the same data source for their study, particularly in African context, but they would all view the data from different perspectives. As Kruger (1982:10) points out, sociology of religion studies society, and sees religion under the aspect of society; science of religion on the other hand studies religion, and deals with the social dimension of human life under the aspect of religion, not society. He adds that the primary category and basic referent of science of religion is religion itself. With this

guide in mind, the researcher believes that he would be able to study and identify religious phenomena from the social phenomena in African context where the two are intermingled. This is not an easy task especially for foreigners, since in African context religious phenomena form integral part of socio-cultural activities. This problem arises because Christian religion and African traditional religion view religion from different perspectives. Zuesse (1979:3) points out the uniqueness of African religions when he says,

For here we find the most explicit emphasis on everyday normal life and its concerns. Nowhere do we discover the Laudation of personal salvation so characteristic of Christian theologies. In these religions the focus of all aspiration, of genuinely religious intensity, is on transcendental significance of everyday life.

For that matter the ultimate objective of religion as identified by Zuesse (1979:7-8) is of two types namely: religions of salvation, which aim at final salvation hereafter and religions of structure which find fulfilment precisely in the norms and eternal relationship which structures all process and change in the world. He again points out the complexity of African religions . He says,

Religions of structure must necessarily be more complex than religions of salvation, since as we noted at the start, the integration of the simple things of everyday life is far more complex and profound than any artificial narrowing of the spirit to exceptional experiences.

Thus African religions, unless adulterated, do not talk about final bliss in heaven. All the religious activities are geared towards harmonizing life with the transcendental world - ancestral world - to bring success and happiness in this material world.

It is the aim of the researcher, therefore, to find out how this African religiousness persists despite the influence of Christianity and Western culture in Lesotho . This could be learned through the study of ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals for these are some of the social activities through which African religiousness could be revealed.

Again, with the emergence of African independent states, African governments are struggling to develop African heritage and this study will increase the researcher's and the present generation's knowledge in African religiousness. It is also through such studies that the African Christian theologians would be able to develop an African Christian theology that would help Africans to understand the Christ message to humankind better. Other religions could also be understood through similar approach. This does not mean however that the researcher is trying to be a theologian. He is concerned with the welfare of religion as a whole.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research work is a combination of phenomenological approach and hermeneutical approach. The phenomenological approach will enhance the researcher to identify the ritual phenomena involved in the research findings at births, weddings (marriages) and funerals. The hermeneutical approach would enable the researcher to get the right interpretations to the phenomena involved as the people see them to be.

1.2.1 HISTORICAL APPROACH

In order to know how far the traditional religion has been influenced by foreign religion and culture i.e. Western culture and Christianity, a historical approach would be adopted to study the trend of affairs from the early missionary era in southern Africa up to the present time.

1.2.2. EPOCHE

In this research, the researcher is conscious of the fact that phenomenology insists on penetrating into the core of things, and that things should not be taken for granted (Kruger 1982:18). For that matter he has to suspend his own experience and understanding of the phenomena involved in his study. However, it would be noted that he cannot totally deny his own personal experience and presuppositions because they would, one way or the other, help him to understand and analyse the religious phenomena better. But he would be cautious of possible distortions of the investigation at hand.

The researcher, therefore, made use of the nature of the religious phenomena as of the past-before and during missionary era-and of the present, as influenced by Christian religion and Western culture, to understand the present traditional practices. Again, throughout the study, he compares the religiousness of a phenomenon with similar ones elsewhere in Africa as well as outside Africa, to establish the similarities and differences that might occur in the ritual practices and to ascertain the religiousness of some Basotho birth, wedding and funeral rituals.

1.2.3 INTENTIONALITY

From the phenomenological point of view, what a religious historian or researcher wants to see and describe is how the people themselves experience their own world. Phenomenology refers to this experience as intentionality. The researcher, conscious of this approach, would bear in mind that he is looking for the traditional religious phenomena as the Basotho see and practise them but not as he knows them to be. However, it would be noted that, here too, he has to be guided by his knowledge in the subject concerned to be able to detect distortions due to foreign influence so as to understand the identified phenomena.

1.2.4 ESSENCE

One of the characteristics of phenomenology is to drive at the heart of things. It insists on looking for the 'essences' (Kruger 1982:19). In this research it would mean looking for the root cause of the ritual practices of the Basotho at births, weddings and funerals. It would be noted that through this approach, one comes to understand the people's religious practices better.

1.2.5 HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

Hermeneutics, in this study, deals with the interpretation of the ritual phenomena at births, weddings and funerals in relation to general socio-cultural and religious life of the people. It is therefore evidently clear that in order to interpret the phenomena at hand, one has to consider the socio-cultural background of the people in the case study.

For that matter, it is important that the researcher bears in mind the religious setting in the socio-political life of the people when interpreting the phenomena at stake.

The ritual practices at birth, weddings and funerals must be seen in the context of Basotho socio-cultural life. Their religious connotation would therefore be viewed in terms of what the people deem religious.

In this wise hermeneutics would be based on three dimensional approach:

1. What the practice used to mean in the past.
2. What it means at present among the present generation - as influenced by foreign culture and religion.
3. What it means in relation to other African societies far and near.

The synthesis of these three approaches, in the mind of the researcher, would give the true religious interpretation of the identified ritual phenomena in the areas under study.

1.2.6 THE STUDY

This study is based on ethnographic observations and critical analysis of anthropological, sociological and historical research findings of other people specialised in such fields. The ethnographic observation is a personal research based on personal interviews with people of general and renowned traditional background and academic stand, such as traditional chiefs and lecturers of the National Teacher Training College and the National University of Lesotho. Questionnaires were also distributed to collect data from a sample of people in Lesotho, from both rural and urban centres. Apart from these, the researcher had personal experiential participation in current funeral and wedding (marriage) ritual practices. The assumptions which conditioned the interpretation of fact findings are basically the researcher's own.

The second section of the research work, based on historical and anthropological books, is carefully analysed to bring out the religious connotations. Thus in chapter 2 there is a study into

what others have done in the same field. For example views of others who have researched into this area. And the review of ritual practices in Lesotho in general and at births, weddings (marriages) and funerals in particular.

Chapter 3 deals with analysis of questionnaires and the result of interviews to bring out the bare facts about people's views on their religious beliefs and practices.

Chapter 4 also deals with the findings and suggestions, hints about areas of future research and conclusions.

1.3 DATA COLLECTION

1.3.1 APPROACH: Sampling techniques (people to sample and why), Materials of data collection.

The purpose of this section is to ascertain how far ritual practices of the past, found in books, prevail at present times and to find out their possible religious connotations if any.

The study is therefore based on ethnographic observations and analysis of documentations, bearing in mind the methodological approach suggested by Kruger (1982). Data was collected through phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches and analysed by the combination of logical empiricism and critical rationalism so as to avoid the danger of accepting things in their totality. The detailed research method therefore comprises personal experiential participation, questionnaires and personal interviews as mentioned above. Through the three approaches, the necessary information was tapped from the rural folk and the urban dwellers.

However, a number of unforeseen problems were encountered. Retrieving the questionnaires distributed became a big problem. About a fifth of the total questionnaires distributed could not be retrieved even though personal contacts were made. Some people did not see why they should disclose Basotho customs to a foreigner they did not know.

There were also other personal delimitations and limitations that were unsurmountable. As a full time educator, the researcher could only do the necessary investigations by using vacation periods which occur only twice a year, namely June-July and December-January. This is because the school teaching programme is scheduled from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm of the school-going days.

Furthermore this study is a part-time undertaking for academic purposes for which there is no sponsorship. There is therefore lack of logistics resulting in economizing on the limited resources available in order to complete the research work at a reduced cost. In view of the above problems the research work was centred mostly around Maseru municipality and some easily accessible district centres. However, the researcher did not consider this a serious handicap to his work because people of Lesotho are homogeneous therefore contact between Maseru - the capital - and the rural areas occur very frequently. In fact the smallness of the country makes it possible for workers from the rural areas to commute daily and at weekends. Most of the people contacted in Maseru do go to their homes in the remote areas like Qacha's nek, Thaba-tseka and Semonkong during weekends and leave periods.

In view of the possibility of false interpretation of phenomena particularly by foreigners, Setiloane (1976:4) assert "...each man takes to the study of another culture the assumptions of his own, which condition not only his interpretation of facts, but the very facts which he sees". It should however be noted that people usually try to hide the truth from foreigners; therefore to safeguard the two problems, most interpretations were crosschecked by comparing or basing them on those of indigenous researchers in the field such as Lesaoana Manyeli (1995). However, since the researcher is an African, such handicaps, if any, would be minimal. An example of such handicaps occurred in the questionnaires for funeral rituals. They contain some details which are not relevant to Basotho funeral rituals. This happened because the questionnaires were prepared before the researcher started the literature survey hence he based them on his cultural background. The recurrence of such mistakes was averted by basing the questions for the interviews on facts from the literature survey.

1.3.2 EXPERIENTIAL PARTICIPATION

The eyewitness account usually occurred as a matter of chance, depending upon when the researcher is involved, that is when a friend, a co-worker or a student died, was bereaved or was involved. A number of such cases for funerals and weddings took the researcher to several places in the rural areas for personal observation. Generally the experiential participants were combined with personal interviews because some of the rituals concerned were either secluded or not self-explanatory.

1.3.3 RITUALS AT BIRTHS

Birth, pre-birth and post-birth rituals are basically women's affairs and hence men are tabooed in most cases. It was therefore not possible to have eyewitness account on birth rituals hence only personal interviews and questionnaires were used.

1.3.4 RITUALS AT WEDDINGS

A number of wedding ceremonies were observed both in Maseru and some villages. They were all in the Christian or Western fashion. Most of them involved church services attended in convoys of cars amid hooting of horns and singing amid jubilations. In others, in the rural areas, church services were attended in processions. In all cases there were church services. These westernized weddings were not without traditional marriage rituals. In all cases *bohali* negotiations went on even though no cattle exchanged hands. The *bohali* was paid in cash at an agreed price per cow for a number of cows. A beast, believed to be the '*ho hlabisa bohali*', was slaughtered, in each case, for the wedding feast which took place in the girl's family home. Even though the *koae* (tobacco) rituals are still in practice, the researcher did not have the opportunity to witness one because they occurred some weeks later after the wedding ceremony. However, some of the marriage rituals described in chapter two below are no more in practice. For example the preliminary rites such as "asking for the calabash of water" (Mokhethi 1988:27).

1.3.5 RITUALS AT FUNERALS

Chances of participation and observation occurred more in funeral rituals than anywhere else. Here too, all funerals observed were of the Christian type yet they were not without traditional rituals. Participation and observations were combined with personal interviews because most rituals were done in secluded areas where a foreigner would not be entertained. In all cases full participation and observation was welcomed during wake keeping, burial, washing of hands after burial and the communal meals. In all the funerals a beast was slaughtered, before the burial, for the communal meal after the burial. Unlike other African funerals-especially in West Africa - there were no wailing, dirges or beating of drums and xylophones. However there were occasional sobs from women during speeches.

It was observed that during the funeral service a programme was followed and quite a number of people were called to give speeches. After that the corpse was sent to the burial ground in a procession. The coffin was lowered into the grave after a short prayer by an officiant. The casting of sod followed a special order. The next of kin threw in the first sod followed by other members and close friends. It is alleged that violation of this rite could result into a fight and even bloodshed. This could be a rite of separation. After burial people went back to the funeral house through the same path and washed their hands in a basin of water into which had been smashed some leaves of an aloe plant. A day after burial, bereaved members cut their hair and wore a black strip of cloth around their necks (thapo). During the funeral the windows of the house were smeared with ash. The above mentioned rituals are all rites of separation.

1.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

In order to reconcile the information from the literature survey with what prevails now among the people, certain sampling techniques were adopted. People to be interviewed and those to fill questionnaires were chosen from the age groups of twenty years and above. Males and females were given equal attention. Particular interest was shown in the youth's knowledge and interest in their cultural practices and customs. Religious denominations were also considered to find out how Christianity and other foreign religions have influenced the traditional beliefs.

Workers, church ministers and chiefs were also taken into consideration in contacting people for both interviews and distribution of questionnaires.

The area of study was also deeply considered. It was desired to centre the research work on the rural areas in order to tap information from less adulterated citizens but financial constraints, coupled with lack of time and pressure of work, forced the researcher to limit his research mostly to Maseru municipality and district centres such as Berea, Mafeteng and Quthing and some nearby villages.

However, the researcher found that Maseru, being the national capital and the major commercial centre, and taking cognizance of the small size of the country, a cross-section of people from all parts of the country could be contacted there.

1.4.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires covering the three areas of study were designed and distributed on random bases to all class of people above the age of twenty years mostly in Maseru town and its suburbs and the district centres mentioned above. The information needed included sex, age, religions, place of residence, i.e urban, semi urban and rural; marital status i.e. single, married, divorced, widowed and separated. The questions asked in the questionnaires were both open ended and closed ended questions. The open ended questions demanded free expression of one's opinion, such as, what rituals are performed when a person is on the point of death. The closed ended questions demanded specific answers, or yes or no. For example, do these rituals provide any blessings? Yes or no. Or what would be the likely punishment for those who violate these rituals? a. famine b. death c. disease d. poverty. (Tick the one appropriate).

Separate questionnaires were set for each of the three sub-divisions, namely funeral rituals, wedding rituals and birth rituals. Samples of the questionnaires can be seen at addendum 'A'

One hundred and fifty sets of the questionnaires were printed, that is fifty sets for each sub-section namely birth, wedding and funeral. They were all distributed personally through personal

section namely birth, wedding and funeral. They were all distributed personally through personal contact. There were cases where people refused to accept them. Others accepted them but never returned them, while others handed theirs to me unanswered or not properly filled. Those that were not filled were redistributed. On the whole about a fifth of the questionnaires were not retrievable even though personal contacts were made in order to collect them back. About a quarter was not filled meaningfully so no data could be collected from them. On the whole, data could be collected from fifty five percent of the total questionnaires distributed. The researcher was very much disappointed. Since the questionnaires were collected before the personal interviews began, a new strategy was adopted.

1.4.2 PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted on random bases but with certain class of people in view, namely chiefs or headmen, church ministers, aged people, some organizations and youths. It was believed that such people would be more knowledgeable and considerate. Here too the concentration was on Maseru municipality and its suburbs than the country-side due to financial constraints and the fact that the researcher is a full time teacher. The interviews were conducted mostly during vacation periods. Those conducted in the district centres and rural areas depended upon availability of volunteers who arranged with people on behalf of the researcher and went round with him at the appointed time.

On the whole twenty people were interviewed in Maseru town, five in Berea district, four in Quthing district, four in Teyateyaneng, and three in Mafeteng district. People interviewed were usually first contacted personally or through a volunteer, and dates were fixed before the interviews could come on. With all these precautions, the interviews were not without problems. There were some disappointments here and there. People would not tell you no, they were not prepared to meet you but would keep on disappointing you till you decided to call it off yourself. While some people were very snobbish, others were very friendly and helpful.

For variety sake, people other than those who filled the questionnaires were contacted for the interview, however, where one proved to be friendly and knowledgeable, one was contacted in

both cases. There was some semi-structured format for the interview questions. Unlike the questionnaires, these were based on the information from the literature survey in chapter 2 below so as to help the researcher to ascertain their truth and relevance to present day practices. The list of rituals and information found in books and in the questionnaires was used to frame the interview questions. It would therefore be realised that the interview questions were in all better framed and greater in number than the questionnaires. Despite the fact that the interview questions were semi-structured, they were not strictly followed as such. Allowance was made for flexibility and a relaxed atmosphere to release tension and boredom. Refer to addendum B for a sample of the interview questions.

1.4.3 LIMITATIONS

It would be realised that no direct mention has been made of the word ritual in the interview questions. This is because the response to the questionnaires revealed that some of the respondents associated the word with witchcraft, sorcery and magic, hence they gave a negative approach to such questions. Therefore the researcher decided to adopt a new strategy by posing questions that would bring out the rituals involved without using the word-ritual. This strategy worked very well; more information was tapped in this way than in the questionnaires. Another strategy was to make the interviews less formal. It was realized that more information could be tapped from the interviewees under a relaxed conversational atmosphere than a rigid questions and answers mood. For example an ex district administrator in one of the above mentioned district centres, who happened to be interviewed, initially said that in this modern era there were no heathen practices in Lesotho. That all Basotho are Christians, therefore things are done in the Christian or Western way. He even went further to say that there are no traditional believers in Lesotho. However, during further relaxed conversational atmosphere this same person said that most of the burial rituals of the past are still practised in the rural areas deep in the mountains. This could be due to lack of coffin and mortuary facilities in such areas.

Most people interviewed, usually reacted in similar manner in the initial stages until they were convinced that there was no diabolical intention behind the research work before they came out with positive responses. This doubtful attitude towards foreign researchers is more or less

universal. And it poses much problem to foreign researchers. In this light one is likely to be misinformed. To combat this problem, critical analyses of statements made by the interviewees were made and compared with findings from documentations as well as the questionnaires.

In order to avoid boredom and tiredness, one person was not interviewed on all the three aspects of the research theme, namely births, weddings and funerals. This approach made it possible to have varied responses to the questions.

On the whole the interview was successful. Even though the remote areas could not be touched some of the people contacted in the urban and semi urban areas do come from such remote places and their information was taken as the representation of what pertains in such areas. It is therefore hoped that this work covers a reasonable area of Lesotho. Moreover the homogeneity of the Basotho and the size of the country makes Maseru the central pivot of social and cultural activities and hence a cross section of people from all parts of the country converge there almost everyday hence data collected there could conveniently serve as representation of the country.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL STUDY

2.1 RITUAL PRACTICES: REVIEW

Rituals are religious phenomena that permeate all religions and are the core of religious practices. A religion without rituals is no religion. Ritual practices, properly explained, reveal the religiousness of the people who practise them. Many scholars such as sociologists, anthropologists, theologians, historians and religious historians have tackled the topic in diverse ways. Rituals are so indispensable to human culture that the study of humanity cannot exclude them. Ritual is a symbolic human act to harmonize human activities with the transcendental powers as a form of invocation or appeasement for success.

At this juncture the researcher would attempt at differentiating between rites and rituals. Even though they are sometimes used interchangeably, one can conveniently say that rites are the totality of the ceremonial activities that mark the various colourful, eventful and critical stages in life usually classified as rites of passage (Van Gennep 1977). Rituals in this case are specific activities that punctuate the ceremonial rites at specific times and places purported to harmonize with or appease the transcendental powers for success in life. Rituals are rites but not everything in a rite can be classified as ritual. In other words rituals constitute rites. Charles OK Onu (1992:147), basing himself on Victor Turner, defines ritual as follows:

A ritual is defined as a stereo-typed sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects performed in a sequestered place and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actor's goals and interests.

However, the researcher does not fully agree with this definition in the sense that not all rituals are stereo-typed because some of them are ad hoc, according to the dictates of the gods or the ancestors concerned and, depending upon the nature of the issue at stake revealed by a diviner or through dreams. Again not all rituals are performed in a secluded place. He also adds that rituals are staged events that follow a standard protocol wherever they are performed. He

seemed to accept Turner's definition without question. As stated above, his additional definition cannot be accepted at value.

Evan M. Zuesse (1979:127) writes about ritual cosmos with specific reference to African Religions. He deals with rituals in general, from birth through socio-cultural activities to death. His area of study covers the people of Africa from the west to the east, through central to the south. He dwells on how rituals feature in the day to day activities of the African and hence reveal their religiousness. He says:

Society, too, is not the core of African religions, even though it is one of the chief media through which religion is expressed. Everyday life and society as well as the ancestors reflect transcendental structures pervading the cosmos. The ancestors, however, are closer to those structures. It is significant that ritual sacrifice is the chief method of coming into contact with them. They in turn often make their desire to communicate known through sickness, sterility or even death.

He also asserts (1979:17) the universality of religion and hence African religiousness by saying: "The religious quest is universal human characteristic and touches at the root of what it means to be human" He adds (1979:128) that every ritual enactment recognizes not only the rule of normative structure, but also the otherness and mystery of everyday life and the things in it. In comparing African way of life to the outside world, he (1979:170) has this to say,

The classical Jewish perspective permits an integration of everyday life, family structure, and the normative structures of the universe into transcendental freedom. This fundamental emphasis is in harmony with traditional African attitudes and spirituality, however strictly a particular movement may teach the burning of traditional shrines and "medicines". But even with this basic emphasis in common, African millenary movements can differ in the degree to which primordial intentionalities or structural intentionalities are stressed. Within "neopagan" "Hebraic" "Christian", or "Muslim" groups the same polarization can be detected.

In fact, Zuesse has shown clear understanding of African religiousness through rituals.

Arnold Van Gennep (1977:3) also classifies rites of passage and deals with the rituals involved with classified meanings. His analysis of the rites of passage gives distinct purpose of rituals pertaining to classified ceremonies in the rites of passage. He deals with a cross-section of rites among which are birth and childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy and childhood, fatherhood, initiation into adulthood and into religious societies and funerals. In this respect man's life is not independent of nature. His classification of a cross-section of rites of passage and the rituals thereof has helped to throw more light on various rituals and their meanings.

Obiakoizu A Iloanusi (1984:63) talks about ritual ceremonies and festivities. Apart from rituals at birth, naming ceremonies, initiations, marriage and death, he mentions other rituals such as agricultural rituals, health and professional rituals. Among others, he explains agricultural rituals to be those connected to sowing and harvest; he adds that these rituals are connected with the earth, the soil, the crops and the seasons of the year. Health rituals, he says, are performed to ensure good health, curing and prevention of danger of diseases. He adds that professional rituals pertain to skilled training such as medicine men, diviners, rainmakers, priests etc. Concerning the relevance of rituals to religion in Africa, he (1984:64) has this to say,

In general these ritual ceremonies and festivals have a religious character and through their strict observation religious ideas are preserved and passed on from generation to generation. For most of these ritual ceremonies and festivities, there are shrines, sacred places and, naturally, religious objects. These also indicate the sources of the people's religion and they are the outward and material expression of religious ideas and beliefs.

However, he does not describe the processes of these rituals with detailed explanations probably because rituals do not form a major part of his main treatise.

The above examples are drawn in order to compare them to Basotho rituals to see how they fall into the general world view or African world view of ritual practices.

Stephen J. Gill (1993:53) has also treated a number of rituals concerning the Basotho healing rites. He says,

The southern Sotho, like most people all over the world periodically felt the need to purify themselves or their kin from various forms of pollution and defilement, to make sacrifices to the spirits so as to put things right, and to strengthen themselves or their houses, fields and animals so as to ensure prosperity, fecundity, and so forth, or alternatively to ward off evil forces and bad medicine.

Thus to the Sotho, like all other Africans, the community welfare is as important as the individual welfare, hence the need to purify themselves and their kin from various forms of pollution and defilement through ritual healing by making ritual sacrifices to appease the gods and the ancestors so that everything would be in perfect harmony. In ritual healing there is the need to ward off bad people or bad medicine known in West Africa as “juju” and ‘thakhisa’ in Sesotho. He also identifies cases when purification rituals are necessary. He (1993:53) goes on to say, “Purification, for example, was needed after coming into contact with a corpse, after killing someone in battle, after childbirth, etc. Sometimes it involved washing or bathing with certain herbs or medicines, while at other times fumigation was employed”. These purification rituals are practised among many tribes in Africa. Among the Akans of Ghana, apart from the above mentioned purification rituals cited, people purify themselves after killing a wild beast like the lion, bear, tiger or reindeer, which are believed to have souls that can haunt the hunter. Purification rituals are also performed after an epidemic has hit a village.

On ritual killing Gill (1993:53) again says,

The ritual killing of an ox, sheep, goat or chicken was also performed in thanksgiving for good fortune, or to solemnise many important family occasions such as marriage or burial. In all cases, the feast would be held in the “presence of the ancestors” and this usually required the brewing of beer as well.

Generally, it is believed that failure to appease the gods or the ancestors, who might have been offended, would render healing rituals futile. He also talks about strengthening which he says meant the increase in the person’s life force (seriti) and his ability to resist or overcome various evil forces or medicines referred to above as ‘thakhisa’. In such cases, he says, incisions were periodically made in certain parts of the body of each member of family in order to strengthen them. And special medicines were smeared in each incision. Incision can sometimes be done

for immunization purposes against some diseases such as gonorrhoea. Basotho soldiers, like other African soldiers, were also strengthened before battle with various animal parts and plant substances believed to have certain properties or powers. All these are done with prayers or sacrifice to the ancestors or deities concerned in the form of beer or ritual sacrifice.

Gill (1993:53) asserts again that the Sotho illness is not merely the presence of an infection in the body but also a state of imbalance which may be partly physical, partly psychological, partly social, partly spiritual. He says that for the Sotho, all misfortune is illness. And that the Soho world view does not neatly divide the human person into physical and non physical compartments, hence associational medicine was valuable in assisting persons or families to overcome or prevent variety of misfortunes and strengthen them.

Patrick Mohlalefi Bereng (1978:18) also makes mention of a number of rituals for girls and boys in Lesotho. According to him when a young girl first experiences her first menstrual blood or observes the moon, her mother awakens her early in the morning and tells her to go to fetch water from the spring. She walks to the spring, without wearing anything, early in the morning when all is quiet and people are sleeping. When she comes back from the spring, she is given soft porridge into which a *lengana*, a eucalyptus, or a *letope* weeds has been boiled. She is then required to remain in the house for a day or two. It is then said that '*masechaba o tlile le metsi*' she has hit the water or crossed the stream. (This is however rarely practised these days). It is followed by a number of taboos for girls in general. This is a rite of separation from childhood to adolescence.

Justinus Sechefo (sa.12) talks about some funeral rituals for purifying people who have buried a dead man. According to him the ritual, known as *mohaha* is performed not too long after the burial function has been accomplished. He says that this ritual also serves as prayer for the deceased to be accepted by the 'gods'.

An ox is killed early at dawn and is very hastily skinned out. The fresh chyme inside the stomach of the beast is taken out, and each member of the family plus the nearest relatives take a small quantity of it in their hands. They all go to the grave, make a circle around the tomb, look

attentively to the east, and watch for the first rays of sun to shoot out. At this time one and all spit a little of their salver on the still warm chyme, and together throw it on the tomb, saying "May thou sleep for us" The impressive and unique ceremony is then over.

The flesh of the ox should not be made savoury by seasoning it with salt and must be eaten on the same day and if any portions of it remain they should be cooked. None should be left raw. The person who had ventured to get down into the grave, so as to find its depth by measuring himself in it, or who had conveyed the body there into the grave is purified and honoured for the heroic deed by being given the head and skin of the animal.

He adds that formerly such a person wore on his wrist the gall bladder of the beast; and that the same applies to the gallant man who undertook to clothe and tie up the dead man to make him ready for the burial.

Sechefe again makes mention of the "washing of the pots" of the deceased person. On this occasion a splendid '*joala*' - beer - is brewed for the ritual. The family, relatives and friends meet together in the hut. They speak together with kind words and express happy remembrance about the deceased. They enjoy themselves with the splendid beverage in the pots, which has to be consumed on the day. The pots are then cleansed and the little ceremony is completed. This is another rite of separation breaking all ties with the deceased.

He (sa.16) also makes mention of rituals for intercession for rain. This ritual, according to him, is done in an exceptionally dry season. During such critical period, it was customary for the chief to call all his men for a general hunt-meeting in the mountains.

There is a similar ritual among the Akans of Ghana. During an excessive dry period the paramount chief of the Akans in Techiman District, is taken to a sacred river for a ritual sacrifice to call for rain. It is said that after immolation of the beast, he cries, during an invocation of the gods, for rain and if he finds favour with the gods, on returning home they would be drenched by a heavy down pour.

This is an indication that rainmaking rituals are widespread in Africa. Mbiti (1975:110-111) has this to say on the issue, "Rainmaking as a profession, is fairly widespread in Africa. Some of the prayers for rain would undoubtedly, be made by rainmakers or other ritual experts. The rainmakers do not in fact make rain, they simply perform the rites which accompany prayers for rain". He adds (1975:109) that whereas prayers for healing are made on personal or family basis, in most cases, rain prayers are made on a community basis since there is nothing like private supply of rain. In most cases the rainmakers rally round the community leader - the chief - to call for rain - as done in the case of the Basotho and the Akans of Ghana. In actual fact the rainmakers only perform rituals to induce rain rather than make rain.

2.2 RITUAL PRACTICES AROUND BIRTH

Pregnancy and childbirth are so intertwined that one cannot separate them since they form the components of procreation. Procreation begins from pregnancy, therefore it would be appropriate to start with pregnancy when dealing with childbirth. Obiakoizu A. Iloanusi (1984:64) says. "The ritual of birth begins with the pregnancy of the mother"

2.2.1 PREGNANCY

Many scholars have treated this topic in diverse ways; some in general terms, and others with reference to specific areas of study.

Van Gennep (1977:43) deals with pregnancy and childbirth rituals which he categorizes, among others, into rites of separation, transitional rites and rites of incorporation. By rites of separation the pregnant woman, and the child in the making, are separated from normal social life for protection; and the rites of incorporation reunites the mother and the child born to normal social life, at a time when they are considered to be strong enough to face the rigours of life. He terms the period between separation and incorporation (integration) as the transitional period. He mentions sexual and dietary prohibitions and cessation of economic activity as part of separation rituals. The researcher is particularly interested in his categorization of the rites and would be using it in this work. The pregnancy rituals could conveniently be put under rites of separation.

Hugh Ashton (1952:27) asserts that sex during pregnancy is not a taboo but may cease after six months when the woman looks more inactive and unattractive to the husband. He says that when her pain or sickness begins, she may be given medicines such as *mohlapiso*, *mohato* or *mothaleho* with which she is vaccinated on her lips and breasts to help her pregnancy and promote the child's growth. Concerning seclusion he asserts that as her pregnancy advances, she stays at home to avoid contact with bad paths of malevolent persons who might harm the child.

← Zuesee (1979:67) also adds that the child in the womb is a kind of witch or at least has great mystical powers. This implies that the seclusion is meant to prevent the foetus from harming other persons or things as he asserts later on. Well, to the best of the researcher's knowledge and his personal experience, it is rather the opposite. Pregnancy taboos, seclusion and rituals are meant to protect the foetus from bad medicines of malicious people as said above and for speedy and healthy development. The foetus is believed to be delicate and therefore prone to infection and must be protected.

The first childbirth experience is always treated as a special case hence it takes place at her parents' home. She is taken there at the beginning of the seventh month, Ashton (1952:27) asserts. He adds that on reaching her parents' home, she undergoes some ritual acts. All her ornaments are removed, her eyebrows are shaved, a mixture of red ochre and butter fat is smeared on her head, face and torso, and a sheep-skin similarly besmeared is tied across her breasts to hide her bigness and keep the foetus warm. Concerning the young lady going to her parents' home for the first childbirth, Zuesee (1979:82) adds that among the Ila the wife must return to her own kin and parents to give birth to a child. Gill (1993:57) also adds that when a woman becomes pregnant for the first time, she returns to her own mother for the process of giving birth. This practice is more or less universal.

The need for the first childbirth experience to take place at the young woman's parent's home lies in the fact that being a novice in childbearing, she may need special attention, tender care and instructions that may best be given by her own mother and the old ladies of her kin. Evidence above shows that this practice is not akin to the Basotho alone. Even in this modern era, where childbearing usually takes place at hospitals, the practice goes on. After delivery at the hospital, the young woman returns to her parents' home and stays there for some weeks or even months.

In Ghana, the Akans and many other tribes practise it. It is believed that the new mother needs to be taught how to medicate herself and to bathe and handle the baby.

For further rituals Ashton (1952:27-28) adds,

A sheep may be killed for her, its gall sprinkled at the back of the hut and its *mohlehlo* or gallbladder fastened round her neck.

She may also wear a necklace of ostrich eggshells, threaded with her husbands' clan beads, together with pumpkin seeds and a wildcat's claw or tail-tip. This rite should bring luck and strength and marks the beginning of her seclusion.

2.2.1.1 THE RELIGIOUS CONNOTATIONS OF PREGNANCY RITUALS

With regard to the religious connotations of the pregnancy ritual acts cited above, the researcher believes that the sacrifice of the sheep is to ask for the blessing and support of the family ancestors for her wellbeing and peaceful delivery. The medicines and other items ritually used, are believed to possess some supernatural powers that could protect the woman and the foetus. Laesione Magnolia (1995:121-122) has this to say on this issue,

The following sacrifices, though they may appear insignificant, are of vital importance as hierophanies and manifestations of Basotho belief in ancestors. At the very stage of pregnancy, a sheep was sacrificed in order to render the ancestors propitious to the pregnant woman. The skin of the sheep was dressed and made into an apron. This skin served to screen her from physical evil that could be caused by witchcraft. The animal as an offering to the ancestors shared their humanity and became sacred. Consequently its skin became sacred and thereby shared the sacred character for the ancestors. The skin became a sacred protective object.

For further precautions taken to safeguard her smooth delivery, Ashton (1952:28) has this to say, "As her time approaches, she is given medicines to "turn" the child and ensure an easy delivery. She is attended to by her mother and by other old women of the village "of good conduct".

The medicines given are believed to possess some spiritual powers to protect and strengthen the child. It is believed that the child could take after any of the women serving as midwives hence the need for people of good reputation and conduct. It also guards against witchcraft and sorcery. And they obviously school her on the principles of childbearing and self medication.

To buttress the religiousness of pregnancy rituals Laydevant (1952:29) also says,

At the Th or Th month of pregnancy, the future mother is taken to her mother's kraal so that her first child be born there. A sheep is offered as sacrifice. Her abdomen is covered with a soft skin to protect the child from evil charms and also from bad weather. The foot of *nacelle* (kind of skunk) is tied to her neck, along with a small magical horn containing medicines. . . These charms of '*khoetsa*' are worn by the child at birth in order to open its intelligence.

Amulets and talismans, used as charms against evil powers, play a vital role in African religions. They reveal the people's awareness of the presence of evil in the society that must be prevented from affecting them or be neutralised.

2.2.2 CHILDBEARING

Childbirth, like pregnancy, is not without rituals. Childbearing rituals begin, according to Ashton, (1952:28) with the cutting of the umbilical cord. He says that as the child is born the umbilical cord is cut and about six inches of it is left attached to the child, and this is heavily larded and gently tied against the child's body, and the afterbirth is buried within the courtyard *lelapa* to prevent strangers from hurting the child or the mother by walking over it. The cutting of the umbilical cord is a rite of separation. It completes the separation of the child from the mother's womb.

To reveal the universality of this ritual, Van Gennep (1977:44) says that among the Hopi of Oraibi in Arizona in North America, when the child arrives, the mother of the young woman

assists in the expulsion of the placenta and binds the baby's umbilical cord. Then she places the placenta, pad and sand from under the woman and a little broom on an old tray, and carries it all to one of the placenta hills of which there are several in close proximity to the village. He adds that the cutting of the umbilical cord is a rite of separation from the child's previous environment. The sex of the child determines the type of instrument used to cut the cord. On this issue he (1977:51) says,

In the Punjab if the child is a boy, the cord is cut with a knife or a *janiū* belonging to an old man in the family, among the Oraibi Hopi of Arizona it is cut with an arrow. If the child is a girl, the Punjabi use a spindle, while the Hopi use a stick for piling grains in jars.

Ashton (1952:29) and Laydevant (1952:29) talk about a similar issue among the Basotho. They say that when announcing the birth of a child to the father, the Basotho use a stick or water. If the child is a boy they use a stick, if it is a girl they use water. To the Basotho the stick represents manhood and water womanhood.

Concerning the burial of the afterbirth, Zuesse (1979:82-83) also adds that among the Ila, the afterbirth of the infant is buried in her mother's hut and the infant is placed for a few moments on the mud floor of the hut before being bathed and wrapped in clothes. This is done as if to restore the baby to its source.

From the above evidence, it would be seen that the childbirth rituals, particularly the cutting of the umbilical cord and the burial of the afterbirth, are more or less universal rituals.

Another birth ritual is given by Laydevant (1952:29) who says that a bed of dry powdered cow dung is quickly prepared for the blood to be quickly absorbed. And if parturition is difficult it is a sure sign that the child is the result of adultery or the woman is unfaithful to her husband. The latter is a general belief in Africa and women usually do confess during difficult parturition. It is however very much discouraged at the clinics.

Laydevant (1952:30) adds that when a child is born, a reed or a rope of straw is placed near the door of the hut so as to warn the public and prohibit entrance. He says that this ritual has a symbolic meaning; that it recalls the fact that the Basotho nation came from a land of reeds and marshes. This explanation, though sounds logical, creates some doubts in the sense that the use of reeds, placed at the entrance as a sign of warning, is practised by other Africans. For example among the Akans of Ghana, apart from birth, it is also used to prevent or ward off evil influences especially when a seriously sick person is undergoing traditional treatment. The researcher therefore believes that it has some spiritual powers that can ward off evil influences. This ritual of seclusion is a rite of separation.

He also talks about a ritual fire. He says that previously, when a baby was born, a new fire was lit by a pure young man (who had not had sexual intercourse). The young man was to light the fire by vigorously rubbing an upright stick of hard wood on a soft wood till fire broke out. This ritual fire was for the exclusive use of the baby, the mother and the servants. He mentions the use of this ritual fire in Botswana and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Zuesse (1979:82) also makes mention of a ritual fire prepared in the same manner for the consummation of a new marriage. Basing himself on Smith and Dale, he says, "Fire is the very heat of life itself; a new fire is made by twirling a 'male' stick in a 'female' piece of wood, and the flame is their union and energy".

The religious connotation of the fire ritual is obvious. The source of the fire, as described, implies purity, hence it could serve as source of energy, vitality and purification of the child and the mother. Moreover, since the Ila fire ritual is similar to it, the interpretation could be applied to it. Furthermore Ashton's (1952:107) account of fire, used to purifying a child who walks over a grave, confirms this interpretation. The use of fire at birth for purification purposes is again mentioned by Machobane (1995:17). He says,

Casalis said it was customary that, shortly after birth, fire of the dwelling was kindled afresh. The function of kindling that fire was performed by "a young man of chaste habits". To drive the point home, Casalis said that the young man rubbed two pieces of wood quickly together until a flame sprang up pure as himself.

This fire ritual is a rite of incorporation purifying and ushering the child into this material world where fire is the source of power and life. It also purifies the mother and prepares her for reintegration into social life.

Laesione Magnolia (1995:122) gives the full account of religious ritual sacrifice at birth when he says,

At the birth of a child his father offered another sheep.
By doing so, he formally took possession of the child and placed it under special protection of the family ancestors.
The symbol of contract and communion of the child and its ancestors through the mediation of the sacred victim is the fat which covered the victim's entrails, which was stretched and coiled round the neck of the infant.

He also mentions another sacrifice of a sheep to express thanks to the family ancestors for having been so helpful throughout the traumatic experience of birth. He says that this sacrificial rite was called '*koroso*' - home coming - if the mother had gone to her parents for her confinement as was done customarily in the first confinement.

This *koroso* ritual is a rite of reintegration into the family after the confinement-transition period.

To support this same issue of ritual sacrifice at birth, Laydevant (1952:32) also has this to say,

A very old custom holds that, after the birth of a child a sheep be slaughtered as sacrifice or, if the child is the son of a chief, an ox. This sacrifice was meant to place the baby under the protection of the family gods. The fat from the entrail, symbol of prosperity, was wrapped around the child's neck for a few moments; the gall was poured over mother and child as a source of blessings. This was the '*hlatsuo ea nyooko*' - (baptism of bile) and called down upon them the blessing of the ancestors. The sacrifice itself was more of thanksgiving offering. This is the meaning that Basotho give to this kind of oblation called '*Ho ananela*' i.e Thank by offering a gift.

Speaking in general terms about birth Gay (1980:105) says that the fruitfulness of the young mother represents ancestral blessing and the prospect that 'bohali payment will be continued and their daughter respected and securely married.

On religious significance of birth rituals in general, Onu (1992:150) has this to say,

Life is generally considered as the gift of God in every culture. The arrival of a child, therefore, signals a sort of interaction between the divine and the human world. As such, this entrance and the eventual reception of the gift of life is always ritualised. . . Birth is a transition from the world preceding life to actual existence.

Ashton (1952:29) also says that after birth the mother and the child are confined to their hut until the child's navel string dries and falls off and are ministered to by her mother, sister or other women of the village. This, as already mentioned, is a rite of transition. When the child and the mother are allowed to go out into the courtyard, a small feast may be held as a "thank-offering" to the ancestor spirits or to God, and to reward the midwives for their services. According to him a sheep is provided by the mother's father and, in the old days, its gall was poured over the child and the bladder tied round its neck; the meat was given to the midwives and shared by visitors. This sacrifice is obviously different from the one described by Laesione Magnolia above. The sacrificial rites could be rites of incorporation admitting the child into the family.

2.2.2.1 NAMING

Naming the child is not given much prominence by the Basotho. There seems to be no clear cut ritual ceremony attached to the naming of the child - as the literature survey reveals. However, Laydevant (1952:32) seems to connect it with the '*Ho ananela*' i.e. thank by offering a gift. This thank-offering is connected with the reception of the new member of the family i.e. the child, therefore it is not made specifically for the naming ceremony. He says,

It was on this occasion that the father chose a name for the child.
Looking over the list of names adopted by the natives of Basutoland,

we note names taken from a certain event, as *pitso*--general gathering: *ntoa*--war; *tseko*-- quarrel. Again there are names of famous people, as *Poulo*--native name Paul Kruger, *Majeremane* - - the Germans; *Hopo*--the magistrate Hope who was killed in 1880. Again there are names of plants, like *Phakisane*--*Lesibo*--*Lehloenya*.

He adds that the Basotho give to their children the name of an ancestor. One of the sons will be given the name of the paternal grandfather, and a daughter that of the grandmother. The gift offered here is obviously a beast offered to the ancestors in appreciation of the child they have received from the ancestors.

Giving children situational or names of events and naming them after the ancestors is a general African practice. It reveals their belief in ancestors as guardians of the family. Laydevant (1952:32) again makes mention of a ritual connected with the shaving of the baby's head. Although this ritual is placed under his sub-heading "imposition of the name", it seems to have no direct link with the naming of the child. He says: "when the baby's head was shaved, the witch-doctor was called in to anoint it with all the rites demanded by the occasion". According to him this ritual was performed with spider's nest found in the branches of the trees called *mohlakola-eucles lanceolata*. Spiders' eggs, believed to represent the ancestors' souls, is mixed with mud from mole's nests, burnt, cooked with fat from a black lamb, and given the required ointment. This ointment is smeared on the child's head along the sutures of the cranium, the first line starting from the brow and going right to the back of neck; the second from ear to ear, in the form of a large cross. He adds that the mother is also anointed on the forehead and on the soles of the feet so as to enable her to overcome the obstacles she might meet on her path. This is followed by a fumigation ceremony which consisted of smoking the baby in the smoke of the burning bush called '*sehalahala sa matlaka*' - the bush of the vultures. He says that D. Kidd and Willongby believed that this fumigation was destined to give wisdom, courage and eloquence to the baby.

Ashton (1952:32), however, does not mention any ritual or ceremonial rites in connection with the naming of the child, though he also talks about the child being named by his father or grandfather. He adds that an elder child is often called by its mother's marriage name. He goes further to give types of names. Setiloane (1976:34) also says:

Children are a gift of *badimo*, and despite a clear understanding of biological facts of conception, failure to conceive is attributed to the disfavour of *balimo*. The gift, in the first place, augments and establishes the *motse* and this is symbolised by such personal names as *oatile* (the *motse* has increased) or *oagile* (it is firmly built). But thanks to *badimo* may be expressed more directly in such names as *Mpho* (gift); *Keneilwe* (I have been given) and *Kelebogile* (I am grateful). If an elderly relative has recently died and a child of the same sex is born, it may be said *o boile mo tseleng* (he has returned on the road); and the child is given his name.

This statement is confirmed by Laydevant (1952:32) when he says: "The younger son and daughter will thus become a kind of reincarnation of that ancestor". Reincarnation seems to be the general belief of Africans. It is a general belief that children are the reincarnated grandparents.

From the above assertions, one can say that the naming procedure itself has religious implications, and the head shaving ritual, mentioned by Laydevant, if accepted as part of the naming rite, is a typical religious ritual. The implication of anointing the baby is to strengthen it and put it under the ancestors' protection.

The naming rituals mentioned above fall under rite of incorporation admitting the child into the family concerned.

2.3 RITUAL PRACTICES AT WEDDING: REVIEW

Eliade (1957:185) explains the religious connotation of marriage and hence the rituals involved by saying:

At marriage there is also a passage from one socio-religious group to another. The young husband leaves the group of bachelors and is therefore part of the group of heads of families. Every marriage implies tension and a danger and hence precipitates a crisis; this is why it is performed by rite of passage. The Greeks call marriage *talos*, consecration, and the marriage ritual resembled that of mysteries.

Gennep (1977:116) also adds that marriage constitutes the most important of the transitions from one social category to another because for at least one of the spouses it involves a change of family, a clan, a village or tribe and sometimes the newly married couple even establish residence in a new house. The change of residence marked in the ceremonies by rites of separation, always primarily focused on the territorial passage. Onuh (1992:156) also says:

Since marriage marks a crossing from the stage of adolescence to assume a marital status, in nearly every culture, no matter how complex it is, such a transition is accompanied by ceremonial ritual. The rituals have always the fundamental features of the rites of passage.

Marriage, in general terms, is a social act which involves the whole community especially in African society. The whole community bears witness to the fact that the couple has been lawfully married. Gennep (1997:139) has this to say on the above issue,

... every marriage is a social disturbance involving not just two individuals but several groups of varying sizes. A marriage modifies a number of elements in their relationship to each other, and these changes, step by step, bring about a disturbance of equilibrium. This phenomenon is scarcely noticed in our large cities, but it is more apparent in remote corners of our countryside where weddings are occasions for a stoppage of production, an expenditure of savings, and awakening from the usual apathy.

Onu(1992:158) confirms this assertion when he says,

... marriage ceremony is an entire communitarian celebration, since so many are involved in a single marriage. It is not just something that concerns the two young people. It touches not only the two families in question - nuclear as well as extended, and also at times, it is an affair of entire village or town.

In African sense the community bears witness to the authenticity of the marriage, and the ceremonial meal and rituals thereof seal the marriage in the presence of all the participants and the observers.

It is interesting to note that the above assertions on marriage in general terms equally apply to the Basotho marriage system and hence establish the fact that the Basotho custom is not a deviation from the norm. To support the above assertion Mokhehi (1988:27) says,

Ideal marriage among the Basotho is understood to be an alliance of two groups of families: parents, prospective couples, kin, and friends are all involved in the making of an ideal sesotho marriage. However, parents have naturally the greater role to play in the arrangement of marriage for their children.

Mokhehi (1988) outlines the stages in Basotho marriage. According to him the first stage in marriage is asking for the calabash (glass) of water. "*Qelo ea mohope oa metsi*". This rite is described by Laydevant (1952:65). He says:

... a messenger was sent with one animal. Arriving at the kraal of the maiden's parents, he would say: so and so, son of so-and-so, greets you. He sent me to ask for a calabash (a glass) of water. The mouth which speaks this proposition is this ox (or cow). If the girl had not yet been promised, her father accepted the gift and the betrothal was concluded.

According to Mokhehi (1988:27) this rite is preceded by another by which the boy informs his parents of his desire to marry. This ritual was known as (*a raha morits'oana*). He says, "In the past, a young man wishing to marry would go to the kraal early in the morning and prevent the cows from being milked by letting their calves go to them and suckle. This symbolism made it clear to the boy's father or kin that he wanted to marry". It is after this that the father asks for the calabash of water from the proposed maiden of his choice. These two rites can be placed under rites of separation. They separate both the boy and the girl from adolescent to adulthood. The period between this betrothal ritual and the actual marriage is the transitional or liminal period.

Laydevant (1952:65) asserts that after this rite the young suitor and his friends pay frequent visits to his fiancée. In order to support these friendly relationship, the girl would receive her visitors well, provide them with porridge, beer and often cooked fowl. He adds that from the

moment of the betrothal many taboos came into play: prohibition for the girl to pronounce the name of her future father-in-law etc. To support this assertion, Ashton (1952:63) adds,

... the prospective bridegroom, accompanied by two or three companions, pays the girl a formal visit. If she is agreeable to the match, she gives him a scarf *moqhaka* as a token of her acceptance. She should then offer them food, but this they should decline. Lest it be said that, instead of being compelled by love, they came driven by hunger.

This is a rite of acceptance. The girl accepts to enter into marriage life with the boy-rite of incorporation into marriage life.

During the negotiation for the bohali payment, Laydevant (1952:66) says that it happens that the whole day may not be sufficient to settle the transfer of the oxen. While the girl's parents try to obtain more, the boy's parents also do their best to pay less. When an agreement is reached, an oxen is killed. This sacrifice constitutes the signing of the marriage contract and also a religious ceremony to call for the protection of the ancestors on the new couple.

Ashton (1952:67) also adds that while negotiations are at foot for the acceptance of the bohali cattle certain taboos are observed for fear of prolonging them or spoiling the marriage. (For instance, the bride and her companions should sit with their legs straight out instead of folded under them in the usual way). As soon as agreement is reached, the bride's father sends word to his wife: "The marriage is concluded", and everyone relaxes. Food is then brought to the court, including a pot of beer called *ba mokhele* and both parents meet again and chat pleasantly. This meeting implicitly includes the ancestors for in African sense, every formal gathering is in the presence of the ancestors and the beer poured on the ground in the process of drinking are for the ancestors, believed to be around.

Ashton (1952:680) goes on to say that the bride's father then gives the groom's father two selected oxen "fat and unblemished". The latter kills one of them, called *mafura* (fat) and gives the other to the maternal uncle of the groom who, if he is in a generous mood, may also have it slaughtered. Customarily the girl's father should give one *hlabisa* beast for every ten 'bohali' cattle given by the groom's father. The 'mafura' is skinned by both the boy and the

girl's people. The girl's people skin the left side and the boy's people the right side of the beast. All work fast for it is believed that the side to finish first would dominate their future relations. The animal is then cut up and divided according to a complicated set of rules. Finally the gall is poured over the groom's hands usually by the father, and the bladder is tied round his right wrist. From the legal point of view this is the culmination of the ceremony. The gall bladder serves as the ring which binds the couple together. The marriage rituals mentioned above are all rites of incorporation ushering the new couple into adulthood and marriage life.

The religious significance is clear in the sense that the slaughtered beast *mafura* is a sacrifice to the ancestors *balimo* and the meals thereof is a communal meal participated by the ancestors. The sacrificial beast then becomes sanctified hence its gall is used to sanctify the marriage by pouring it on the groom's hands and using the gall bladder as a ring to culminate the marriage.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:124) has this to say about the religiousness of the marriage rituals.

... the father of the bride sacrifices an ox at every marriage so that the ancestors might look favourably on the marriage. The bride and the bridegroom were sprinkled with the gall. The fat of the victim was wrapped round their necks and wrists. The use of the gall and the fat here is symbolic of the communion and sharing of the sacred froces of the sacred victim. Here again the idea of the sacred meal was expressed.

On this same issue Judith S. Gay (1980:98) also asserts:

When the basic *bohali* contract of ten cattle has been completed the girl's family should kill an ox *ho hlabisa bohali or tlhabiso* which is then ceremonially divided by the two families. This demonstrates their satisfaction with the *bohali*, assures the blessing of the bride's ancestors and marks the point at which it can be said that the couple is truly married.

The delay of *bohali* payment is sometimes punishable by the ancestors. Krige and Camaroff (1981:115) give an account of a situation where the delay of *bohali* payment for thirty-eight

years and twenty-four years respectively reveals the limit to the patience of the ancestors. The wives concerned were struck by sickness which proved intractable to conventional medical treatment. And divination revealed that the ancestors - in each case those of the husband's family - were disgruntled by the unfinished state of affairs after years of delay, and manifested their pique through mystical affliction of their daughters-in-law.

The importance of *bohali* payments in Basotho marriage is emphasised by Ashton (1952:71) who says that in all cases civil or christian marriage negotiations over '*bohali*' cattle takes place on much the same line as those previously described and the cattle are delivered to the bride's people before the wedding takes place. The reasons for retaining this custom need not be over emphasised. Adam Kuper (1982:127) says:

This central exchange, ceremonially spotlighted, is, as it were, bracketed by more private rituals and transactions. These include . . . the making of offerings to the bride's father's ancestors, etc. Then after the public excitement of the wedding come the observances which mark the bride's more or less gradual and complete incorporation into the new home.

After the wedding follows a transitional or liminal period during which the bride is prepared for the final separation from her family for incorporation into her husband's family. On this issue Ashton (1952:73) says: "After the wedding the bride usually remains at home for about a month. This period is devoted to preparing her trousseau and collecting her household equipment.

The bride's final entry into her husband's family is marked by a rite of incorporation that welcomes her into her new home. This important ritual is known as *koae* (tobacco). Ashton (1952:74) tells how finally the bride goes to her husband's home accompanied by two or more kinswomen and friends. On their arrival at her new home they go straight to her mother-in-law's kraal and are welcomed by the local women. The next morning they should rise early and prepare breakfast for her mother-in-law. Her father-in-law kills a sheep for them and gives her a piece of the intestines as a symbol of her acceptance into the family. This is called *koae*. Until this ritual has been done, she may not eat anything nor start her

marital life. Laydevant (1952:67) also adds:

The offering of the sheep has sealed the welcome of the new bride: the eating of the sheep's meat has consecrated her a member of the household. After a good night's sleep, the girls are up bright and early. They sweep the hut, light the fire, grind the grain and do all the chores of the home . . . The new bride is supposed to have done most of the work to show her mother-in-law that she is a hard worker and a precious treasure in the kraal.

He adds that when the bride's companions have returned home, her father-in-law kills an ox called *pholo ea moqhoba* - the ox that accompanies. The principal quarters are sent on an ox back to the bride's parents and the rest is eaten by the bridegroom's folks.

These slaughtering of beasts to welcome the bride could be sacrifices of thanksgiving and at the same time a request to the family ancestors for their backing and protection of the new marriage. In this connection, Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:123-124) has this to say:

The notion of the existential union of the living-dead with the members of their household is more eminent than the idea of separate worlds of the living and the dead. As a result, the Basotho cannot visualize marriage without procreation and ancestral active participation.

This proves the religiousness of the marriage rituals. The importance of the '*koae*' ritual is made explicit by Mokhethi (1988:36) when he says:

This is the official rite of welcome to the new bride at the house of her groom. The sheep or goat is slaughtered for this purpose. Until this rite has been performed, customarily, the bride may not eat anything nor engage in any activity in the new family. The *koae* rite follows the wedding festivities. The mother-in-law takes this opportunity to talk intimately with her daughter-in-law, explaining to her how the household is managed, how to get things going, and what is expected of her. The new bride is informed about certain mannerisms she is expected to adopt especially in her dealings with her father-in-law, senior brother-in-law and other senior male relatives.

Another ritual which needs mention is Ashton's (1952:75) assertion that when the bride is ready for her marital life she places a pot of beer in the groom's hut to indicate her desire for marital life. Laydevant (1952:67) however, says that the beer is placed in the mother-in-law's hut. This rite could be a humble request (prayer) to the ancestors for their blessing and backing of the consummation of the marriage life. The above rituals are rites of incorporation.

2.4 RITUAL PRACTICES AT FUNERALS: RIVEW

Considering funeral rites generally, Van Gennep (1977:146-148) says that rites of separation are few in number and very simple, while the transition rites have a duration and complexity sometimes so great that they must be granted a sort of autonomy. He adds that those funeral rites which incorporate the deceased into the world of the dead are most extensively elaborated and assigned the greatest importance. He goes on to say that mourning appears to be a more complex phenomenon. It is a transitional period for the survivors, and they enter it through rites of separation and emerge from it through the rite of reintegration into the society (rite of lifting mourning). He also points out that during mourning, social life is suspended for all those affected by it, and the length of the period increases with the closeness of social ties to the deceased. For example widows and relatives. He adds that the social standing of the dead also counts. If the dead was a chief, the suspension affects the entire society. There is public mourning and proclamation of holidays.

African expression of religiousness in funeral rituals is explicitly stated by Zuesse (1979:127) when he says:

The ancestors, however, are closer to those ultimate structures. It is significant that ritual sacrifice is the chief method of coming into contact with them. They in turn make their desire to communicate known through sickness, sterility, or even death. They are especially present, that is, at liminal points of transformation (such as thresholds). Above all during funerals, and during the great festivals such as the new year harvest, they return to dwell among the living.

2.4.1 SOME GENERAL FUNERAL RITUALS

There are some funeral ritual practices in other parts of the world that are similar to those of the Basotho in particular and Africa in general. It would be interesting to note some few examples from Van Gennep (1977:153-154), who says,

... since the deceased must take a voyage, his survivors are careful to equip him with all the necessary material objects - such as clothing, food, arms, and tools - as well as those of magico-religious nature - amulets, passwords, signs etc - which will assure him of a safe journey or crossing and a favourable reception as they would a living traveller, . . . The Lapps, for instance, took care to kill a reindeer on the grave so that the deceased might ride it during the difficult journey to his final destination.

He goes on to talk about how relatives provide money for the deceased's journey and how this practice was found among ancient Greeks, in France and among the Slavs and the Japanese. It could be noted that it is also practised among the Akans in Ghana. He (ibid 162) goes on to say that among the Lushae tribe of Assam, the deceased is dressed in his best clothes and tied in sitting position on a scaffold of bamboo, while next to him are placed the tools and weapons of his sex. A pig, a goat and a dog are killed and all relatives, friends and neighbours share the meat; the deceased is also given food and drink. He adds that at night, he is placed in a grave dug next to the house. His nearest relatives say goodbye and ask him to prepare everything for those who will follow and join him.

And the soul, accompanied by those of the pig, the goat and the dog - without whom it would not find its way - goes dressed and equipped to the land of *mi-thi-hua*, where life is hard and painful.

The above, more or less universal examples of funeral rituals practices and their religious connotations, are cited to show how some of the Basotho funeral rituals discussed below are

similar in many ways to those found in other parts of the world.

The Basotho funeral ritual practices are many and punctuate the ceremonies from sickness to death and burial; and it is needless to say that most of these rituals have religious implications. When a person is seriously sick and on the point of death, the Basotho perform a recovery ritual in the form of propitiatory sacrifice to appease the ancestor(s) the sick person might have offended. Concerning such ritual practices Justinus Sechefo (sa.14) says:

A young man who has been sick for a length of time without showing any hopes of recovery, should be prayed for to try to appease the wrath of the departed ancestors who are the "gods". A sheep which has remained tied up for some time during the day is killed for him in the evening. First of all the sheep is led walking to the bed of the dying young man and is shown to him by others. With doleful expressions they say: "Behold this is your beast, by which we pray for thee: O! Ye our ancestors who are our gods, we beseech you, dip your hands for us in the cold water, so that our sick man may find sleep, and arise from his sickness. May it be that on our coming here the next morning, we find him sitting up, sipping some porridge. May his sickness now depart with us". Gradually the earnest compassionate heart of all, sooner or later do the dying man well.

On the other hand an aged person who has been sick for a long time without improving or dying but suffering is given something like a safe journey ritual, which is more or less an extreme unction - as practised by the Catholics. In this connection too Sechefo (sa.14-15) says that a sheep is sacrificed to the ancestors to release him. The sacrificial beast is killed ritually with a '*lehlabo*-basket needle, pierced under its armpit. The liver is hastily taken out and roasted on fire. Then the dying person is given only a very small piece of it which is pressed between his stiffened teeth. In this way he eats his last farewell supper. Then the family are asked to go near the bedside and express their willingness to part with the dying person, who with feelings of sorrow agree to let the one go. The dying person then gradually passes away. All the meat of the sacrificed beast must be cooked and entirely consumed by the family on the same day. No portions of it should remain uncooked for the following day. The atonement applies very much the same for a person suffering from the *maroko*. The

religious implications of the above rituals are explicit and need no further explanation.

2.4.2 BURIAL RITUALS

In the past, the Basotho burial system was different from the present. The difference might be due to Western and Christian influence. Secheho (sa.5) says that the graves of elders and owners of cattle were dug in their cattle kraal since of necessity the rich should not be separated from their cattle. The stones of the kraal were removed to allow sufficient space for the grave and the kraal was built again after burial. Among the Lushae tribes of Assam, Gennep (1977:162) says that the corpse is buried at nightfall in a grave next to the house. The Lo Dagaa of Ghana, according to Goody (1962:147), also bury the grandparents inside the courtyard of the house they have helped to build. Ashton (1952:104) also says that the graves of the senior members of the family are sited near the entrance of the kraal and those of their young children and their kinsmen just outside the kraal, but those of other villagers just outside the village. The Akans of Ghana also used to burry the family heads in the house. The religious implication of this practice could be that since they qualify to be ancestors, they should be near home or at home to help and protect the living, though Ashton (1952:104) says it is done to prevent enemies and sorcerers from rifling it.

According to Laydevant (1952:72) when the cadaver was taken out of the hut for burial, it never went through the door, but through a hole cut in the wall so that, its soul would not find the door when it returned to visit its former abode. Ashton (1952:105) also says: "Formerly it would not have been taken through the door of the *seotloana*, but through a gap made to the right of the door for men and to the left for women". The Lo Wiili of Northern Ghana also followed the same procedure. Goody (1962:77) has this to say about it, "For the dead body, however, a special hole had formely to be made in the wall of the courtyard belonging to the set of rooms in which he died. On the other hand, the bodies of young infants were passed over the top of the courtyard wall, . . ." He goes further to say: "The removal of the corpse by a special exit is of widespread occurrence, and Tylor has associated this procedure with the attempt to prevent the ghost from finding his way back to the house and harming those he left behind. In its most extreme form this belief involves the abandonment or destruction of the

house itself". According to Laydevant (1952:72) if a person died in his own hut in the village, it was abandoned. Gill (1993:50) also adds that the body was removed from the house through a hole which was made in the back wall. It is also interesting to note that Gennep (1977:156) also says that the Haida also take the corpse out of the house through a hole in the wall. This practice, apart from its universal nature, reveals the Basotho belief in life after death and the fact that there is interaction between the dead and the living.

The burial rites of the Basotho also have similarities in Africa. Concerning the preparations and burial rituals of the Basotho, Ashton (1952:102) has this to say:

Preparations for burial are begun at the earliest opportunity. According to tradition, the corpse is placed in a crouching position, knees drawn up to the chin and hands clasped in front, and it is tied with grass ropes. If rigor mortis has already set in, the sinews have to be cut, so that the limbs can be bent. The body is washed, dressed, wrapped loosely in a black ox-hide, and lightly bound with another grass rope.

Sechefo (sa.6) also adds that the dead body for interment was wound up in an ox-hide, bound with ropes of the 'moli' grass and placed "sitting up" in the grave so as to be able to rise up instantly on the day when it would be called to do so. This latter addition seems to have an implication of the christian resurrection. Again, Gill (1993: 58) also has this to add:

At the grave, the body, which was positioned to face the direction of the primeval *Nts'oana-tsatsi* or the rising sun, that is north east, was usually wrapped in a black ox-hide from a fleshly slaughtered beast.

Goody (1962:144) also says that the Lo Dagaba of Northern Ghana bury their dead men lying on their right side facing east so that the rising sun will tell them to prepare for hunt or for the farm. These show how burial rites could be similar in Africa.

Ashton (1952:102), however, goes on to say that in modern times burial follows the European fashion in a coffin. He adds that ordinarily, the corpse is not ritually purified in any way, though among important families it is washed with lotion prepared from various plants, which

cleanses the body and protects it from witchcraft. This work of laying out the body is done by close relatives of the deceased, excluding the immediate family, and that it should be supervised by a doctor. He adds that a corpse is generally believed to be unclean hence those who handled it be cleansed by washing with medicines and the hut occupied by the corpse should be purified by fumigation, otherwise crops would fail. The researcher considers the purification and cleansing rituals as religious. They are rites of separation breaking the immediate link between the dead and the surviving family and relatives. In the Catholic church the corpse is sprinkled with holy water and fumigated with incense in the church and at the graveyard, before burial, to purify it.

During burial, Sechefo (sa.6) says that few grains of seeds of mabele (kaffir corn), occasionally maize, sugar cane, pumpkin seeds and a tuft of ordinary dog grass twisted into a tiny ring were thrown beside the body in the grave. His or her snuff box, if any, was also placed at the side of the body. Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:40) also adds beans, fruits and weapons and preferred objects of the dead person to the burial objects. Ashton (1952:106) also adds that a few beads, proper to the deceased's clan are also buried with the deceased. And that a man's milking pot and thong and a woman's stirring rod and porridge stick used to be placed in the grave, but that this is no longer done. Lydevant (1952:72) also adds, thatch offered to build a hut, tobacco to chew or smoke. On certain occasions sacrifices or libation of beer were offered so that they would have food and drink and keep away from the living. Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:116) again adds wheat and sorghum to the burial items. The burial rituals are all rites of separation breaking direct links with the living and bidding the deceased farewell.

Religiously, these burial rites reveal the Basotho belief that there is life beyond the grave. The researcher however disagrees with Father Des Rosiers' assertion that the burial rites are a proof of the existence of God mentioned by Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:40). He rather sides with the assertion of Lesaoana Manyeli himself that as far as he could see, this kind of burial service is a direct proof of the existence of life beyond the grave. Thus it is a proof or an indication that the ancient Basotho believed that something of the dead person survived after death.

2.4.3 RITUALS AFTER BURIAL

After burial, all those who went to the burial ground returned by the same route and cleaned their hands with water mixed with some herbs for purification before entering the house for the communal meal. Sechefo (sa.8) says that on returning home after the burial, all the men who handled or touched anything about the grave should wash their hands immediately outside the hut of the deceased, with water mixed with the slimy juice of the wild aloes from the mountain. Likewise, the implements that were used were washed in the same mixture. This is another purification rite that could be classified as a rite of separation from the deceased. This purification act is followed by the communal meal after burial. Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:117) also adds that all the participants of the burial were obliged to wash their hands with the water mixed with shredded leaves of wild aloes before they shared the sacrificial meal. In the event of the meat of this immolated animal being left over, had to be buried before the sun rose on the following day, that today this obligation is no more binding. Laydevant (1952:73) also says:

At burials, an ox was slaughtered and had to be eaten during the night before sun-rise. Just before the rising of the sun, the entire village gathered together, each person holding in his hand a little chyme from the animal's stomach, near the grave. As the first rays of the sun shot over the horizon, they cast the chyme on the grave and said all together "U RE ROBALLE"... sleep in peace for us.

This final ritual is a rite of incorporation for the deceased ushering him or her into the land of the dead and a rite of separation for the mourners bidding the deceased final farewell.

A day after burial, another important ritual follows-the cutting of the hair. It is an important obligation for all mourners. Sechefo (sa.9) says that all the family and nearest relatives of the deceased assemble at the hut of the deceased for the hair cutting, beginning with the immediate heir and proceeding to the least of the family. All hair clipped should be swept up together with a broom and then collected into one heap without losing any. The heap of hair

was buried in the ground or concealed under a heavy stone. The smearing of the deceased's hut is done at this time. (This smearing is a purification ritual). He adds that the wearing of the 'thapo' or 'mourning veil' follows after the cutting of hair. In the primitive times a slender tiny rope twisted out of the *moli* or 'rush' leaves was worn around the head or the neck in the case of younger children. This served the same purpose as a mourning veil of today. The cutting of hair and the wearing of thapo are rites of separation of the mourners from the regular or normal social life. The smearing of the deceased's hut is also a rite of separation. These are all signs of mourning and hence suspension of normal social life. In addition they observe a number of taboos to separate them from the normal social life. mb

The cutting of the hair is observed in many places in Africa. However, in some places it is observed by the women. The wearing of the *thapo* is also observed in diverse ways in other parts of Africa. For example the Akans of Ghana wear a mourning cloth - a complete traditional dress in black or red from the burial day or the day of death till after six weeks. However, all sympathizers wear it only on the day of mourning and or burial.

The funeral ends with the lifting of mourning by taking off the *thapo*. Sechefo (sa.10) says that when the mourning period had ended, the immediate heir calls the family and relatives together to take off the mourning *ho rola thapo* or to remove the banhood from the family *ho tlosa khutsana*. On this occasion he slaughters a beast for the essential and binding function. This last ritual is the rite of incorporation of the deceased into the land of the dead and a reintegration of the bereaved family into normal social life. The funeral rituals are explicitly religious rituals. They have transcendental meaning.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED

Data collected through questionnaires calls for critical analytical approach to interpret them effectively. The approach here is a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutical study and the analysis of the data collected. The tables below reflect how data collected through questionnaires were analysed.

3.1 MODE OF DISTRIBUTION

The following areas were considered in distributing the questionnaires:

Sex: male and female

Age groups: from 20 years and above

Religious denomination: Christian, Traditional believer and (Moslem)

Residence: urban, semi urban and rural (in this case Maseru is classified as urban and the district centres as semi urban; the others are rural areas.)

Marital status: married, single, widowed, divorced and separated.

N.B. There were no Moslem respondents so it was dropped out from the data.

3.2 MODE OF RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES

As already stated in chapter 1 the questionnaires retrieved and accepted as properly filled constituted 55% of the total number distributed, i.e 83 in number, 30 of these were on funerals, 25 on weddings and 28 on births. Below is the detailed statistical data on the mode of response.

TABLE 1 below shows the breakdown of the male, female response to the questionnaires in general and in the three categorized sections viz birth, wedding and funeral in particular.

It reveals that the male-female ratio of the respondents is 45% (37) males to 55% (45) females in general outlook. This could reflect the male-female ratio of the general population. On the other hand it shows easy accessibility of females over the males which might be due to migrant male workers in the mines in the Republic of South Africa. Again a study of the specific sections of the questionnaires reveals that the male-female ratio of the respondents to birth questionnaires is 10 males to 18 females. This reflects the fact that birth is women's field. On wedding, the ratio is 11 males to 14 females. This also confirms the interest of females in wedding and the higher percentage of females over males in the population. In funeral, however, the figures changed. The ratio of male-female respondents was 16 males to 14 females. This could reflect the major role the males play in funerals in Lesotho.

TABLE 1. SEX DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

	BIRTH	WEDDING	FUNERAL	TOTAL	%
MALES	10	11	16	37	45
FEMALES	18	14	14	46	55
TOTAL	28	25	30	83	100

On the religion of the respondents, two areas were considered namely; Christian and Traditional believers. Traditional believer here implies citizens who are not Christians and do not belong to any foreign religion but live by traditional ethics and religious beliefs and practices. Table 2 below reveals that 73% (61) of the respondents are Christians and 27% (22) are traditional believers.

TABLE 2 RELIGION OF RESPONDENTS

	BIRTH	WEDDING	FUNERAL	TOTAL	%
CHRISTIANS	20	19	22	61	73
TRADITIONAL	8	6	8	22	27
TOTAL	28	25	30	83	100

In all three sections, namely birth, wedding and funeral, Christian respondents outnumber the traditional believers. This reveals the fact that there are far more Christians than traditional believers. One interesting thing is that most of the respondents who claimed to be traditionalists also claimed to be Christians as well. They showed this by marking both items on the questionnaires. It also reveals Christian influence on Traditional religion in Lesotho. The researcher feels that those who responded in that way imply that they combine Christian religious doctrine with Traditional religious practices. This in fact could be a general situation of all African Christians. The age group distribution of the respondents shows a relatively fair distribution of the questionnaires. Table 3 below reveals that the highest percentage of respondents 17% (14) was in the age group 25-29 years, the second highest 16% (13) was in the age group 20-24 years whilst the least 4% (3) came from the age group of 60 years and above. The average percentage was 11.1% so it shows clearly that the questionnaires were fairly distributed. Fifty-three percent of the respondents were below 40 years and forty-seven percent were above forty years. The difference indicates that the youth were more enthusiastic and easily accessible to the researcher. The low percentage for 60+ age group indicates the inaccessibility of the aged.

TABLE 3 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

AGE GROUPS	BIRTH	WEDDING	FUNERAL	TOTAL	%
20-24 years	4	5	4	13	16
25-29 years	6	3	5	14	17
30-34 years	3	3	-	6	7
35-39 years	1	4	6	11	13
40-44 years	4	2	1	7	8
45-49 years	5	2	4	11	13
50-54 years	2	4	4	10	12
55-59 years	3	2	3	8	10
60+ years	-	-	3	3	4
TOTAL	28	25	30	83	100

It is interesting to note that all three aged respondents responded to only funeral questionnaires. This reveals their concern with death.

From Table 4 below, the figures on the residence of the respondents reveal that there were more respondents from the urban centre (Maseru) 67% (56) than the semi-urban 10% (8) and the rural areas 23% (19). The difference accounts for the fact that the researcher concentrated more on the urban centre because he realised that he could get a fair representation of the countryside in the city due to the homogeneous nature of Basotho. This and other factors mentioned in chapter 1 justifies the researcher's stand.

TABLE 4 RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS

TYPE OF RESIDENCE	BIRTH	WEDDING	FUNERAL	TOTAL	%
URBAN	18	20	18	56	67
SEMI-URBAN	2	2	4	8	10
RURAL	8	3	8	19	23
TOTAL	28	25	30	83	100

On the marital status of the respondents, five categories were considered namely, married, single, widowed and separated. A close study of figures in table 5 below reveals that 19% (16) of the respondents were single, 69% (57) were married, 8% (7) were divorced and 4% (3) were separated. Surprisingly no widows or widowers responded to the questionnaires. It is difficult to account for this lack of response from the widows and widowers. It might be that they were either not contacted or they were not interested in the questionnaires. The figures reveal that greater number of the respondents were married people 69% (57). This could reflect the percentage of married people in the population of the country. The second highest number came from the single or unmarried respondents 19% (16). Most of them were females within the age group of 20-24 years. Some of the single male respondents were also within the age group of 40-59 years. These could be mostly the religious people (i.e Catholic priests and brothers). The divorced and the separated respondents ranged between 40 and 54 years. This suggests that marriage problems or divorce cases are rampant within the middle ages. The divorced and the separated constituted 12% (10) of the total respondents.

TABLE 5 MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

MARITAL STATUS	BIRTH	WEDDING	FUNERAL	TOTAL	%
SINGLE	4	3	9	16	19
MARRIED	20	17	20	57	69
DIVORCED	4	2	1	7	8
SEPARATED	-	3	-	3	4
WIDOWED	-	-	-	0	0
TOTAL	28	25	30	83	100

A further study of the tables above reveals that out of the 83 questionnaires retrieved and accepted as good 34% (28) were on birth, 30% (25) on wedding and 36% (30) on funeral (Table 5 above). Ten of the respondents on birth were males and 18 were females (Table 1 above). There were 20 Christians and 8 Traditional believers (Table 2 above). And there were respondents from all age groups up to 59 years (Table 3 above). This demonstrates a fair distribution of the questionnaires on birth. The urban dwellers were 18 as against 2 semi-urban and 8 rural dwellers (Table 4 above). The married respondents were 20 whilst the divorced and single respondents were 4. There were no widowed and separated respondents in this section.

On marriage, out of the 30% (25) respondents, there were 11 males and 14 females (table 1 above), 19 Christians and 6 Traditionalists (table 1 above). All age groups responded except 60 years and above (Table 3 above). Here too the distribution was fair. The urban dwellers were 20 as against 2 semi-urban and 3 rural dwellers (Table 4 above). And ~~the~~ there were 17 married, 3 single, 2 divorced and 3 separated respondents. There were no widowed respondents in this section (Table 5 above).

Out of the 36% (30) respondents for the funeral questionnaires, there were 16 males and 14 females (Table 1 above); 22 of the respondents were Christians and 8 were Traditionalists (Table 2 above). Here too the age distribution was fair except that there was no response from 30-34 years age group but there were responses from the aged (60 and above). This response of the aged could be attributed to the fact that they were interested in funerals

because they were probably conscious of their death (Table 3 above). The urban dwellers in this section were 18 as against 4 semi-urban and 8 rural dwellers (Table 4 above). On marital status, there were 20 married, 1 divorced, and 9 single respondents. There were no separated and widowed respondents (Table 5 above).

In all three sections, greater number of the respondents were Christians. This could reflect the impact of Christian missionaries on the Basotho. The higher percentage of females over male respondents could also be attributed to the male migrant workers in the Republic of south Africa as mentioned earlier on. The reasons for the high percentage of urban dweller respondents has been given in chapter 1 and (page 49) above.

3.3 RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON BIRTH.

3.3.1 PREGNANCY

The tables below correspond with the general response to specific questions on pregnancy. Comparing the first and second items in table 6 (below) it would be noted that 71% of the respondents said that the pregnant woman goes to her parents after six months or in the sixth month of her pregnancy, whilst 29% claimed that she goes there in the seventh month of her pregnancy. So, based on these facts and figures, it could be deduced that the first childbirth takes place in the home of the young woman's parents, and that she goes there between the sixth month and the seventh month of her pregnancy. In most cases the respondents gave more than one response to most questions in the questionnaires. For that matter most responses have to be judged on their own merits. Whereas items 1 (going back to parents after 6 months) and 2 (going back to parents after 7 months), 4 (wearing a special blouse) and 5a(wearing goat's skin after 8 months) could be compared to select the highest percentage, items 3 (no hair cut until delivery), 6 wearing the paw of a wild cat), 7 (walking barefooted), 8 (applying red clay to the body), 9 (drinking traditional medicine) and 10(wearing a goat's gall bladder) should be treated on their own merits. The high percentage response for items: 3 (no hair cut until delivery), 6 (wearing the paw of a wild cat), 7(walking barefooted), 8 (applying red clay to the body) and 9 (drinking traditional medicine) indicates that such rites, even though said to be the practice of the past, are still lingering on among the citizens or they

belong to the recent past. Again it would be noted that there are some slight differences in the clans or tribes. For example item 5 (a) tells us that the pregnant woman wears a goat skin '*ho bipisoa*' after the eighth month, item 5 (b) also adds that the Matebele use sheep skin known as '*letsoku*' instead of the goat skin.

TABLE 6 RESPONSE TO THE PREGNANCY RITUALS

	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1	She goes back to her parents after 6 months	20	71
2	She goes back to her parents after 7 months	8	29
3	No hair-cut until delivery	26	93
4	She wears special blouse (<i>selapa</i>)	18	64
5	She wears goat skin (<i>ho bipisoa</i>) after 8 months	10	36
5	She wears sheep skin with ' <i>letsoku</i> ' (Matebele tribe)	5	18
6	She wears the paw of a wild's cat (<i>khoetsa</i>)	25	89
7	Not allowed to wear shoes (walks barefooted)	24	86
8	Applies red clay mixed with fat (Vaseline) to the body	20	71
9	She drinks traditional medicine prepared by herbalists (<i>lipitsa</i>)	20	71
10	Goat's gall bladder was worn as a necklace	5	18

3.3.2 LABOUR (CHILD BEARING)

The study of table 7 below reveals that items 1 (mother serving as midwife), 2 (wearing of some amulet *moetlo*), 4 (fire set and traditional medicine prepared) and 5 (reeds put near the entrance of the hut) are popular. They carry 82%, 86%, 71% and 93% responses of the respondents respectively. It could therefore be deduced that traditionally mothers, grandmothers and old women of the community serve as midwives during childbearing (item 1). This responsibility of the old could be based on their personal experiences in childbearing and their reputable social stand in the community. The wearing of an amulet or talisman (item 2) as a charm against evil forces is to promote speedy and peaceful delivery. It reveals

the people's awareness of the presence and influence of evil forces or charms. Likewise, the twisted cloth folded for her to use as a pillow and the fire-set are believed to speed up delivery (items 3 and 4). The traditional medicine prepared on the special fire is believed to have some special potency to speed up delivery. As mentioned in chapter 2 above the fire could as well serve as a source of new life that has come in the form of a baby. The fire could serve as source of power, life and the presence of God. Zuesse (1979:82) recounts the use of fire in the marriage rituals among the Ila. The reeds put outside near the entrance of the hut (item 5) could serve as information medium and at the same time a warning to keep off men and danger. As already stated, Laydevant (1952:30) adds that this method has a symbolic meaning. It reveals the origin of the Basotho. Looking at the function of the reeds at that crucial time Laydevant's interpretation, if accepted, could only be a secondary factor. The primary aim is to ward off the possibility of evil powers getting access to the baby and the mother. Using warm hands and warm water (item 6) is a traditional midwifery technique for making the hands flexible and agreeable with the body temperature of the child. Item 7 says that the woman goes to hospital or clinic when her time is up. Though this is the current practice, it is a deviation from the traditional childbearing.

TABLE 7 LABOUR RITUALS

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Mother or grandmother and old ladies serve as midwives	23	82
2. Some amulet or talisman (<i>moetlo</i>) is worn by the pregnant woman	24	86
3. She uses a twisted cloth folded as a pillow	10	36
4. Fire is set. Traditional medicine is prepared for her to drink	20	73
5. Two reeds put outside the hut to serve as a warning to people not to enter	26	93
6. Using warm water and warm hands	6	21
7. The woman goes to hospital or clinic when her time is up	5	18

3.3.3 NAMING CEREMONY

Table 8 below shows how respondents responded to this rite. The first response tells us that a sheep is slaughtered for 'kananelo' feast. This is also a sacrifice to the ancestors to thank them for the new arrival in the family. It is also to welcome the baby into the family as most of the respondents interpreted it. But even so, it does not dispute the fact that ancestors are involved because sometimes people give such interpretations to avoid Christian condemnation of the act. To support this assertion, Pula (1990:337) has this to say, "... It was considered that in order to be a good Christian one had to conform to Western culture, and to abandon his or her own cultural practices . . . But the problem here is that Western culture proved so dominant, that many local people felt ashamed of their own culture . . ." (This is a reaction to the missionary attempts to discourage traditional customary practices). This item carries 77% (22) of the respondents and therefore it is popular among the people. Item 2 - the child is shaved - is also very popular 71 % (20). Whilst this ritual forms part of cleansing rites and hence a rite of separation, item 1 is a rite of incorporation accepting the newly born child into the family formally. Item 3 - a name is given to the child by the mother or father - is also a popular response 71% (20). It is also a rite of incorporation accepting the child into the family formally. It tells us that the naming of the child is the responsibility of both parents. Item 4 - the child wears an amulet or talisman transferred from the mother - is very popular response, 86% (24) of the respondents. It suggests that it was a popular practice and might have been stopped only recently or it is still in practice. It has some psychological effect on the nursing mother. It creates the impression that the child is protected and therefore beats down her fears about the child's health.

It is also a rite of incorporation bringing the child under the protection of the family medicine and gods the 'balimo'. We should again bear in mind that, in this case most of the respondents gave more than one response to most of the questions, hence most responses are treated on their own merits. Very few of them have alternatives to be compared with. For example items 5 and 6 below are comparable because they give alternative responses. Item 5 says naming is done eight days after birth whilst item 6 says it is done after the umbilical cord has fallen off. Item 5 carries 54% whilst item 6 carries 46%. The two responses are

complementary because the umbilical cord usually drops within the eight days. The dropping of the umbilical cord is also a rite of separation. It severs the child's relationship with its former world. Item 7 says that the celebrant (the one naming the child) spits on a piece of meat and gives it to the child to eat. This is symbolic because a one-week old child cannot eat meat. It carries 39% of the respondents. It implies that it is not popular and might have been practised by some clans. The implication of this ritual is to make the child take after the celebrant who is usually a person of good character. This is also a rite of incorporation. Lastly item 8 says the child is baptised in the church 7%. This response is considered incorrect because family names are not given during baptism.

TABLE 8 NAMING RITUALS

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. A sheep is slaughtered for 'kananelo' feast	22	79
2. The child is shaved	20	71
3. The name is given by the father or the mother	20	71
4. The child wears an amulet or talisman transferred from the mother	24	86
5. Naming is done 8 days after birth	15	54
6. Naming is done when the umbilical cord falls off	13	46
7. The celebrant spits on a piece of meat for the child to eat	11	39
8. The child is baptised in church	2	7

3.3.4 EFFECT OF PREGNANCY RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY

Table 9 below reveals what the respondents feel are the effect of pregnancy rituals on both mother and child. Here too the responses are judged on their own merits because respondents gave more than one response at a time. Item 1 in this table tells us that the mother would have easy delivery and the child would be healthy. This effect could refer to the drinking of a traditional medicine '*lipitsa*' (Table 6 item 9). The percentage response in each case (36% (10) and 25% (7) respectively) shows that the belief was popular among the people.

Protection against witchcraft and evil spirits - item 2 - for both mother and child was also a popular belief - 50% (14) in each case. This response could also refer to items 5 and 6 in table 6. (The wearing of a sheep or goat skin and a paw of a wild cat) Items 3 and 4 talk about the prevention of abnormalities, sickness and protection by the ancestors. The percentages are 43% (12), 46% (13), 25% (7) and 46% (13) respectively. They are also popular beliefs among the people. These responses could also refer to items 5,6,9 and 10 in table 6, namely the wearing of sheep or goat skin, the wearing of a wild cat's paw, the drinking of traditional medicine and the wearing of a goat's gall bladder as a necklace, respectively. Item 5 says the pregnancy rituals give confidence and security to the pregnant woman. This response refers to the psychological effect of pregnancy rituals as a whole. In fact this response summarizes the whole ritual practice. It gives the pregnant woman, who is a novice in the field of childbearing, some confidence that she is protected from danger.

TABLE 9 EFFECT OF PREGNANCY RITUALS

RESPONSE ON MOTHER	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	%	RESPONSE ON THE BABY	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	%
1. Easy delivery	10	36	1. Healthy baby	7	25
2. Prevents witchcraft & evil spirits	14	50	2. Prevents witchcraft & evil spirits	14	50
3. Prevents abnormalities in the foetus	12	43	3. Prevents abnormalities & diseases	13	46
4. Prevents sickness	7	25	4. Protected by the ancestors	13	46
5. Gives confidence and security	5	18			

3.3.5 EFFECT OF LABOUR RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY

Table 10 below shows the responses of the respondents to the effect of labour rituals on the mother and her baby. Items 1 and 2, safety delivery (71% (20) and prevention of complication during labour (86% (24) are more or less the same point. The corresponding

responses for the baby, however, differ a bit, i.e. smooth and safety growth of the child (36% (10) and prevention from evil spirits and witchcraft. (54% (15). The corresponding figures and percentages show how popular these beliefs were among the people. Items 1 and 2 for the mother and the baby could be the responses to items 2,3 and 4 in table 7 above, namely the wearing of amulet or talisman, the use of twisted cloth as a pillow and the setting of fire and preparation of a traditional medicine for the woman. Item 3 - the promotion of a normal delivery - like item 2, shows the people's belief in the potency of labour rituals. On the part of the baby, item 3, a healthy baby 71% (20) and item 4, a normal child, 54% (15) could all best, refer to item 9 in table 6 i.e drinking a traditional medicine prepared by a herbalist 'lipitsa'. The percentage responses show that they are all popular beliefs of the people. Here too, item 4 for the mother - psychological effect - sums up the rationale behind the labour rituals for those who believe in the potency of the rituals.

TABLE 10 EFFECT OF LABOUR RITUALS ON THE MOTHER AND THE BABY

RESPONSE ON THE MOTHER	FREQUENCY	%	RESPONSE ON THE BABY	FREQUENCY	%
1. Safety delivery	20	71	Smooth and safety growth of the child	10	36
2. Prevents complication during labour	24	86	Prevents the child from evil spirits and witchcraft	15	54
3. Promotes normal childbearing	15	54	Healthy baby	20	71
4. Psychological effect	10	36	Normal child	15	54

3.3.6 INTERPRETATION OF THE NAMING RITUALS

Table 11 below shows how respondents interpreted the naming rituals. Naming ritual as a whole is a rite of incorporation into the family as stated in item 1, that it enrolls the child into the family of the living and the dead. It carries 29% (8) of the respondents and it is the most popular in the table. Item 2 tells us that one of the aims of naming rituals is to build the child up in a good character by taking after the master of ceremony who gives it a piece of meat with his or her spittle on it. This item carries 18% (5) of the respondents. It shows that it is

practised among some clans. It reveals Basotho's interest in the moral training of their children at an early stage. Showing appreciation for the baby - item 3 - is a social aspect of the rite. It carries 21% (6) of the respondents. This could be a response to item 1 table 8 above. i.e. the slaughtering of a beast for 'kananelo' feast. Item 4 - thanksgiving to the ancestors 'balimo' - like item 3, might be a response to item 1 in table 8 above, it reveals how inevitable the ancestors are in the lives of the Basotho and their belief that the ancestors are the providers of children in the family. In fact this is more or less a general African belief. Item 5 - to help remember important members of the family - is more or less item 4 put in a different form but it also implies that names are sometimes used to remember important occasions and people.

TABLE 11 THE INTERPRETATION OF NAMING RITUALS

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. To enrol the child into the family of the living and the dead	8	29
2. To build up the child in a good character	5	18
3. To show appreciation for the child	6	21
4. Thanksgiving to the ancestors by sacrificing a sheep	7	25
5. To help remember important members of the family	2	7
TOTAL	28	100

3.4 RITUALS AT WEDDING (MARRIAGE)

3.4.1 PRE-WEDDING RITUALS FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL

Pre-marriage rituals are rituals performed in preparation for marriage. Marriage is a form of initiation to introduce one into responsible adulthood. Unless of course one chooses to stay away from it due to personal reasons or on religious grounds, every normal adult goes through it. It is the legitimate means of procreation in human society. It is a social norm for every normal human being to conform.

Table 12 below deals with responses to pre-wedding rituals. Item 1, in this table, is about the

boy indicating to his parents his desire to marry. He does this through a special ritual known as 'kicking the little dish' '*o raha morits'oana*'. It is the traditional way of making his parents aware that he is mature for marriage. It carries 60% (15) of the respondents even though it is said to have been stopped long time ago. Item 2 on the boy's side again talks about initiation school. It is generally believed that it is where boys are introduced to adulthood and thus prepared for marriage. It also carries 40% of the respondents. It gives the impression that initiation school is becoming unpopular with the new generation. On the side of the girl the most popular item is item 2 - initiation school. It also carries 40% (10). Items 1 and 3 follow with 20% each. Whilst items 4 and 5 carry 12% (3) and 8% (2) respectively. The differences may be due to clan or tribal differences in the practice.

TABLE 12 PRE-MARITAL RITES FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL

RESPONSE FOR THE BOY	FREQUENCY	%	RESPONSE FOR THE GIRL	FREQUENCY	%
1. Kicking the little dish ' <i>O raha morits'oana</i> '	15	60	1. Presentation of heifer by the boy's family	5	20
			2. Initiation school	10	40
2. Initiation school	10	40	3. Smearing the girl with ochre	5	20
			4. Preparation of trousseau	3	12
			5. Going to the stream	2	8

Going to the stream, item 5, above is said to be a rite whereby the girl goes to the stream early in the morning followed by some young women who pour water on her on her way back home. This might be a ritual connected with the initiation school or when the girl experiences her first menstruation. '*O otlile metsi*' (Bereng (1978:18). The smearing with ochre could also be connected with the initiation of girls.

3.4.2 RITES PERFORMED FOR THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM DURING THE WEDDING

A study of table 13 below also reveals that respondents gave more than one response at a time

therefore each item has to be treated on its own merit. Items 1 and 2, i.e. negotiations for *bohali* payment and the killing of a beast for the wedding feast respectively, are very popular 80% (20) and 88% (22). Item 3, special parts of the meat given to the bride and the bridegroom, is also popular 72% (18). It is an indication that these practices are common among all the clans. Item 4 - the bride and the bridegroom are given women and men's clothes respectively- however, carries 40% (10) of the respondents. It could also be a popular rite except that respondents might have divided opinion as to whether it belongs to pre-marital rites or marital rites.

TABLE 13 *RITUALS FOR THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM DURING WEDDING*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Negotiations on <i>bohali</i> payments in the presence of a chief	20	80
2. Beasts killed for the wedding feast and for the ancestors	22	88
3. Special parts of the meat given to the couple	18	72
4. New clothes for the bride and the groom	10	40

3.4.3 THE EFFECT OF WEDDING RITUALS ON THE COUPLE

It would be noted from the study of table 14 below that the effects of the wedding rituals on the couple are both positive and negative. Thus rites properly carried out would bring positive effects such as item 1- prosperous marriage life, item 2 - unity between the couple, item 3 - blessing from the ancestors and item 4 - validating the marriage. They are all popular responses carrying 60% (15), 84% (21), 72% (18) and 80% (20) respectively. On the other hand there are negative effects which could result from failure to perform the rituals or to perform them properly. The effect could be: sickness (item 5), birth problems (item 6) or sterility (item 7). The unfortunate aspect of it is that all the negative effects usually affect the bride. The reason might be that the bride is a new entrant into the man's family and could bring good or bad luck depending on the wishes of the ancestors. All the effects could have both social and spiritual connotations. Socially the society would not recognize and even respect the marriage as valid and hence there would be disunity between the couple and their

families. This could affect the prosperity of the marriage. Again if the ancestors are not satisfied and they do not recognize the marriage as valid, the above mentioned punishments are likely to befall the bride. This could again result in disunity and disharmony which would automatically affect the prosperity of the marriage.

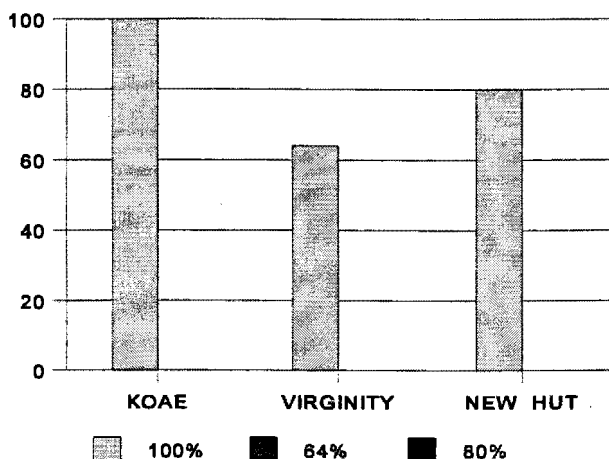
TABLE 14 EFFECT OF WEDDING RITUALS ON THE COUPLE

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Prosperous marriage life	15	60
2. Unity between the couple and their families	21	84
3. Blessing from the ancestors	18	72
4. Validates the marriage	20	80
5. Sickness	10	40
6. Birth problems	15	60
7. Sterility	20	80

3.4.4 RITUALS AFTER THE WEDDING

Respondents gave three rituals that are performed after the wedding ceremony. These are (1) 'koae' (tobacco) - a sheep is slaughtered to welcome the bride into her husband's family.(2) - test of virginity of the bride. This practice is said to have been stopped because it brings shame, disrespect, mistrust and many problems to the bride and her family and even to the marriage. (3) Building of a new hut for the couple. The *koae* ritual is a rite of incorporation admitting the bride into her new home and family. It is a means to inform the family ancestors about the new arrival in the family and to ask for their blessings. The new hut built for the couple is also a rite of incorporation into independent marriage life and a means to procreate. Fig. 1 below shows the percentage responses of the respondents. The *koae* - 100% (25) and the new hut 80% (20) show how popularly they are practised among the people.

FIG. 1 PERCENTAGE RESPONSE OF AFTER WEDDING RITUAL



3.4.5 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS AFTER WEDDING

Four main effects were given by the respondents. Their percentage responses show that they are popular beliefs of the clans. Item 1 in table 15 below says that it ties up the two families (of the bride and the bridegroom). This item carries 80% (20) of the respondents. Item 2 - it makes the bride fully accepted in the new home - also carries 92% (23). Item 3- it gives the couple freedom to procreate - carries 96% (24) and item 4 - it prevents premarital sex among the youth - also carries 60% (15). Items 1 and 2 are responses to the 'koae' ritual, whilst item 3 refers to the new hut for the couple and item 4 also refers to the virginity test in fig. 1 above. Even though the virginity test, as explained, could serve as a check on the moral conduct of the youth, if encouraged, could disrupt many marriages. It has outlived its usefulness because these days the prospective couple do meet before the marriage is contracted.

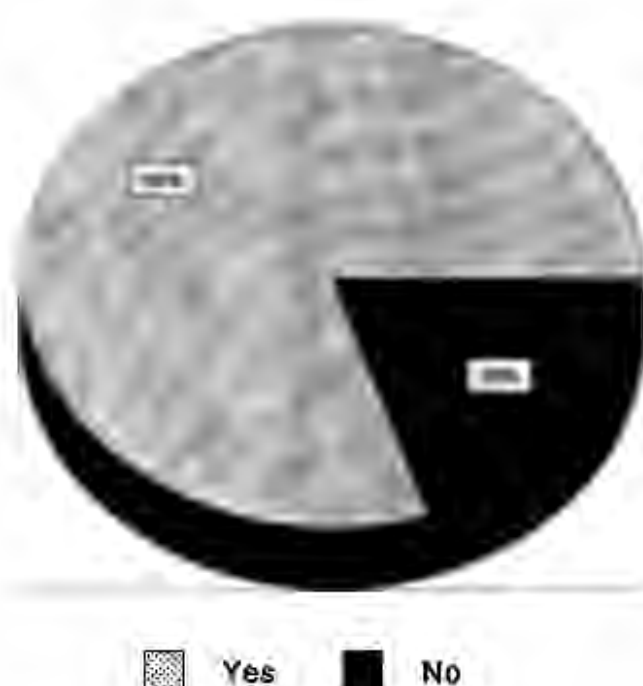
TABLE 15 EFFECT OF POST WEDDING RITUALS

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. It ties up the two families.	20	80
2. It makes the bride fully accepted in her new home.	23	92
3. It gives the couple freedom to procreate.	24	96
4. It prevents pre marital sex among the youth.	15	60

The final question in this section was whether the wedding rituals bring any blessings or prevent any anticipated calamity that might befall the couple. It was a closed ended question that demanded yes or no answer. Fig. 2 below shows the frequency and percentage response of the respondents. 80% (20) said 'yes' and 20% (5) said 'no'.

The response reveals that majority of the respondents believe that the ancestors have control over their lives. It means that the Basotho fear and revere their ancestors.

Fig. 2 Pie graph of the response



3.5 FUNERAL RITUALS

Traditionally Africans believe that sickness precedes death. So when someone dies without any outward sign of sickness eye-brows are raised, likewise accidental deaths; they are all attributed to witchcraft, sorcery or the wrath of the ancestors. In fact any death, apart from old age, is regarded as abnormal, hence the old people with many children and grand children when they die, are regarded as ancestors and greatly revered.

The funeral rites in this study, therefore, begin with rituals performed for a person on the point of death. In other words somebody who is seriously sick. Table 16 below shows the response to rituals performed for a person on the point of death. The responses show the family members' concern for the dying member. Item 1 - a sheep is slaughtered to appease the ancestors - 63% (19) - shows the people's concern for the ancestor. Item 2 - a traditional doctor is called to help, 55% (17) - reveals the family members concern for the dying person. The healing process may imply the use of herbs, roots and sometimes divination.

Item 3 - family members meet to pray for the sick person 47% (14) - usually accompanies item 1 - the ritual sacrifice. Item 4 - a priest is called to pray for the sick person 20% (6) is obviously a Christian practice and does not fall in line with this study.

TABLE 16 *RITUALS FOR A DYING PERSON*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. A sheep is slaughtered to appease the ancestors.	19	63
2. Traditional doctor is called to help.	17	55
3. Family members meet to pray for the sick person.	14	47
4. A priest is called to pray for the sick person.	6	20

When a person dies some rituals are performed to prepare the corpse for burial and to pave its way to the land of the ancestors. Table 17 below reveals the rituals performed for a dead person mentioned by the respondents. Item 1 is wake-keeping - '*tebelo*'. The percentage response 90% (27), shows that it is a popular ritual among the people. Item 2 - preparation of the corpse, comprises washing, closing the mouth and the eyes and cutting the sinews to make the body conform to the traditional position required. It carries 80% (24) of the respondents. In the old days the crouching position was required; at present, the body is laid straight in a coffin. The percentage response shows that it is a popular ritual among the people. Item 3 - placing the corpse on river sand to prevent decomposition 40% (12), has been replaced by mortuary facilities in the country. It could however be practised in the very remote areas. Item 4 - smearing windows with ash 70% (21), also shows that it is a popular practice among the people.

TABLE 17 RITUALS PERFORMED FOR A DEAD PERSON

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Wake-keeping 'tebelo'	27	90
2. Preparation of the corpse-washing and breaking joints	24	80
3. Placing the corpse on river sand to prevent decomposition	12	40
4. Smearing windows with ash	21	70

3.5.1 BURIAL RITUALS

Burial is the most outstanding rite performed for the dead. It reveals the African belief in life after death. Table 18 below reveals the burial rituals believed to prevail among the people. Item 1 - anointing the body with special oil - carries 50% (15) of the respondents. This ritual might prevail among some clans (Ashton 1952:102). Item 2 - relatives pay last respect 93% (28) - is a popular ritual among the people. Item 3 - a beast killed and the hide used as blanket for the dead - 100% (30) - is the most popular response. It reveals the people's belief in life after death. Item 4 - the corpse is lowered into the grave after a speech by the local chief 67% (20) - is a popular response and could be practised by most of the people. Item 5 - covering the grave according to order of seniority 90% (29) could also be a general practice of the people. Item 6 - the corpse is laid to face the east 60% (18) - also indicates that it is a popular ritual among the people. The burial rituals are all rites of separation.

TABLE 18 RITUALS FOR BURIAL

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. The body is anointed with a special oil	15	50
2. Relatives pay last respect	28	93
3. A beast is killed and its hide serves as his/her blanket	30	100
4. The corpse is lowered into the grave after a speech by the local chief	20	67
5. Covering of the grave according to order of seniority	27	90
6. The body is laid to face the east	18	60

3.5.2 RITUALS AFTER BURIAL

After burial all those who went to the burial ground return to the funeral hut or house through the same path or route. Table 19 below reveals the responses to rituals after burial. Item 1 - washing of hands - carries 100% (30) of the respondents. It implies that it is a general practice. It is a purificatory rite cleansing the people from any contact with corpse.

The second item is the communal meal 100% (30). Thus it is also a general practice.

This communal meal-farewell meal for the dead-is believed to be eaten with the ancestors.

Item 3 - the cutting of hair 93% (28) - is a general practice. All bereaved members of the family and relatives cut their hair a day after the burial. This ritual is followed by item 4 - the wearing of 'thapo' (a black strip of cloth). It also carries 93% (28) of the respondents. Item 2 is a rite of separation severing direct relationship with the dead person. Items 3 and 4 are also signs of mourning and rites of separation from normal social life. The last two rituals go with a number of taboos depriving the mourners of normal social life.

TABLE 19 RITUALS AFTER BURIAL

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Washing of hands outside the hut or house	30	100
2. Communal meal	30	100
3. Cutting of hair a day after burial	28	93
4. Wearing of 'thapo' a day after burial	28	93

3.5.3 EFFECT OF FUNERAL RITUALS ON THE DECEASED

Table 20 below shows the responses of the respondents on this issue. The first item tells us that there would be peaceful rest for the deceased. It represents 53% (16) of the respondents. The second item - 40% (12) - says that it enables the deceased to be welcomed in the ancestral world. The third item - 55 (17) - says that it makes the deceased and the ancestors show concern for the living relatives. And the last item - 90% (27) says that so that the deceased does not cause any havoc to the living relatives. The last item sums up the reasons for taking the trouble to go through the above rituals. It is to avoid punishment from the

deceased and the ancestors in general.

TABLE 20 EFFECT OF THE FUNERAL RITUALS ON THE DECEASED

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	%
1. Peaceful rest	16	52
2. To be welcomed by dead relatives and ancestors	12	40
3. To show concern for the living relatives	17	53
4. So that the deceased does not cause any havoc to the living	27	90

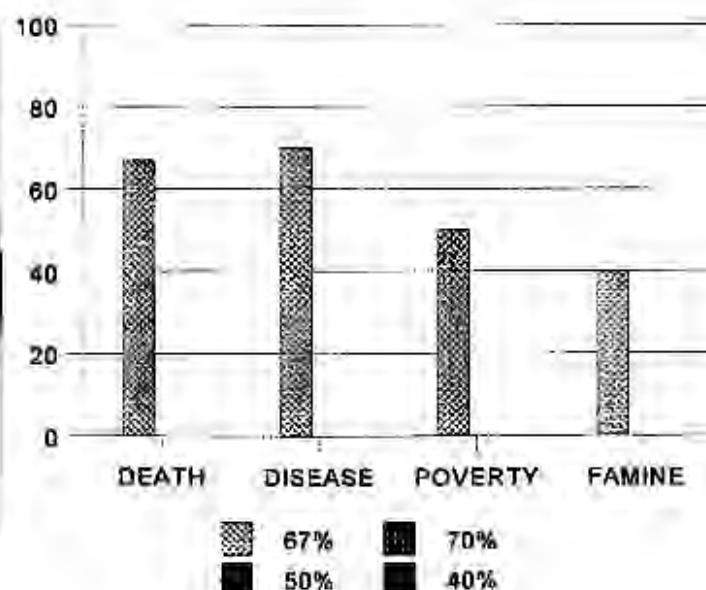
3.5.4 SOURCES OF PUNISHMENT WHEN RITUALS ARE NOT PERFORMED

There were closed ended questions where respondents were required to choose from four possible sources of punishment suggested by the researcher, namely; Ancestors, God, society and the devil. Out of these four sources only two were chosen by the respondents. Ancestors had 80% (24) and God had 20% (6). Fig. 3 below is the graphical representation of the responses.

Fig. 3 SOURCES OF PUNISHMENT



Fig. 4 TYPES OF PUNISHMENT



3.5.5 TYPES OF PUNISHMENTS FOR FAILURE TO PERFORM THE FUNERAL RITUALS

Here too the respondents were required to select possible response from four responses suggested by the researcher. Namely: death, disease, poverty and famine. Fig. 4 above shows the respondents' responses with their percentages. Death 67% (20), disease 70% (21), poverty 50% (15) and famine 40% (12). This shows that death, disease, poverty and famine are all possible sources of punishment that could be meted out to those who fail to carry out the necessary rituals for their dead relatives. It is needless to say therefore, that the people perform the funeral rituals as an obligatory duty and that failure to perform this duty would bring the wrath of the '*balimo*' on them.

3.6 INTERVIEW RESULTS

As already stated in chapter 1 thirty-six people were interviewed on all the three sub-sections of the topic, namely: birth, wedding and funeral.

The interview, like the questionnaires, revealed that even though people generally claim that the old traditional practices have been stopped and that things have changed due to missionary influence, the researcher believes that it is the same old wine in a new bottle. Pula (1990:339) has this to say on this issue:

The experience of the *balimo* is a very significant religious value among the Basotho, it should not just be suppressed. In fact the missionaries tried to destroy it, but they have failed: because the Basotho continue to give different names to the practice and keep it going.

Thus most of the traditional religious practices have been given social (secular) interpretations so as to avoid censure from the Christian religious leaders. At birth a beast (sheep) is slaughtered to welcome the baby. The emphasis is on welcoming the baby, among other reasons, but in the old days the emphasis was on sacrificing to the '*balimo*' as a thanksgiving offering for the newly born child. And as one of the interviewees puts it: "Any beast killed whether for sacred or secular purposes, the blood spilled, is a sacrifice to the

balimo (food for the ancestors)". Similarly a sheep or a goat killed during the naming ceremony of a child, despite the secular interpretations, is a religious act to inform the ancestors of a new member of the family being incorporated into the family. 80% of the 36 people interviewed agreed that beasts killed during functions are purposely sacrificial victims to the ancestors as thanksgiving, propitiatory, pacificatory or votive sacrifices; otherwise the required meat for the purpose could be purchased from a butchery. This does not, however, mean that one cannot kill a beast solely for social functions; but in any case, the Basotho, like other Africans, believe that the *balimo* are present in all function whether sacred or secular.

3.6.1 BIRTH RITUALS

3.6.1.1 PREGNANCY RITUALS

Most of the interviewees admitted that pregnancy rituals are performed despite modern medical facilities in the country. They claimed that most of the pregnant women especially in the rural areas, practise the traditional rituals in addition to medical treatment, and that in the remote areas, where there are no clinics, people rely on the traditional rituals such as wearing of a talisman or an amulet - the paw of a wild cat '*khoetsa*'. Going back home to give birth, during the first pregnancy, they say depends on individual couple's decision or clan decision. Ninety per cent of the interviewees admitted that the drinking of traditional medicine, the wearing of a special blouse '*selapa*', walking barefooted - especially during the ninth month, and not cutting the hair, are still in practice even in Maseru. These rituals, they claim, are performed to ward off evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery and to ask for protection from the '*balimo*'. Thus they practise the traditional rituals along with receiving medical treatment.

3.6.1.2 LABOUR RITUALS

According to some of the interviewees there have been some modification in the traditional midwifery rituals. The villagers send selected experienced and reputable women to train in modern midwifery at nearby clinics so that they combine modern midwifery with the traditional ones. In all cases belief in

traditional medicine and rituals are so strong that they are not totally discarded. 86% of the interviewees asserted that the drinking of traditional medicine and the rituals for easy delivery, and to avoid complications and abnormalities in babies, are strong beliefs in Lesotho. So, even though people go to the clinics to deliver when their time is up, they keep on practising the traditional rituals mentioned above to ward off evil spirits, witchcraft and sorcery and to attract protection from the ancestors. By so doing they keep their traditional religious practices going.

3.6.1.3 NAMING RITUALS

All the interviewees confirmed that a beast (mostly a sheep) is slaughtered during the naming of a child. As discussed in the introductory part of this section (page 54), some of the interviewees claimed that the purpose of killing the beast is social while others admitted that it is a sacrificial victim of thanksgiving to the ancestors for giving them the new child. On this issue one old woman, a diviner, said that the beast for immolation should correspond with the sex of the child, and before it is killed, it is led to where the child is laid and shown to it by making their heads touch three times. After that the beast is led outside to be slaughtered. All the questionnaire responses in table 8 above were confirmed by the interviewees but they insisted that there are some slight differences according to the various clans or tribes. The rituals involved, mentioned by old women proves that the naming ceremony means something more than a mere social function.

3.6.1.4 EFFECT OF THE BIRTH RITUALS

The consensus of opinion of the interviewees shows that the pregnancy and labour rituals - as stated earlier in this work - are to promote safe delivery, good health for the child and the mother; prevent abnormalities that could befall the child through witchcraft and evil spirits or sorcery, and complications during labour. The naming rituals, on the other hand, incorporate the child into the family, express gratitude to their ancestors and ask for their protection of the child. The interviewees also confirmed that the Basotho insist on good moral training for their children; and that this starts right from the naming rituals when the child is given meat with the spittle of a person of reputable character. They believe that this ritual act helps the child to emulate the good personality of that person.

3.6.2 WEDDING RITUALS

3.6.2.1 PRE-MARITAL RITUALS FOR THE BOY AND THE GIRL

The interviewees claimed that the pre-marital rituals as mentioned in chapter 2 and in the questionnaires in this chapter, are no more in practice. Thus they confirmed that 'kicking the little dish' *o raha morits'oana* for the young man and the 'presentation of a heifer' or 'asking for a calabash of water' are all outmoded ritual practices in Lesotho. They, however, asserted that the only alternative in practice is the initiation school for both boys and girls. This school, they claimed, prepares the boys and girls for marriage by training them in Basotho culture. Thus after attending the initiation school the boys and the girls are ready for marriage. The initiation school is one of the Basotho traditional institutions that has survived the missionary crusade against African cultural practices. It is a rite of passage that ushers the youth into adulthood - rite of incorporation.

Menstruation is also a natural phenomenon that marks the beginning of womanhood in girls and hence a rite of passage. It indicates that a girl is mature for marriage and procreation.

The interviewees asserted that a special ritual is performed for a girl on her first menstruations as described by Bereng (1987:18) and already discussed in chapter 2 above.

3.6.2.2 THE WEDDING RITUALS

The interviewees also asserted that the negotiations for the *bohali* payments precede the wedding. That it is the girl's father who determines the number of cattle and the price per head to be paid by the boy's father (thus the *bohali* payment is in cash not in cattle) They also claimed that the marriage is contracted as soon as partial payment of the *bohali* starts. The rest, they said, are paid gradually especially after the marriage has been consummated by the arrival of the first child. While 40% of them claimed that the negotiation and payment of the *bohali* is done in the presence of a local chief, 60% of them claimed that it is done between the two families alone. All the interviewees admitted that it is the girl's parents who provide the beast for the wedding feast and that after the payment of every ten cows the father

provides one beast '*ho hlabisa*' to be killed to show his appreciation. They all admitted that every beast killed in connection with the marriage is a form of sacrifice to the ancestors as thanksgiving and request for their blessing and backing of the marriage. They all asserted that some special parts of the meat are selected to serve to the bride and the bridegroom.

3.6.2.3 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS ON THE COUPLE

The effect of the marriage rituals on the couple as asserted by the interviewees, are in line with those mentioned in the responses to the questionnaires, namely: promoting prosperous marriage, blessings from the ancestors and validating the marriage. It also promotes cooperation between the couple and their families. On the other hand, they admitted that a calamity could befall a couple who fails to undergo the rituals. The bride might suffer from sickness, sterility and childbirth problems.

3.6.2.4 RITUALS AFTER THE WEDDING

It is said that new dresses (trousseau) are made for the bride. She is given dresses by both her parents and the parents of her husband. Her biological family gives her dresses during the wedding and when she is leaving home for her husband's home. All the interviewees asserted that when the bride leaves her home for her husband's home for the first time, she is accompanied by some companions - young girls and women - who go to help her with her house duties in her new home for a day or two and then return. They all admitted that *the koae* ritual is performed for the bride when she arrives at her husband's home, by her father-in-law, and that she would not eat anything in the house until this ritual was performed. They added that a special family oil is used to smear all parts of her body and she is served with special meat from the ribs of the beast. She is shown the beast before the immolation and that she is the first person to taste the meat from the sacrificial beast before anybody else. Until this ritual is performed she does not consider herself fully accepted into her new family.

60% of the interviewees asserted that a similar ritual is performed for the bridegroom on his first visit to the bride's home, known as '*fomo*' (Gay1980:98).

3.6.2.5 TEST OF VIRGINITY

According to the interviewees, this ritual has been discouraged and stopped a long time even though it was a very good means of checking and preventing pre-marital sex among the youth. They claimed that this rite was discouraged because these days the boys and girls stay as lovers before they marry; therefore, there is no justification in the ritual. Moreover, it used to bring shame and antagonism to the bride and her family. Many factors other than sex can cause the breaking of the hymen; therefore it is not a good means of testing virginity.

This ritual was practised by other African tribes in the past. The Yoruba of Nigeria encountered many problems from it.

3.6.2.6 THE BUILDING OF A NEW HOME FOR THE COUPLE

85% of the interviewees confirmed that the boy's parents build a new hut or home for the couple as already asserted in the response to the questionnaires. As already stated earlier in this chapter this is a rite of incorporation.

3.6.3 FUNERAL RITUALS

3.6.3.1 RITUALS FOR A DYING PERSON

The interviewees confirmed that there used to be a special ritual for a dying person suspected to have been bewitched or being called by the ancestors. They claimed that a sheep or a goat- according to the dictates of a diviner - was immolated to appease the ancestors on behalf of the dying person. The procedure for the ritual is the same as mentioned in chapter 2 above. This ritual might still be practised in some rural areas because there was divided opinion on whether it is still practised or not. While 60% claimed that it has been stopped, 40% said that it is still in practice in the rural areas.

3.6.3.2 RITUALS FOR A DEAD PERSON

The assertions of the interviewees on the rituals for a dead person are not different from the findings in the literature survey and the results of the questionnaires on the subject matter. The interviewees confirmed that when a person dies, preparations are made for wake-keeping *tebelo*. They said that it is a custom that the corpse should be brought to the house for this ritual before burial. They confirmed the preparations for burial described earlier in this chapter (table 17 above). They added that the beast for immolation is killed only when the corpse has been brought to the house, not before or after burial. It suggests that its killing has something to do with the dead person and not merely for feeding the people. They added that the beast for immolation could be a cow or a sheep, according to the strength of the family and the social stand of the deceased. The sex of the beast should correspond with the sex of the deceased. The skin or hide serves as a blanket for the deceased and that in the old days it was wrapped round the deceased. They also confirmed that the burying of the deceased with many items such as clothes, food, grains, weapons, tools and even thatch have been completely stopped. The researcher did not witness any such cases in his personal observations

At the burial grounds, they confirmed that the corpse is put in the grave facing the east. And the casting of sod in order of seniority starts from the sons, but the next of kin should be the first to cast the sod. Each male member of the family throws a spade-full of soil into the grave. After that friends and sympathizers could join to cover it neatly. They also confirmed the need to return to the funeral house through the same route, wash hands in water into which has been put shredded leaves of an aloe plant for purification from contact with the corpse, and join in the sacrificial meal. They added that no bone from the sacred meal is given to dogs. They are collected and burnt later. They believe that this meal is taken with the ancestors particularly the deceased. Apart from the cutting of hair and the wearing of the *thapo*, a day after burial as signs of mourning, clothes of the deceased are distributed among the family members a month later, when the *thapo* is cut to lift the mourning. On this occasion too a beast is immolated and the clothes are washed in a stream, purified with water into which has been put shredded aloe leaves. Others claimed that the blood of the

immolated beast is also used to purify the clothes by sprinkling them with it. The widow, they claimed, continues mourning her late husband for six months or even a year. When her mourning period is over, she goes to her parents to take off the mourning dress and a beast is again immolated for the occasion.

3.6.3.3 THE EFFECT OF THE RITUALS

The interviewees confirmed the effects given in the responses to the questionnaires - (table 20 above), that when the rituals are performed the deceased would rest peacefully, meet with the ancestors and show concern for the living family. Failure to perform the rites, however, would result in calamities such as death, disease, famine and poverty befalling the family. They asserted that the ancestors are the sole cause of disasters resulting from failure to perform the rites.

3.6.4 THE CLASSIFICATION OF AN ANCESTOR

It would be observed that throughout this study the ancestors play a dominant role in the ritual practices of the Basotho as in fact they do in all African religions. Hence the researcher deems it important to find out who the Basotho classify as ancestors and how one becomes an ancestor. To be able to achieve this objective, the researcher included this issue in the interview questions. (Funeral question no. 3.15).

The sub-heading above was a controversial issue that yielded diverse responses from the interviewees. On this issue alone more than twenty people were interviewed but their answers were diverse. Nobody seemed to be sure of a definite answer. Some of them claimed that anybody who dies is an ancestor; others said that only adults who have families qualify to be ancestors and others still asserted that it is the aged, who have children and grand children, such as those who used to be buried in the kraal, qualify to be ancestors. The present generation believe that everybody qualifies to be an ancestor because, they claim, even children who die would grow to be old in the ancestral world.

On the issue of how one becomes an ancestor, it was a general consensus of opinion that the

Basotho do not have any laid down procedure to install one into ancestorhood. There are no ancestral shrines or deity shrines in Lesotho. From this perspective one can say that the ancestral veneration is more or less abstract in the sense that there seem to be no concrete representation whatsoever. The only monuments they assert, are the tombs. The researcher then tried to find out how best the tombs could serve as shrines of ancestors. It was revealed that the occasions when people visit tombs are when those who were absent during the death of a relative or a family member, are sent to the grave to pay their last respect. Individuals could also visit a tomb when sick or continuously have visions of a dead relative. There seems to be nothing like a general commemoration of the dead in a family or clan like the *Akwasidae* of the Akans of Ghana.

3.6.5 FUNERAL RITUAL FOR A TWIN BROTHER OR SISTER

One informant from Quthing told the researcher that there is a special funeral ritual for twins. According to her, when a twin brother or sister dies no formal funeral rites are performed until the living one also dies. She said that before the deceased twin is put in the coffin, the living one has to lie in it first and before the coffin is lowered into the grave, the living one climbs in and lies in first. Other interviewees confirmed this ritual. Nobody could, however, give any substantial reasons for this ritual. All they could say was that because they were born together, it is believed that they should go together. Therefore it is only when the living one dies that formal funeral rites are performed for both of them.

The researcher believes that all the funeral rituals mentioned have religious connotations in the sense that they reveal the people's belief in life after death - a transcendental world - and that the ancestors and the spirits control the material world hence they control human life. This belief explains why they resort to rituals to appease them at the liminal points in the rites of passage in order to solicit their support and blessings.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

African Traditional Religions are not historical religions. They have no founders and no developed histories like the Christian or Islamic religions. They are lived and hence form integral part of the socio-cultural life of the people. Mbiti (1990:1) says:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of belief and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is, therefore ultimately a study of the people themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life.

Thus in Africa traditional religions the profane and the sacred are intertwined to make life meaningful and successful in African context. On this issue Mbiti (1990:1) says: “To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices can only lead to lack of understanding of African behaviour and problems”. He (1990:2) adds,

Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the spiritual and the material areas of life.

In African religious concept heaven and hell do not exist. Rather there is belief in the ancestral world. The ancestors and the divinities and spirits serve as the mediators or intermediaries between humanity and the Supreme Being. To the African, God is too remote for mundane attention; therefore there are no shrines for the Supreme being. But there are shrines for His functionaries, namely ancestors and the lesser deities (gods) though the Basotho seem to differ in this context in the sense that they do not have shrines for the ancestors or the lesser deities.

Concerning the main components of African traditional religions, Idowu (1973:139) has this to say:

Taking Africa as a whole, there are in reality five component elements that go into the making of African traditional religion. These are belief in God, belief in the divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine, each with its own consequent attendant cult.

Mbiti (1990:1-5) also gives some basic tenets of African religion. He says that religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned. He adds that wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crop. He takes it with him to the beer party or to attend funeral ceremony etc. Traditionally religion accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death. He goes on to say that traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is part. Therefore a person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his root, his foundation, his context of security, his kinship and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence.

He adds that the chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the community and in traditional society there are no irreligious people. There are no creeds to be recited, no sacred scriptures. Religion is the whole system of being of the African. Religion in African societies is written in people's hearts, minds, oral history, rituals and religious personages like the priests, rainmakers, officiating leaders and even kings. Everybody is a religious carrier. Traditional religions are not universal. They are tribal or

national. African religions have no founders nor reformers. Belief in the continuation of life after death is found in all African societies. This belief does not constitute a hope for a future better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. He says that there is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. The soul of man does not long for spiritual redemption, or closer contact with God in the next world. There is no messianic hope or apocalyptic vision with God stepping in at some future moment to bring about a radical reversal of man's normal life. Man's act of worship and turning to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical.

Again, a look into the Bantu religion of which the Basotho are no exception, Prozesky and de Gruch (1995:25) reveal that, like other Africans, for the Bantu speaking societies religion upholds and concerns the moral order. More precisely, upright living is guaranteed to yield a good life. The ancestors, with the collaboration of diviners and the support of herbalists are the guardians and defenders of the normal order. Any serious departure from the code of right conduct will result in a withdrawal of benefits and suspension of protection, so that the offender will register pain of physical and social disorder. And ultimately, it is the ancestors, through the offices of the diviner with the assistance of the herbalist, that provide the means of renewing the moral order once it has been upset. The most portrayals of African religion then begin with a mandatory reference to a creator spirit too peripheral to human affairs to merit much attention from anybody.

The above religious concepts of the African reveal that to study the religion of the African is to study the people themselves, since what constitutes religion in African sense is embodied in the totality of the African.

4.2 FINDINGS

One way of identifying the religious connotations of ritual practices at birth, wedding and funeral is to view them from the perspective of the rites of passage among others.

Rites of passage involve change of conditions resulting from the movement from one

territorial passage in life to another which does not occur without disturbing the life of the society and the individual involved. The dramatic changes in the rites of passage demand specific rituals to reduce their harmful effects. Such attempts to ward off the possible harmful effects take the form of purification, propitiation, pacification or thanksgiving rituals. These objectives are achieved through immolation of beasts, wearing of charms - amulets and talismans - drinking of medicines and incision and or fumigation.

All such appeals go to one's object of worship or the transcendental powers. Ritual acts are therefore religious acts.

It is at such dramatic points in the passage of life that humans realise their nothingness and hence seek help, support and protection from the spiritual world against untimely failures due to spiritual, witchcraft and sorcery influences. Onuh's (1992:142) assertion on rites of passage also reveals the religiousness of ritual acts. He says,

In all spheres, be it on the human or on the cosmic level, the change occasions a period of anxiety and uncertainty as well as danger both for the subject of the change and for all those around. As a result, these changes are marked and accompanied by ceremonies and rituals, whose purpose is to ensure that the transitions are successfully made and to cushion the disturbances involved.

The rituals involved aim at mitigating any attendant evil and disturbing effects. They are no doubt appeals to the transcendental powers for help and support. Highlighting on the ceremonial acts that punctuate the rite of passage, Gennep (1977:3) says,

Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semicivilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred. In such societies every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions between sacred and profane - actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury.

These actions and reactions are interaction between the sacred and the profane; and it is the interaction between the sacred and the profane that makes it necessary to establish rituals to deal with the problems involved and thus establish harmonious atmosphere with the

transcendence for success.

Staples (1981:169) also says: "The rites of passage compartmentalize social life into successive stages in each of which the individual is given a specific identity and accorded a status and set of roles". He goes on to say that it is the belief in, and concepts of, the ancestors that legitimates and shapes the rites of passage. The concept of reality that belief in the ancestors implies, forms the matrix in which rituals have meaning. Thus the rituals themselves are symbolic reflections of aspects of the way reality itself is believed to be constituted. Hence the rituals reflect the religious beliefs of the people concerned.

Birth is a process through which a new life comes into being, and life is generally considered as a gift from God in African culture. Onu (1992:150) says, "The arrival of a child, therefore, signals a sort of interaction between the divine and the human worlds". Moreover the process of childbearing involves dangers that could result into death of the mother or the child or both. Hence the necessary precautions are taken through rituals such as the wearing of talisman *moetlo*, the goat skin *ho bipisoa* and the drinking of traditional medicine prepared on a special fire to harmonize things with the transcendental world.

Marriage is another critical stage in the rites of passage through life. It is a stage where a young man and a young woman come together to assume the responsibility of procreation. It is a stage where two people from different families come together to form another family nucleus. It is a stage where the young woman should prove her fertility and the young man his potency. Marriage is therefore full of problems and difficulties that are beyond human control, hence Africans, and for that matter Basotho, resort to rituals to harmonize things with the spiritual world to avert all possible dangers and misfortunes that might occur. Basotho wedding (marriage) is therefore full of ritual sacrifices to appease the *balimo* for their support and protection against witchcraft, sorcery and the evil powers that be.

Funerals also mark another turning point through life. Death is a point at which one leaves this material world to join the spiritual - ancestral-world. Funeral is a ceremonial rite for this passage of life. It is also a critical point punctuated with ritual acts that reveal a people's

outlook to death and belief in life after death. African funeral rituals, and for that matter Basotho funeral rituals, give transcendental meaning to death. They reveal the people's belief in life after death - the ancestral world. Zuesse (1979:4) asserts that the motive power behind all religious behaviour is the yearning for and experience of transcendental meaning. In this light, looking at the Basotho funeral rituals enumerated in chapters 2 and 3, it is needless to say that they reveal the religiousness of the Basotho.

4.2.1 THE LITERATURE SURVEY

The study of the literary works of others on the subject matter - both foreign and indigenous scholars - reveals that the Basotho, like other Africans, regard birth, wedding and funeral as critical stages in the rite of passage that call for ritual acts to cement relationship with the spiritual powers for success and harmony as they pass through these trying stages. By so doing they indulge in ceremonial rites for these and other stages in the passage of life. All these ceremonial rites of life are dotted with rituals that reveal their belief in life after death and the spiritual world. It is therefore obvious that Basotho ritual practices at birth, wedding and funeral have religious connotations. Mbiti (1975:19) points out the African religiousness revealed by ceremonial rites of the rites of passage when he says:

Africans like to celebrate life. They celebrate events in the life of the individual and the community. These include occasions like the birth of a child, the giving of names, circumcision and other initiation ceremonies, marriage, funerals, harvest festivals, praying for rain, and many others. Some of these rituals and ceremonies are done on a family basis, but others are observed by the whole community. They have a lot of religious meaning, and through their observation religious ideas are perpetuated and passed on to the next generations.

The study also reveals that most of the Basotho ritual practices at birth, wedding and funeral fall in line with other African ritual practices both in the past and at present. For example going back to parents for the first child-birth experience; washing hands after burial; payment of *bohali*, to mention but three examples.

It also reveals that some of the practices are more or less universal. i.e. killing of a beast for a dead person in connect with his journey to the next world. There are others, however, that

seem peculiar to the Basotho such as casting the sod in special order during burial. It is interesting to note that the universal practices, the African practices and the purely Basotho practices, all have some religious connotations and hence indicate that the Basotho are traditionally notoriously religious.

Another important finding from the literature study is that the ancestors *balimo* are the custodians of their traditional religion and their socio-cultural life. They fear and revere them; and they appeal to them at stress situations especially at occasions of the rites of passage like birth, wedding and funeral. There are several instances when the people appeal to them during the ceremonial ritual of the rites of passage.

Another observation is that there are some ritual practices that are mentioned in some books that belong to the past. They are no more practised by the people of the present generation. For example taking the corpse out of the house for burial, Laydevant (1952:72) and Ashton (1952:105) say that it was taken out of the house through a hole in the wall and not through the door. Again the betrothal rites mentioned by Mokhethi (1988:27) i.e. kicking the 'jack' and asking for the calabash of water, are no more in practice. Apart from such few instances the literature study gave the researcher a sound foundation and a good basis for his field work especially in the development of interview questions. Whilst scholars like Gennep and Zuesse enriched his knowledge on traditional religions and enhanced him with a wide scope for comparison, Laydevant, Ashton and Gill, to mention but only three, also furnished him with a variety of Basotho ritual practices.

4.2.2. THE QUESTIONNAIRES AND THE INTERVIEWS

The study of the questionnaires and the interview results revealed that the socio-cultural practices of the Basotho have been influenced by both Christianity and Western culture. The statistical data, collected and analysed, revealed that 98% of the people contacted were Christians belonging to one denomination or another. This may reflect the high percentage of Christians in Lesotho population and hence the degree of its influence on the traditional

cultural practices is expected to be high.

4.2.3 QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire results revealed that most of the ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals, described in the literature review, are still in practice. However, in their interpretation, emphasis was laid on their social aspects. For example the immolation of a beast during birth, naming, wedding and funeral was given social interpretation such as for entertainment and to welcome the baby, among others. What the researcher is driving at is that, among other interpretations, emphasis was laid on the purely social aspects instead of on the religious aspects as the literature review reveals. The researcher, therefore, believes that such attempts are meant to avoid censure from their Christian religious leaders who discourage such beliefs and practices. However, the interpretations of other ritual practices revealed that the core of their ritual acts lies in the fear and reverence for their ancestors and a belief in life after death. The funeral rituals are the most outstanding ones that have not been influenced much by Christian and Western culture.

Again there was no mention of burying the dead with several items including food, tools and weapons. This shows that such practices have been stopped. Though there are no more crouching positions in the burial as of old, the facing of the east has been maintained. The corpse lies stretched facing the east where the Basotho believe to have originated.

4.2.4 INTERVIEW

From the interview results the researcher found that there is no much difference between the ritual practices of the past and the present, and that it is the same old practices given new interpretations. The '*bohali*' payment, for instance has been changed from cattle to money due to the present economic trend, but the amount involved is valued in terms of cattle per head and it is still the bride's father who provides the beast for immolation and for the wedding feast. Again it is still maintained that for every ten cattle paid the bride's father should provide a beast for immolation (*hlabisa*). However, certain practices such as putting

the gall, and the fat from the entrails of the immolated beast on the couple have been stopped. But the fact that the '*bohali*' payment is valued in terms of price per cow, and the fact that the killing of a beast is maintained during the wedding, and that they still observe the '*koae*' rituals, shows that the potency of ritual practices as a means to appease the ancestors - their gods - at stress situations, is very strong among the Basotho.

It was also revealed that the tendency of a young woman going back to her family for her first child-birth experience has been reduced considerably. This could be attributed to the presence of many clinics in the country and their ability to offer better midwifery services than could be expected from the young woman's parents.

It was here too observed that ancestor veneration forms the basis of the Basotho ritual practices and hence their traditional religion. Unlike many other Africans, the Basotho have no deity shrines. They refer to the ancestors as their gods. All appeals for help and protection during stress situations are made to the ancestors. As indicated throughout the study, all ritual acts are directed to the ancestors, especially the ritual sacrifices. However, the finality of the appeal goes to God. Like other Africans, the Basotho see the ancestors as the intermediaries between them and God. This is so because the African sees God as too remote for mundane attention, and that it is the ancestors and the lesser deities who give direct punishment for human defaults.

4.2.5 PERSONAL OBSERVATION

The personal observations revealed that even though almost every Mosotho is a Christian, they still keep to their traditional ritual practices that reveal their traditional religious beliefs. And even though there are many modern medical facilities throughout the country, the pregnant women still wear the goat or sheep skin to protect their pregnancy from witchcraft, sorcery and evil spirits. They also use traditional medicines and walk barefooted during certain periods of their pregnancy. This means that the traditional religion is inseparable from the African way of life. Mbiti (1990:2) says, "A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of

security, . . .” Again the immolation of beasts during pregnancy, childbirth, marriage and funeral reveals the stronghold of ritual sacrifice as a religious act of the Basotho to appease the ancestors and the spirits concerned for successful and happy life here and now.

One area where the traditional ritual practices thrive most unadulterated, is the funerals. Observations revealed that the so called Christian burial rites were mixed with traditional burial rites. There was no funeral, the researcher attended, which was without such rituals as an immolation of a beast, the provision of a farewell meal after burial, the casting of sod in order of seniority during burial, the washing of hands in a basin of water into which were shredded the leaves of an aloe plant, the cutting of hair and the wearing of ‘*thapo*’ a day after the burial among other things. This shows the people’s Africanness and their strong belief in their traditional religion. It also shows the importance they attach to funeral as a rite of passage which must not be traversed without the necessary rituals.

Another observation was that the illiterate folk are the strong adherents of the traditional religious practices. During the time of interviews, the researcher was quite often referred to old illiterate members of the community as those who would be of the best service to him. But there was no occasion when the researcher found a group of people or a single person staying away from a ritual act on Christian religious grounds. Everybody participated in the birth, wedding, and funeral rituals. The researcher feels that the literate folks feel shy to acknowledge their cultural heritage of which the traditional religion is one. Literacy should enrich the culture rather than destroy it.

The researcher believes that even though most Basotho claim to be Christians, like many other Africans, they are traditionalists at heart. They are torn between two worlds namely the Christian world and the African traditional religious world. They cannot profess to be true Christians because Christianity is European enculturated (oriented) and they cannot be truly African traditionalists because they refuse to adhere fully to the traditional religion. An African cannot deny his Africanness. It is in the blood.

Even though Christianity claims to be universal, it is European oriented as already said and

does not meet the religious expectations of the African and for that matter the Basotho. Therefore the Basotho are the victims of psychological tension. They can cope better with the tension of life if they could feel free to observe the religious ritual practices which they do secretly or in disguise. The researcher therefore feels that the universality of Christian religion lies in its dynamism - ability to adapt to various cultural backgrounds.

4.3 SUGGESTIONS

The researcher has the following suggestions to make to the Basotho:

1. That Christian theologians should build up an African Christian theology which would incorporate some African religious practices and thus make the Christian message more meaningful and understanding in African context to their African converts. The searcher is not in any way trying to be a missiologist neither is he concerned about the authenticity of the Christian church. Rather he is trying to see all religions as one, with a common goal. Zuesse (1979:4) says, "The motive power behind all religious behaviour is the yearning for and experience of the transcendental meaning". Here the emphasis is on the fact that the ritual acts are religious acts and must be respected. The African, and for that matter the Basotho, cannot do away with them. They would either be practised directly or indirectly.
2. That in order to inculcate in the Basotho children the Basotho cultural and religious practices, the subject matter should be given prominence in the development of the child in formal education. And that the traditional religion should form part of religious studies not cultural studies or Sesotho in schools. It will create the awareness of traditional religion in the youth so that they might not be alienated by Western education.
3. That African traditional religions should form part of the curriculum, from the secondary level to the tertiary institutions including university education, so as to create the awareness of traditional religions in the youth as done in other parts of Africa.

4. That like the Christian religion, the traditional religion should be examinable and appear on transcripts and result slips. Experience has shown that teachers and students, alike, do not take nonexaminable subjects seriously. Therefore if it is not made examinable students and teachers, alike, would not give it the prominence it deserves. Anything worth doing is worth doing well. African traditional religion is a religion and must be treated like any other religion.

Culture is dynamic, therefore African traditional religion, which forms an intergral part of our socio-cultural life, is also dynamic and hence subject to modifications where necessary but not total annihilation. The researcher believes that if the traditional religion is not incorporated into the formal educational curriculum, the youth would not accord it the respect it deserves as a religion of a people. The researcher does not subscribe to the suppression of any form of religion, least of all the Basotho traditional religion.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

1. The researcher recommends that future researchers research into the religious importance of Basotho ancestor veneration. The researcher observed that throughout his study the ancestor veneration played a prominent role in the Basotho ritual practices at birth, weddings and funerals. A study into it would therefore throw more light on their traditional religion.

2. Another area of concern could be the influence of Christianity and Western culture on Basotho traditional religious beliefs and practices. This could reveal whether Christianity can replace traditional religion in the near future whether they will continue to be practised side by side, whether one will incorporate the other, or whether they will later coalesce and strengthen each other and thus make religion more meaningful to the Basotho.

4.5 CONCLUSION

It is the contention of the researcher that the Basotho ritual practices, at births, weddings and

funerals traced under this study, are religious rituals that portray the religiousness of the Basotho ritual practices and hence reveal their traditional religion which is not different from African traditional religions in general.

Suffice it to say then, that despite the Christian and the Western cultural influence on the traditional religion, it continues to be practised by the people. Even though some people turned down the researcher's request to interview them because they were Christians and others failed to answer the questionnaires on the same grounds, there was no wedding or funeral ceremony, observed, that was purely a Christian practice. All the so called Christian weddings and funerals were dotted with some unavoidable traditional ritual practices. This shows that even though some of them do not want to talk about the ritual practices openly, the Christians and the non Christians, alike, do perform them when the need arises. In fact they believe that the rituals ensure the beneficiaries the protection of the ancestors (their gods) during the critical periods concerned and the years ahead; and the neglect of which could cause disaster for the whole family or the community. They are also aware that if the gods are displeased, they would lose the vital force with which to resist the malevolence of sorcerers and witches and in the final analysis they would fail in their life expectations. This shows that the traditional religion cannot be removed or replaced with christianity. And if it cannot be replaced or removed, why not encourage it and polish it through the formal educational sytem.

In fact, the role of ritual sacrifices in the Basotho traditional religion cannot be over emphasised. Immolation of beasts form a major part of Basotho ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals. Ritual sacrifice reveals that, to the Basotho, life without regular contact with the '*balimo*' is incomplete. The ritual sacrifices are performed to establish harmony with the ancestors and the totality of life. The importance of ritual sacrifice in the life of the Basotho can be found in the words of Rev. Nussbaum (1984:54) when he says:

In sesotho culture the most meaningful gift which can be presented is an animal for slaughter. Animals are still, for many Africans, the nearest and dearest of possessions. A person identifies with his animals in such a way that he gives himself by giving his animal. He may do this for the ancestors, at a wedding

or funeral, for a special guest who comes for a visit, or on various other occasions. Such a gift shows the respect the giver has for the recipient, as well as the desire to cement a harmonious relationship. It differs in kind from any other gift which may be made.

It would be noted therefore that the traditional religious practices of the Basotho as revealed by their ritual practices at births, weddings and funerals, indicate that the Basotho traditional religion is not a religion of salvation here-after, but a religion of structure-for salvation here and now, as stated earlier on. It aims at bringing sanity into this material world of ours. It embodies social and religious ethics that aim at correcting social evils.

4.5.1 FINAL CONCLUSION

African religiousness and for that matter Basotho religiousness is rooted in their ritual practices through the passage of life. Zuesse (1979:238) exemplifies this when he says, "Ritual, that is to say, is spiritually more profound than any theology; it accomplishes more for those who participate in it than any number of rarefied mystical treaties for jaded antiritualistic modern connoisseurs of the *"occult"*. Concerning the problem of identifying the religiousness of ritual practices, he says, "It deals with very specific realities that are not transportable into our living room for our casual inspection." Coming back to my point he (1979:242) adds,

The transcendental centre of symbolic action is the real heart of ritual. Ritual mediates between real and ideal, flesh and mind, material and spiritual, giving each a shape which is that of the other . . . African spirituality, above and beyond the specific focus of particular ritual actions, is always a piety directed toward the sanctity of the universe as a whole. Every action on its deepest level seeks to sustain the divine order and its continual self-regeneration; in this sense every ritual enactment, however superficially oriented to utilitarian goals, is utterly selfless.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that the religious connotation of the ritual practices in the case study lies in the Basotho's attempt to find solution to material and spiritual problems that engulf them in their passage through life, especially during birth, weddings and funerals so as to harmonize life with the transcendental for success. To achieve this they resort to ritual

practices to establish cordial relationship with the ancestors-their gods- to ensure their protection against the spells of evil spirits, sorcery and witchcraft. In all such cases the final arbiter is God for whom the ancestors deputise.

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ADDENDUM A

Questionnaire On Basotho Customs Basotho Ritual Practices At Birth

Tick the appropriate response where applicable

1. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Religion denomination: ☐ Christian ☐ Moslem ☐ Traditional Believer
3. Age group ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39 ☐ 40-44 ☐ 45-59 ☐ 50-54 ☐ 55-59 ☐ 60+
4. Present place of residence: ☐ Urban ☐ Rural ☐ Semi-urban
5. Marital status: ☐ single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

6. What rituals are performed during:

(a) Pregnancy?

.....

.....

.....

(b) Labour (during child bearing)?

.....

.....

.....

(c) Naming ceremony?

.....

.....

7. What does the pregnancy ritual help to prevent or provide for the:

(a) woman.....

.....

.....

(b) Baby?.....

.....

.....

What does the labour ritual provide or prevent from the:

(a) Mother?.....

.....

.....

(b) Child ?.....

.....

.....

9. What is the interpretation of the ritual (s) during the naming ceremony?

.....

.....

.....

**Questionnaire On Basotho Customs
Basotho Ritual Practices At Marriage**

Tick the appropriate response where applicable

1. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Religion denomination: ☐ Christian ☐ Moslem
- ☐ Traditional Believer

 3. Age group

<input type="checkbox"/> 20-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-34
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-59
<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60+
4. Present place of residence: ☐ Urban ☐ Rural
- ☐ Semi-urban

 5. Marital status:

<input type="checkbox"/> single	<input type="checkbox"/> Married
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/> Separated	

6. What rituals are performed :

(a) Before marriage for the bridegroom?

.....

.....

.....

(b) Before marriage for the bride?

.....

.....

.....

7. What rituals are performed:

(i) During the marriage for the bridegroom?

.....

.....

(ii) During the marriage for the bride?

.....

.....

.....

8. Do these rituals provide any blessings or prevent any anticipated calamity that might befall the couple?

YES

NO

(i) If yes mention any blessing or any calamities they bring or prevent.

.....

.....

.....

9. Is there any ritual performed after the wedding ceremony? YES

NO

(ii) If yes name them

.....

.....

.....

10. What is the importance of this (these) rituals?

.....

**Questionnaire On Basotho Customs
Basotho Ritual Practices At Funerals**

Tick the appropriate response where applicable

1. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Religion denomination: ☐ Christian ☐ Moslem
☐ Traditional Believer
3. Age group

<input type="checkbox"/> 20-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-34
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-59
<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60+
4. Present place of residence: ☐ Urban ☐ Rural
☐ Semi-urban
5. Marital status:

<input type="checkbox"/> single	<input type="checkbox"/> Married
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/> Separated	

6. What rituals are performed:

(a) (i) When a person is on the point of death?

.....

.....

.....

(ii) How does the ritual(s) help the dying person?

.....

.....

.....

(b) When a person is dead;

.....

.....

(c) Before laying him/her in state;

.....

.....

(d) Before burial;

.....

.....

.....

(e) Before putting the corpse in the coffin;

.....

.....

.....

(f) At the cemetery;

.....

.....

.....

(g) After burial;

.....

.....

.....

7. Do these rituals help the dead or dying person in any way?

.....
.....
.....

8. Who is going to punish the family if these rituals are not performed?

- (a) God?
- (b) Ancestors?
- (c) The society?
- (d) The devil?

N.B. Tick the one appropriate (if none of the above, write your answer)

.....
.....
.....

ADDENDUM B SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. RITUALS AT BIRTH

- 1.1 What are the dos and don'ts for a pregnant woman?
 - 1.1.1 How do such restrictions help a pregnant woman?
- 1.2 How does the smearing of ochre and butter fat help the pregnant woman or her pregnancy? (Ashton 1952:27)
- 1.3 What is the essence of a pregnant woman wearing special beads, the foot of *nakeli* (kind of skunk) magical horn and a bit of iron? (Laydevant 1952:29)
- 1.4 What do you do to have easy labour during childbirth?
- 1.5 Do the ancestors play any part in the development of the foetus?
 - 1.5.1 If yes, how?
- 1.6 For how long are the mother and the baby secluded after birth? (Ashton 1952:30)
- 1.7 How do you do away with the afterbirth?
 - 1.7.1 Why do you need to bury it at a special place?
 - 1.7.2 Do you believe that mishandling of the afterbirth can cause any harm to the baby?
 - 1.7.3 If yes, how?
- 1.8 Is there any thing done to stop continuous infantile death of one mother?
 - 1.8.1 What belief do you have about it?
- 1.9 When is the child named?
 - 1.9.1 How is the naming done?
 - 1.9.2 What important activities occur during the naming ceremony?
 - 1.9.3 Are the ancestors involved in the naming ceremony in any way?
- 1.10 Is there anything more to add?

2. RITUALS AT WEDDING

- 2.1 Was your wedding a traditional or Christian type?
- 2.2 Was *lobola* paid?
 - 2.2.1 In cattle or in cash?
 - 2.2.2 When was it, before or after the wedding?
- 2.3 Was any beast killed?

- 2.3.1 Who killed it?
- 2.3.2 For what purpose?
- 2.4 Do the ancestors play any part in the wedding?
- 2.4.1 If yes, how?
- 2.5 Are the ancestors named or formerly mentioned anywhere during the wedding?
- 2.6 What is '*mafura*' (fat)? (Ashton 1952:68)
- 2.6.1 When is it done?
- 2.6.2 Is it relevant or practised in modern time?
- 2.7 When is the '*hlabisa*' given? (Ashton 1952:68)
- 2.7.1 Can it be given in cash?
- 2.7.2 What is the importance of it?
- 2.8 What is '*koae*' (Laydevant 1952:67) (Ashton 1952:74)
- 2.8.1 When is it done?
- 2.8.2 Can it be avoided in any way?
- 2.8.3 If yes, how?
- 2.8.4 If no, why?
- 2.8.5 Do the ancestors play any part in the '*koae*' ritual?
- 2.9 Is there anything to be done before meeting formerly as husband and wife?

3. *RITUALS AT FUNERALS*

- 3.1 Is there anything done to help a dying person? (Sechefo sa. 14)
- 3.1.1 If yes, how is it done?
- 3.2 When somebody dies in your family, how do you prepare for the funeral?
- 3.3 How do you prepare the corpse for burial?
- 3.3.1 Is there a special way to wash or preserve the body?
- 3.3.2 Are there selected people who should handle the corpse?
- 3.4 When is the grave dug?
- 3.4.1 How is it dug?
- 3.4.2 Who are supposed to dig it?
- 3.5 does the body need to face a special direction/position in the grave? (Laydevant

1952:73;Ashton 1952:106)

3.5.1 If yes, what is the rationale behind it?

3.6 Is there any difference between the burial of an old family member and the others?

(Ashton 1952:104)

3.6 If yes, what is the difference?

3.7 Is there a special way of taking the corpse from the house or hut of the deceased? (Ashton 1952:105 Laydevant 1952:72)

3.7.1 If yes, how is it done?

3.7.2 Why do you do that?

3.8 Do you kill any beast during the funeral? (Ashton 1952:107)

3.8.1 If yes, when and why?

3.8.2 Is there a special way of killing the beast?

3.9 When is the communal meal cooked?

3.9.1 Do you formally give some of this food to the ancestors?

3.10 What do you do to show that you are mourning?

3.10.1 What is '*thapo*' and when do you wear it?

3.10.2 When do you cut the hair?

3.10.3 What is the essence of cutting the hair?

3.11 Do you treat the widow or the widower in a special way? (Sechefo:sa.11;Bereng 1987:20)

3.12 What are the dos and don'ts during the funeral?

3.13 How long does the funeral last?

3.14 Is there any special function to end the funeral?

3.15 How do you classify somebody as an ancestor?

3.16 What items are buried with the dead person (Ashton 1952:106)

3.17 Anything else?