

**THE REALITY AND RELEVANCE OF *SERITI* IN THE PAST AND  
PRESENT: ITS ESSENCE AND MANIFESTATION IN AN AFRICAN  
RELIGION PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
NORTHERN SOTHO**

**MATOME BETHUEL RATHETE**

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PROMOTER: PROF.G.J.A. LÜBBE

JOINT PROMOTER: PROF J. S. KRÜGER

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Student Number: 368-667-1

I declare that THE REALITY AND RELEVANCE OF *SERITI* IN THE PAST AND PRESENT: ITS ESSENCE AND MANIFESTATION IN AN AFRICAN RELIGION PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NORTHERN SOTHO is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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MR M B RATHETE

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

**I dedicate THE REALITY AND RELEVANCE OF *SERITI* IN THE PAST AND PRESENT: ITS ESSENCE AND MANIFESTATION IN AN AFRICAN RELIGION PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NORTHERN SOTHO to my wife Nkareng, Edith ngwana Mokgadi and my late parents Emishen Modjadji Rathete and Gilbert Moneri Rathete. I also dedicate this work to my children Kholofelo Emishen, Nathaniel, Walter Karabo and Ivan “The Terrible” Mohaleamalla Rathete.**

## SUMMARY

The thesis has to do with *seriti* in its tripartite manifestation that the researcher calls category A, B and C. Category A deals with oratory, wisdom, hospitality, kindness and generosity in the Northern Sotho's everyday interaction with other people. It also deals with ritual as part of strengthening the character of an individual. Category B deals with a human being in his/her interactions with ancestors who in turn end up conferring *seriti* upon him/her. Category C is the type of *seriti* that is almost antithetical to category A *seriti*. This type of *seriti* could be enhanced with the sole purpose of harming others or seeking unfair advantage over other people.

Of the three types of *seriti*, the researcher argues that category C *seriti* is waning. In the case of category B, there is a rejection of traditional healers (who perform rituals which are required by ancestors), as well as other elements like protecting oneself with strong medicine which has to do with category C. This therefore means that category B is not rejected in totality. The chapter that deals with women and *seriti* takes into account the development of *seriti* from the past and present. Both the traditional concept of a woman and the modern one are accepted by all respondents. The idea of a woman working like a slave to please everyone is not gaining popularity.

The traditional concept of a man is that he is a polygamist and a lover of many concubines. He produces many children who make up for the loss through warfare. A traditional man works in a group context and loves to possess many cattle. These traits are rejected by modern people who in turn think that a man with *seriti* works for his family, he is loved and respected, he loves his wife and believes in equality. The thesis proves that certain characteristics of category B and C are waning while category A *seriti* is getting popular. The fact that this is the case is encouraging for the development of an African Philosophy and Religion.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The title of the thesis is: ***The Reality and Relevance of seriti in the Past and Present: Its essence and manifestation in an African Religion Perspective with special reference to the Northern Sotho.***

Mbiti (1990) once pointed out that Africa's three religions, namely Christianity, Islam and Judaism were going to influence African religion in a profound way. Not only has the religion been influenced by these other religions, Africans themselves have been influenced in a positive way depending on whatever it is that is called positive.

There is something in the personality of a Northern Sotho that forms the essence of the true personality of a human being. This essence of a human being is spiritual and because of its nature it is lasting. Because it is spiritual, it negates anything that is material. It exists independently of the owner. It does not matter whether a person is a cripple, a lunatic or even a thief, there is something that lives, that stirs within this person, that makes him/her human and this thing is *seriti*. It is the thing that forms the essentials of a human being. It is called *seriti*. All people have it. Doctors, lawyers, traditional medicine men and many other people who are highly placed in society have *seriti*. The fact that they are very important persons does not make them to have *seriti*. It is the fact that they are human that makes them to have *seriti*. *Seriti* in its definition is the ethico-religious and mystical or metaphysical qualities that emerge from modern and traditional society to promote the dignity of groups of people or an individual.

*Seriti* as a concept was relevant in the past and had connections with ancestors. In the present it is still a relevant concept but there have been paradigm shifts in the unfolding of this concept. It appears that in the present times, ordinary people who are interviewed on this concept would not be able to come up with certain metaphysical meanings of the concept of *seriti*. People would not for example think of the concept *seriti* in relation to ancestors – that *seriti* //spirit and *moya* // soul, play a vital role in the constitution of an ancestor. Ordinary people would think of *seriti* as generosity, kindness, being humane, being good at speeches in a tribal court and so on. This therefore means that the metaphysical meaning of *seriti* is getting lost while the ethical meaning is retained. Determining whether the metaphysical meaning of *seriti* is getting lost while the ethical meaning of the concept survives would be dependent on the ages of the people who are going to be interviewed. The researcher shall focus on metaphysics since *seriti* is a metaphysical term. What is important is not whether *seriti* could be verifiable scientifically, but what is important is what it is that makes people to conclude that there is something that approximates the concept of *seriti*. We know that a person has *seriti* when he/she has gone through all the required rites of passage. We also know that a person has *seriti* just by being a human being. This *seriti* changes depending on the religion that influences a person.

Teffo and Roux (1991:134) quote Sparkes (1991:207) as stating that “Metaphysics is that branch of philosophy concerned with the most fundamental questions: existence, essence, space and time, the nature of universals, cause and effect, etc.” They further argue that:

central to African metaphysics are religious beliefs relating to the African conception of God, the universe, and their interrelations. Further notions such as spirit, causality, *person* (own italics), space and time, and reality, in their various conceptions, play a significant role in the life of Africans as they grapple with existential realities through phenomena such as religion, ancestral veneration, witchcraft, magic, etc.

*Seriti* has to do with a Northern Sotho conception of a person or a human being and as a result of that, it has a metaphysical dimension. Teffo and Roux (1991: 145) write that this metaphysical dimension is dependent on proto-theories to account for events in the world for which there is no generally accepted explanation. There is something of this in African accounts of a person. They also point out that with more knowledge of anatomy, and particularly neurology, these views will change or simply vanish. Perhaps something of the nature that knowledge of anatomy and neurology is necessitating a change in the conception of a person by the Northern Sotho. The Judaeo-Christian conception of a human being still persists to this day despite advances in modern science. One dimension of this thesis shall be devoted to the fact that the metaphysical nuance of the concept *seriti* is gradually disappearing and in its place, there is the ethical dimension. Both these dimensions constitute what the researcher calls category A *seriti*.

*Seriti* also has an ethical dimension. In its ethical dimensions, it has to do with the question of what is right and what is wrong according to traditional ethics and morality. Perhaps at this stage it would be better to summarise the western, Christian and lastly the traditional ideas on happiness. According to Stumpf (1993:42) Socrates' idea of virtue has to do with behaving rationally and it also has to do with fulfilling one's function. It all has to do with happiness. Choosing our acts with the hope that these will bring us happiness forms the crux of Socratic ethics. According to Socrates, some forms of behaviour appear to produce happiness but in reality do not. He continues to say that we frequently choose acts that may in themselves be questionable but we nevertheless think will bring us happiness. Socrates argues that thieves may know that stealing is wrong, but they steal in the hope that it will bring them happiness. The Northern Sotho's idea of choice depends on the individual and the group. In the past, there was no time to make any individual choices. The division of people into age-mates made individual choice impossible. When the group decides to attack, they do

that as a group and when they make choices at the place of the gathering/ *kgoro*, they make these choices as a group. A person who made individual choices was shunned and disliked. This was a very dangerous person in the society. Nowadays when an individual speaks at a *kgoro*, he is doing that with the acknowledgment of the group and it is this group that grants him respectability, which ultimately, results in the growth of his *seriti*.

Among the Christians, according to St Augustine, maximising happiness has to do with loving God as a first step; secondly, loving other human beings, and lastly loving objects. The true ground of happiness occurs according to that particular pattern and understanding. Loving objects, then human beings and God last is very dangerous in the sense that it becomes disorderly. According to St Augustine, human beings love food and consume the quantity that is commensurate with their hunger. Human beings do not only have physical needs, they also love objects of art for the aesthetic satisfaction they give. He considers the love between human beings as constituting the highest form of love. The basic need for human affection cannot be satisfied by things. This is particularly the case with man's/woman's spiritual needs. Man/woman was made, said St Augustine, to love God. Man's/woman's nature was made so that only God, the infinite, can give him/her ultimate satisfaction.

What makes the Northern Sotho happy? This question is fraught with problems because we have both the traditional and the modern Northern Sotho. The traditional Northern Sotho are people centred in the sense that what matters the most is the human being. There is a Northern Sotho proverb that emphasises the importance of a human being but at the same time if misunderstood, could mean that human beings and cattle are placed on the same level. This is not the case since a human being is priceless. The proverb says a human being should go past the cow and reach out to another human being because a human being is

more important than a cow// *feta kgomo o sware motho, motho le kgomo di a swana.*

The traditional Northern Sotho, on the other hand derive happiness out of living in ritual purity especially where the ancestors are concerned and that means that on a yearly basis, he/she must slaughter an animal dedicated to ancestors and feed the meat of the animal to people. Secondly, a Northern Sotho would like to live in communion with other people. A rich Northern Sotho who has cattle, sheep and goats would like to extend generosity to other less fortunate Northern Sotho.

There are Northern Sotho who are torn between tradition and western ways of living. These are the Northern Sotho who are schizophrenic. A schizophrenic is a person with a double personality in the strictest sense of the psychological use of this word. Tutu places this word within the context of people who are torn between two cultures, namely the western and the African culture. These people accept some aspects of western culture and some African culture to survive and to live meaningful lives. During the day they are Christians but during the night, they are traditionalists who visit diviners. These people would be comfortable with the idea of Africanising the church. Lastly there is an increasing number of people who are moving away from traditional African culture in favour of the western culture. These are mostly living in towns.

Traditional rites of passage from childhood to adulthood also pose a major problem in the sense that most of these practices are either ignored by the Northern Sotho or have been replaced by certain practices for example, immunization in the case of babies and the circumcision of boys by medical doctors in the case of the initiation into manhood. To illustrate this movement from traditional to more modern ways of understanding of *seriti*, the research will endeavour to demonstrate that the Northern Sotho no longer accept that a person should protect himself/herself with strong medicine to acquire *seriti*. Furthermore, people are no longer interested in

using medicine to solicit for good luck. The Northern Sotho also do not believe that a person has *seriti* because that person is a rascal or a thug or a physically imposing person.

This alone suggests a move by a greater amount of the Northern Sotho away from traditionally acceptable concepts on *seriti* to concepts on *seriti* that have a bearing on ethical issues. The status of *seriti* has changed because of modern ways of looking at and defining the world.

Other perceptions of *seriti* that have been affected by this change have to do with modern perceptions generally held on the question of the status of children, the youth, women and men. Children, the youth, women and men have a changed status and as a result of these changes, perceptions on *seriti* have changed or are changing. It is against this background therefore that the task of the researcher would first be that of asserting that there is a tripartite division of the concept of *seriti* which are referred to as categories A, B and C. In some cases it appears as if out of the three categories, some categories of *seriti*, for example category C, are waning to make way for modern manifestations of *seriti*. In the area of the rites of passage among the Northern Sotho for example, it appears as if it is no longer important for a man/woman to go through all the traditional rites of passage, for example, the out-dooring ceremony where a baby goes through some traditional rites of passage before going outside the hut where it was born to see the sun for the first time. It may even be possible that certain categories of *seriti* are no longer taken seriously save for the category that deals with ethical matters which the researcher has named category A *seriti*. It may even be possible that only the ethical and the ritual manifestations of *seriti*, which the researcher calls category A and B have retained some recognition among the Northern Sotho. Sometimes it may even be possible that categories A and B *seriti* become a preparatory stage for category C. To illustrate what the researcher is trying to say, a man/woman may seek to be in good terms with his/her neighbour by being generous, kind and merciful but at the same time,

this kindness, generosity and mercy have to be extended to the ancestors through a ritual of communicating with ancestors or any other ritual that is dedicated to ancestors. The end result of being kind and generous as well as being aware of ancestors and their needs would at least go a long way towards soliciting for luck. Soliciting for luck may require that a person should go through certain rituals that have connections with category C *seriti*. The research shall therefore endeavour to demonstrate that in the modern times, the concept of *seriti* has changed.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Since *seriti* in the past was real and relevant. What is the status of *seriti* today? If for example we focus on the status of men/women in the past-traditional Northern Sotho man/woman, could we say that Northern Sotho society's conception of a man/woman has changed? A change or evolution in religious and cultural orientation implies a change in orientation and consciousness. The change or evolution may be minimal but it is an evolution. In the future, this change or evolution becomes more pronounced. If there is a change, is there any evidence that there is such a change? The researcher focuses on all three categories of *seriti* with a view to isolating any changes that might be in evidence.

For the Northern Sotho, there is a general loss of purpose in life as a result of a loss of *seriti*. On the other hand, the traditional Northern Sotho yearn for a return to the time when a child and an elderly person had a place. The western outlook on life has replaced traditionally recognised rites of passage which were the means to guarantee the presence of *seriti*. From infancy right through to adulthood, rites of passage are retreating before the monolithic western culture. A traditionally inclined African is no longer able to answer the question: "Who am I?" while a modern African is confused by the fusion of western and African ways of guaranteeing *seriti*.

Both traditionally inclined Africans and the western orientated Africans expect a life of abundance here and now. For traditionally inclined Africans, ancestors who are believed to have accumulated life in abundance become important means of acquiring *seriti* whereas for those who are westernised, Christ is the means of finding a good standing in society – indeed a good way of accumulating *seriti*. For some people, both the ancestors and Christ are used to acquire dignity or *seriti*.

*Seriti* is a religious concept and as such should be understood within the context of African religion in general and Northern, Western and Southern parts of South Africa in particular. As already stated, *seriti* in its total manifestation, namely categories A, B and C, is something that is spawned by Northern Sotho religion. As a result of this, the decline of African religion in these parts suggests a decline of some of the categories of *seriti*, namely category B and C. Recent research suggests that there are factors that militate against African religion. Some of these factors are the Pentecostal, Zionist and missionary initiated churches. Some African initiated churches have actively advocated for the eradication of some central traditional concepts like ancestral veneration. The reason these churches want ancestral veneration to be exterminated is because they believe that ancestral veneration harbours satanic beliefs namely that reverting to ancestral veneration is equivalent to the invitation of Satan into the churches.

Accordingly those churches that advocate ancestral veneration are deemed to be giving the devil a direct invitation into the church. An attack on ancestral veneration is therefore an attack on categories B and C *seriti*. Category B *seriti* is engendered by rituals dedicated to ancestors for the protection of the neophyte. Happiness for the Northern Sotho is something that could be derived out of a Northern Sotho's connections with his ancestors and marking every transition of their lives with rites of passage. Some African initiated churches concentrate on these rites of passage which the mainline churches have neglected and condemned. If

category B *seriti* is also waning, then the entire edifice of traditional Northern Sotho culture would collapse.

Category C *seriti* on the other hand follows as a consequent of category B. People who execute a ritual properly are rewarded with blessings as a result of such an execution of ritual and the end result is, for instance winning at the horseracing gathering, at a lottery and other types of blessings. It is for this reason that a synopsis of the attack on ancestral religion, which is an indirect challenge to category B and C *seriti*, as stated elsewhere, should be indicated to illustrate the decline of traditional African religion.

If there is a change or even an evolution, this implies that in the future, the tripartite manifestations of *seriti* shall gradually lose some of their manifestations, resulting in only one manifestation of *seriti*, namely category A. But at the present moment, categories B and C *seriti* are on the way out, albeit the exit does not seem to be drastic.

In the past, a person with *seriti* was of above-average intelligence, respectable and in return was able to respect others. He/she was a person who was ritually pure in the sense that he/she was also a person who used traditional medicine to generate luck with women, men and accumulation of worldly goods. The researcher is of the opinion that there is a gradual rejection of traditional healers who made category C *seriti* possible as well as the rejection of category C *seriti*. In the future, *seriti* will become more and more associated with category A.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The researcher has made references to *seriti* in the previous page only briefly. An explanation of the tripartite division of *seriti* has to be considered. Firstly *seriti* as a concept is something that has to be

understood in terms of a tripartite division of categories A, B and C. Category A focuses on both ethical and mystical manifestations of *seriti*. A person with a high degree of intelligence, who is generous and kind, has category A *seriti*. Category A *seriti* is the type of *seriti* that makes a person to be a good person. A person with category A *seriti* represents the ideal human being in the traditional society which he/she respects and is respected in return. This person is kind and generous, inspires fear not because he/she is a rascal but because he/she fears and respects other people. What this person represents is the sum-total of what society values and needs. In the modern times a person with category A *seriti* is a person who has studied and is an intellectual. This person does not have to be an orator if he/she works with numbers, machines and computers. He/she has to be an orator if he/she is a lawyer, pastor, magistrate and a teacher. All these gifts are nothing according to the Northern Sotho if a person is not able to greet other people, to be kind to other people and to generally communicate with neighbours on any topic that may be fancied.

The most important thing for such a person is that he/she has to communicate with other people rather than to keep to himself/herself. If a person has category A *seriti* he could be a skilful negotiator and a person with sagacity at tribal level. The modern manifestation of category A *seriti* could be a person armed with various gifts to survive in the modern world but at the same time should know that a human being is a human being through other human beings.

Second, a person or persons with ritual purity such as kings and diviners have *seriti* that the researcher calls category B. This category involves various stages of ritual purity in the development of a human being from childhood through to death. All rituals of passage, of incorporation and rituals of separation belong to this particular category. The idea is to acquire ritual strength that would make a human being to function properly in the traditional setting. Human beings solicit for *seriti* which for some reason has depleted and needs to be replenished.

This *seriti* could have dissipated due to the fact that the carrier or bearer of this *seriti* has done certain things that are contrary to a given tradition, such a person could have committed incest or some other type of abomination and as a result needs a rite of incorporation into the original scheme of things or even wants society to look at him/her as a good person or a person with category A *seriti*.

This person has to be reconciled to his/her ancestors through a rite of incorporation, or has to find some means of making himself/herself ritually pure. The modern setting, for the modern man/woman could present a very interesting scenario and this of course would be due to the progress or destruction or tabula rasa that was introduced by western civilization and religion. Western civilization introduced not only religion and culture but an entire survival package.

The problem with this survival package is that it has not been able to satisfy a western educated traditionally inclined Northern Sotho as well as those people who are not traditionally inclined but who still have traditional survivals. This therefore results into some kind of schizophrenia where one person has the personality of a traditionally inclined Northern Sotho as well as that one of a modern Northern Sotho. Other people have been able to resolve this impasse by either choosing to remain a westernised Northern Sotho or a traditional Northern Sotho.

Category C *seriti* occurs when people generate more than their fair share of *seriti*. This situation could be explained by using the following illustration: a person realises that some other people are lucky or are more gifted than him/herself. A person devices a plan to have things tilted in his/her favour. Some other people go to traditional healers to be cleansed. Others refer to this process as to be washed // *go hlapiswa*.

Category C *seriti* also has to do with a person who uses traditional medicine for personal gain. Sometimes people who use these traditional medicines do it to protect themselves without intending to harm others.

Category C *seriti* is a corruption of the original status of *seriti* (category A) in the sense that it stems from the greed and love for material things on the part of the person in possession of such *seriti*. This love for material things is in direct contrast to the pursuit of good deeds for their own sake or doing something because such a thing represents the good.

Literature studies have concentrated on *seriti* in its original status in the traditional setting but the researcher concentrates on both the original status as well as its modern manifestations. The problem is the reconciliation of the original status of *seriti* and the modern manifestation of *seriti*. To some traditionalists, the modern manifestations of *seriti* is not *seriti* at all. For them, *seriti* has to be retained in its original status. On the other hand, there are people who do not believe that things have to maintain their original status in a cultural situation that is dynamic and as a result of that, changing. The truth is that we have to reconcile the past and the present to arrive at what makes an African today to be happy.

First to be considered by the researcher is the idea that *seriti* as a concept has undergone very dramatic, if not drastic changes. Cultural changes that have been introduced by colonialism, capitalism and democracy have necessitated changes whether consciously and unconsciously by the indigenous populations. Education, educational institutions as well as westernisation has had a debilitating effect on traditional African institutions that guided Africans in the past and that are still having an effect on African life.

*Seriti* is personal dignity in its various manifestations. According to (Setiloane 1976: 40) it is the sum-total of all those characteristics that generate dignity, for example, a person who is generous, kind, and morally and spiritually strong is believed to have *seriti*. A person who is not generous, kind, and morally and spiritually strong has a little *seriti* but is not totally bereft of it. His / her *seriti* has been minimised. What

causes a person to have *seriti* is the fact that such a person is a human being. This, therefore, means that every human being has *seriti* even if such a human being could be physically or mentally handicapped or even despised. These characteristics were the sum total of what was expected of adult existence by traditional society.

What made people to have *seriti* was the fact that every human being at some stage had to go through the rites of passage, rites of separation and incorporation (Gennep: 1960). These rites were and are still carried out on behalf of an individual or groups of individuals to mark a transition from one form of existence to another. The fact that everyone in society has gone through these rites of passage makes him/her to acquire *seriti* which in turn translates into generosity, kindness and spiritual strength as an end product in the case of elderly men and women. In the case of the youth, they are taught to endure hardships of any kind including the hardships of war and exposure to the elements. Such exposure alone results into what the researcher calls *seriti*. In the case of young women, they were taught to be home-makers. Infants on the other hand derive their *seriti* from the fact that they had to be healthy. This is the reason why precautions were taken to ensure the maintenance of their health.

Since everyone in traditional society is taught to be generous, kind and spiritually strong, we say that they are taught to be human (*botho*). Once a person is a human being in the sense that he/she has generosity, kindness and spiritual strength, we say that such a person is a real person // *mothomotho*, that is, a human being in contrast to an animal.

The *seriti* or dignity of an individual is something that is not the same for children and adults for example, we do not expect children to speak eloquently in traditional courts but a child within a traditional setting derives dignity from the fact that he/she is loved by all the people due to the fact that he/she is obedient and humble. It could thus be stated that

a child who is obedient and humble has dignity or *seriti* in a traditional setting.

Traditional society demanded that rituals of passage should be carried out on every human being so that such a human being could qualify to be called human. Today the rituals of passage recognized in the traditional setting exist side by side with western conceptions about what constitute being regarded as human. Immunisation programs ensure the dignity of children. Circumcision could also be done at clinics and hospitals. In such a multicultural situation, one should always expect that other things that were held or believed to promote *seriti* such as circumcision have partly been overshadowed by *seriti* through high school education as well as tertiary education. Engaging in scientific pursuits in the classroom gives whoever is engaging in such pursuit *seriti*. It was reported in the SABC news on Friday, May 2004, that some traditional surgeons who are insisting on practising their trade the old way have been arrested. One of the reasons why these people were arrested was to prevent deaths due to botched circumcisions.

*Seriti* and *botho* (the art of being a human being) should be studied together because they belong together but many writers, particularly in Southern Africa have chosen to write only on the concept of *botho*. The starting point should be *seriti* and then later, the concept of *botho* should be studied once the concept of *seriti* has been exhausted. The reason why the researcher is thinking in these terms is because *botho* as a concept cannot be studied apart from *seriti* and that in reality, *botho* is part of *seriti*. *Seriti* as a concept includes *botho* in the sense that a person acquires *seriti* once he/she knows how to be a human being in one's own culture.

In other words if a person knows how to be a human being say for example according to the Northern Sotho, if a person heightens such knowledge to perfection in such a way that the person becomes easily

identifiable with such perfection, such a person has acquired *seriti*. Knowledge of how to be a human being in various cultures among Africans invests the person who knows how to be such a human being with dignity (*seriti*). The researcher briefly alluded to a definition of *seriti* in the past pages. What follows is an explanation of the definition. The researcher recapitulates the definition of *seriti* in the following manner:

*Seriti* is the ethico-religious and mystical or metaphysical qualities that emerge from both modern and traditional society to promote the dignity of groups of people or an individual. In its ethical dimensions, *seriti* is something that is produced by good works, for example, a person could be said to be kind and generous. A person who feeds the hungry and the visitors and cares for other people's children is said or believed to have *seriti*. In its religious manifestation, a person is believed to have accumulated *seriti* if he/she performs ancestral duties such as invoking the ancestors and offering them something. Since death is a pollutant, a person has to be treated ritually or should always be in a state of ritual cleanliness. In its mystical or metaphysical manifestation, a person is believed to have *seriti* if he/she has a gift of oratory and intelligence. Those with intelligence and oracular abilities include kings and deputy kings.

The online Northern Sotho dictionary ([http://www.thiaoouba.com/sec\\_color.htm](http://www.thiaoouba.com/sec_color.htm)) renders *seriti* as aura and dignity. The study of auras is too important to ignore. An instrument was developed to study these phenomena. It is called a Gas Discharge Visualization. Prof. Konstantin Korotkov, an internationally recognised physicist from Russia studied auras. A person with a bright clean aura is good and spiritually advanced even if he/she is modest and not aware of it while a person with a grey or dark aura has ambiguous intentions no matter how impressive, eloquent, educated, or even good looking the person may be. (What is the Aura in [http://www.thiaoouba.com/sec\\_color.htm](http://www.thiaoouba.com/sec_color.htm))

What is interesting about the study of auras is the fact that children have stronger and cleaner auras than adults. This is in contrast to the traditional belief that adults have stronger auras. Upholding such ideas would work against the original understanding of what *seriti* is according to the Northern Sotho, namely, the idea that adults instead of children have stronger auras or *seriti*. Another weakness with auras is that everything, animate and inanimate objects, including stones and minerals like diamond and gold, have aura. The problem with this way of looking at *seriti* or aura is that the Northern Sotho do not believe that everything has *seriti*.

#### **1.4 RELEVANCE**

It is important for the Northern Sotho to know what was traditionally acceptable and therefore promoted the dignity of other human beings (in this way giving them *seriti* and being recipients of it) and what was traditionally unacceptable and, therefore, working against the common good of society.

There is also a need for students of African religion and philosophy to understand what was meant by *seriti* in the past and what it means to have *seriti* now. The understanding of this concept is extremely important as it forms what is constituted as the goal of African religion. This goal is that life in general does not have to be lived under miserable circumstances but it has to be lived in abundance. Many Africans thus prefer to go to places where the abundance of life is ensured or guaranteed. Forces such as witchcraft, real or imagined have to be fought against and defeated as they thwart the inclination by Africans to live abundantly. When the researcher writes of Africans, this includes those who are both traditionally inclined as well as those who are westernised.

Due to a ruthless type of westernisation, distinctions concerning an understanding of the concept of *seriti* have undergone a shift in emphasis and understanding. It is therefore imperative for the researcher to

highlight this shift as well as its interconnectedness. The researcher will revisit an understanding of *seriti* in the past and focus on how this *seriti* has been translated and understood as *botho*. *Botho* as a concept is actually the philosophy of *seriti* but is a philosophy of *seriti* that has abrogated or cut off most of the traditional baggage. The researcher is thus of the opinion that the concept of *seriti*, should not be cast away completely at least not from the traditional point of view and posterity.

In a situation where there is a deliberate clash of traditions, namely the traditional way of doing things and the western way of doing things, such a clash should not be used to demonise or even to divest another tradition of its *seriti*.

## **1.5 METHOD**

Firstly, the researcher used books to gain a perspective of what *seriti* was in the past. To do so, the researcher relies on books that have an illustrative value on *seriti* such as books on rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. There are also proverbial utterances that give an idea of what it means to have *seriti* as a child, the youth and adults, focussing on males and females.

To be able to establish the metaphysical as well as the ethical meanings, the researcher intends to use meanings of *seriti* from textbooks and thereafter, try to find out what the meaning of *seriti* is from both the young and the older respondents. From a conjectural point of view, those respondents who seem to point out many characteristics of *seriti* would be older as compared to those who have a limited recollection of the concept.

There are two types of methods which could be employed in a project of this magnitude, namely the qualitative method and the quantitative

method. Mouton & Babbie (2001: 53) define the qualitative research paradigm as follows:

The term “qualitative research paradigm” will be used in this book to refer to that generic research approach in social research according to which research takes its departure point as the insider perspective on social action. Qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the insider perspective (also referred to as the “emic” approach.)

To get the insider perspective, the researcher visited the designated areas as part of a pilot project to find out what the meaning of *seriti* is. The researcher was aware of the meanings of *seriti* from reading books on *seriti* and making general assessment of the material gleaned from the books. This material became part of what went into the drafting of the questionnaire. The material from the questionnaire that comes in the form of responses from the respondents is going to form the most important and vital component of the thesis. While material from books, some novels and proverbial expressions shall shed light on the past status of *seriti*, the material generated by responses from the questionnaire shall focus mainly on the present status of the concept of *seriti*.

The researcher, in his interpretation of the material from the questionnaire depended mainly on the quantitative method. David & Sutton (2004: 133) write the following on the quantitative research design:

Quantitative research design is based within the positivist traditions of natural sciences. The purpose of a research design is to provide a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The main method of collecting this data is the self-completion survey or structured interview.

The questionnaire was sampled mainly among teachers and students and other professions ranging from ages 20-60. One of the reasons why the researcher sampled the questionnaire in that pattern was because the respondents should at least be literate and have an idea of what is meant by *seriti*. The respondents came from the Department of Education,

administration, correctional services, students, nurses, directors, chemists, the unemployed, taxi owners, managers, traditional healers and so on.

Section A dwelt on biographical data where the names and surnames of individuals were not mentioned. Section B handles the characteristics of *seriti* where respondents had to agree, disagree or be neutral, namely to be undecided. A list of thirteen (13) questions mainly on the characteristics of *seriti* was drawn. These characteristics are the following: A person had to be good, be able to speak well, be kind, merciful, honest, a person had to be chosen by ancestors, be a diviner, his/her house has to have *seriti*, and so on. When these questions are handled analytically, the researcher shall take into account the responses of the 20-30 year olds, and the responses of the 40 plus years second. Also, of importance would be the analyses of the responses according to their gender, namely male and female. The same questionnaire handles questions on children and *seriti*. For them to have *seriti*, they had to be healthy, be treated medically the traditional way and so on. On the question of the youth and *seriti*, education, initiation, volunteer work and so on have been singled out as things that heighten the *seriti* of the youth while at the same time, there are factors that militate against the mental and physical growth of the youth like taking drugs and getting drunk.

A section on *seriti* involving men and women where the characteristics of women are the following: she is a mother, she keeps the house tidy, she is held in high esteem by friends, works hard to keep her husband comfortable and so on. These characteristics will be based on the traditional Northern Sotho as well as western or modern stereotypes. In this section it is important to highlight the responses of the 20-40 year olds and those of the 40 years plus because of the generational differences.

The researcher's argument is that those who are much younger have already been exposed to gender equality while those who are 40 years and over would be thinking in terms of old stereotypes. It would also be interesting to note the gender differences of the respondents when they are subjected to the same questions. In the same section, the question of men with *seriti* shall be handled and these questions also contain traditional and western stereotypes of men with *seriti*. These stereotypes are the following: he has gone through all the traditional rites of passage, has many cattle, many wives and concubines, he hates women abusers and so on. The respondents would be divided according to their age differences. There will be 20-40 year olds and the 40 plus year olds. The respondents are also going to be divided into male and the female. The reason the researcher would like to divide the responses according to gender is because he wants to take note of the responses.

During the pilot stages of the research on *seriti*, the researcher did not find any evidence of the old understanding of the concept and its interconnectedness with ancestors among the people he interviewed. It was only after the researcher pursued the interviewees as to the status of the ancestors vis-à-vis the concept of *seriti*, that some interviewees, particularly traditional healers, indicated the connectedness. Ordinary people would not be in the position to be aware of the connections between *seriti* and ancestors. Among the Pedi, Mönning is to be credited with introducing the multifaceted dimensions of *seriti* and its metaphysical import. Setiloane did the same thing but argued that *seriti* has connections with *botho*. This shows that the concept has undergone a shift in emphasis from old meanings and interpretations to modern ones.

It is for this reason that the researcher embarks on what *seriti* is in the present and what was *seriti* in the past. If the answers have the tendency of leaning towards kindness and generosity, to have mercy, to be true to oneself and to be honest, then the researcher would be in the position to

know that answers to that question favour a modern understanding of *seriti*. If most of the answers indicate that a person has to have a prodigious memory and to speak well in a tribal court to be reckoned as having *seriti*, then the researcher knows that the answers are leaning more towards a past interpretation of *seriti*. It may even be possible for the researcher to conclude, on the basis of the responses, that conceptions on *seriti* in general have not changed at all, or that there has been a change. If there has been a change, this could signal a gradual move from traditional conceptions of *seriti* to modern conceptions.

In addition to the questionnaire, there are graphs that illustrate both the changes as well as an analytical interpretation of these changes. These graphs appear at the end of chapters 2 to 4 just before the endnotes.

## **1.6 GEOGRAPHY AND ITS PEOPLE**

The researcher visited those areas that are held to be traditional centres of ideas that mainly concern *seriti*. The researcher visited these areas because he hoped a more traditional spirit would be prevailing in these areas and second, that the people living in these areas would be able to give more data on *seriti* than, for example, the people in the urban areas. People living in the urban areas next to the rural areas would be able to come up with a modern perspective on *seriti*. These rural areas are the eastern part of the Limpopo Province where people live mainly by planting maize and other foodstuffs. The rainfall patterns in these areas are enough to enable the planting of maize and tropical fruits. In the Modjadji area there are two places with different lifestyles. These two areas are GaKgapane and the Modjadji area. In the Modjadji area the researcher was able to come across many ideas around the issue of *seriti*. First to be interviewed were the *ngakas* or diviners. These are the people who are mostly affected by loss of *seriti* or prestige. Most of the diviners were complaining about the fact that there are accusations and counter

accusations of witchcraft against them. There are also petty jealousies amongst the diviners themselves as they compete for clients. These quarrels have led to their loss of *seriti*.

There is another new enemy that the diviners themselves reported that they are facing. It should be taken into account that the cultural milieu of some of the Northern Sotho is that medicines work because ancestors are willing that it should work. In other words, medicine depends on the will of the ancestors to work. Because of jealousy, some diviners could stop the healing properties of the medicine of a successful colleague. In their own words, they say they close the success of a diviner /*go tswalela* //to close. Once such a diviner is closed, medicines that have been given to these clients would stop working and the clients would stop flocking to such a diviner. These are some of the things that have led to the loss of prestige that diviners used to have among their people.

The people in general (and by these the researcher means those he was able to find and interview) were steeped in a situation of un-employment, which reduced their status to that of people who are not even able to raise their economic standards. In Modjadji and Sekgopo, most of the space reserved for agricultural purposes was lying fallow, while the vegetable and fruit market was filled with agricultural produce from the neighbouring farms. The people either go to these farms to buy these fruits and vegetables or they are employed to sell these agricultural produce. The market is either infested by inferior agricultural produce or is chock-a-block with people vying for customers. The unemployed could, however improve their situation if they planted some of the agricultural produce themselves.

## **1.7MODJADJI AREA**

Originally, the land from Magoebaskloof, the entire Tzaneen area and Sekgopo were under the leadership of Queen Modjadji II. Warfare and defeat led the borders of Modjadji to be confined to its present configurations. The Modjadji people are part of what we call the Northern Sotho. In these areas one comes across a mixture of purely traditional and modern lifestyles and finds a high concentration of diviners and herbalists.

The Modjadji area and people are very friendly but generally poor. The soil is rich and loamy but sometimes sandy. Rainfall patterns are seasonal although there are sporadic outbursts of rain here and there, resulting in much needed relief for the farmers. These rainfall patterns influence the type of crops that are grown, which is mainly subtropical fruit such as mangoes, bananas, papaws, guavas as well as avocado pears. People who live in these areas do not buy such fruit as it is freely available. Some sell the fruit in the streets. The ground also accommodates onions, spinach, cabbages, sweet potatoes, as well as millet and corn.

In Kgapanane and the Modjadji area, there were large numbers of young people moving from one place to another. The streets were generally crowded as this was during the holidays. There were also elderly people who were doing their business, most of them having been unemployed for ages. The researcher's assistant who helped him to target diviners had been unemployed since 1990. One does not know how such people survive but one could also attribute their survival to the abundance of crops to keep them alive.

Some diviners that the researcher visited ranked amongst the most prominent members of society while others were virtually unknown and struggling for survival. One of them asked for a consultation fee of fifty rands (R50) before he could speak to the researcher. He wore dirty clothes as he had no wife to look after him. Usually when a diviner is

consulted, the fee of fifty rands (R50) is demanded only when the bones are to be used for a prognostication. The bones themselves have to be thrown several times to make an assessment of the nature of the illness that the patient is suffering from. Fortunately, the other diviners did not ask for a consultation fee.

Some difficulties that were encountered had to do with a misunderstanding of the term *seriti*. One particular diviner said he understood the question about *seriti* but when he elaborated on the concept, it was clear that it was *meriti* (shadows) that he was talking about. *Meriti* is some form of contamination that results in bad luck. According to him, *meriti* results in *makhoma* (a condition where the sufferer complains of too much air in the stomach). Taking a mixture of salt and ash orally heals this condition.

The researcher visited Sekhukhuneland as well. Sekhukhuneland is an area that lies South-east of Polokwane. This area lies halfway between Polokwane and Lydenburg and is bordered by the Olifants river (Lepelle) on the west and Steelpoort River on the east. Its centre is Mohlaletsi (Maroteng or Geluuskraal). Kgoši Sekhukhune is recognised as king by the following groups of people: the Bakone, the Batau and the Bakwena. All these people are classified as the Bapedi. Generally the researcher concentrated on the areas of Mohlaletsi, Ga-Nchabeleng and Apel.

In the economic sector, there are people who are teachers, nurses, and state administrators. There are also people who sell agricultural produce on street corners. This agricultural produce consists of spinach, groundnuts, tomatoes, cabbages, oranges as well as bananas. There is also a growing constituency of women who own vegetable plantations in schools. These women plant mainly spinach, onions and beetroot to supplement their income although very often these are their only means of survival. People stand outside the fence and make orders for these agricultural produce; which are obtainable fresh from the ground. There

are no scales that are used but they certainly make the agricultural produce easy to obtain in terms of the prices and the demand. The rest of the population, which consists mainly of elderly people have to rely on state pensions.

### **1.8 HISTORY OF DISPOSSESSION**

Some many years ago, around 1981, the researcher's uncle told him about the origin of the name Botswana. He told the researcher that the word Botswana derives its origin from the word *go tswa* which means to come apart while the word *bo* would mean a place. Botswana would then mean a place of the parting. The Sotho speaking people were together all the time and it was time for them to part. When they parted, they called the place they were leaving behind Botswana – a place where a parting was made. This parting resulted into the Southern Sotho going South and the Western Sotho or Sotho-Tswana remaining at Botswana and the rest of the western Transvaal. The Northern Sotho had to move up North.

Other sources do not dwell on how Botswana got its name; they focus rather on how the Bapedi group originated through the Hurutse. Kinsey (1972: 1) argues that the Bapedi originated from the Bakgatla. Tabane who led the Kgatla offshoot settled at a place called Schilpadfontein in the vicinity of Pretoria. Tabane was succeeded by his son Motsha, whose son and heir Diale had a number of wives, the youngest of whom was his favourite wife Mathobele.

Mathobele became pregnant and while pregnant, the other wives were saying that her child cried whilst still in its mother's womb. The child, a male child, was born normally and was named "Lellelateng" meaning "it cries inside." The unusual event was attributed to witchcraft and the Kgatla, or council, wanted to kill the mother and child. Diale interceded for them and they were both spared.

It soon became apparent that he would not be accepted by the tribe, and as a result of that, he and his family, together with a large following, broke away and they trekked to the east with their flocks and herds to found the Bapedi nation. These people settled in Steelpoort in approximately 1650.

The name Bapedi, according to Bulpin was originally Karanga from Zimbabwe. The name was taken from a resident minor group of dispossessed people from Zimbabwe calling themselves Pedi which was the nearest their language could get to the Karanga name of Mbedzi, the dispossessed people. Rev Alexander Merensky on the other hand believes that the name might have come about as a result of a conglomeration of various tribes. The most important component of the tribe was called the “Bapedi” or the “Baperi,” meaning the “Family of the King”. The Pedi themselves are fond of calling one another “Child of the King” //ngwan’a Kgosi.

The most important king of the Bapedi was Thulare because under his reign, the tribe grew and prospered and the Pedi empire was extended. Thulare died in 1824 on a day of a solar eclipse. Two years after his death, the Bapedi empire was crushed by Mzilikazi. Sekwati who was Thulare’s son fled to the north to Ramapulana to escape Mzilikazi’s attacks. He came back to establish himself at a place called Phiring.

The first encounter of Sekwati and the Voortrekkers came in 1847 and in 1852. The cause of the encounter was that both the Voortrekkers and the Bapedi were interested in the welfare of their livestock and this often led to land encroachment on the part of the Voortrekkers and an attempt on the part of the Bapedi to defend what they believed to be theirs. The Voortrekkers were also interested in free labour or slave labour and this they accomplished by stealing Pedi children to be enslaved as farm labourers.

Sekwati died on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1861, and was succeeded by his son, Sekhukhuni, who acquired the chieftainship by force. His brother Mampuru was driven away. Sekhukhuni built up his arsenal by buying arms from Delagoa Bay, and in 1875, the Bapedi under Sekhukhuni withstood an assault by a Swazi impi. A few military encounters between the well armed Sekhukhuni and the Boers resulted in a situation where the former was able to assert his independence as a result of a peace treaty, and this came about in February, 1877.

The Tranvaal was annexed by Great Britain on the 12 April 1877 and the new conqueror, Shepstone, demanded that Sekhukhuni should pay 2000 head of cattle. Sekhukhuni only paid 245 cattle and claimed that most of his cattle were dead. Sekhukhuni could not pay the number of the cattle needed as part of a peace deal. He further went ahead to declare himself the paramount chief of all the tribes.

Clarke warned Sekhukhuni that if he attacked friendly natives he would be breaking the treaty he had made, but Sekhukhuni replied that the English were afraid to fight, and that Europeans at Fort Burgers and in the Waterval area must leave his land and that he was ready for war.

The Bapedi proceeded to roam the countryside to harass the farmers east of Leolo mountains, raiding cattle and burning homesteads. Sekhukhuni was given arms by some boers who did not want any British government. This was an act of defiance against Clarke who believed that Sekhukhuni was now getting out of control.

Several campaigns were launched to break the power of Sekhukhuni. Chiefs from the surrounding area as well as some Zulu police and some 500 Swazi were used to wage a black on black type of warfare against Sekhukhuni. In the end, some Swazi who knew the territory very well, were able to inflict a devastating defeat against Sekhukhuni. He was arrested and sent to Pretoria as punishment. Later on he was released and allowed to return to his country where he was murdered by Mampuru

while asleep. Mampuru was in turn arrested and was hanged for the murder of Sekhukhuni on the 22 November, 1883.

At Blouberg, the Boer settlers had disappeared into their laagers because they needed to defend themselves against Mmalebogo. Bulpin (1965: 378) reports that Mmalebogo was given seven days grace to surrender or fight. As a peace gesture, Mmalebogo sent a gift of a white ox and 20 pounds but when Joubert invited him to come down and talk things over he declined.

Missionaries on the other hand realised what an advantage it would be to let Joubert take over the running of the country. Sontag and Frederick Schmill visited Mmalebogo's capital several times to arrange the prospect of surrender but the chief always said that he was afraid. Eventually the chief offered to surrender if he was given the guarantee that his life would be spared. No guarantee was given the chief and the war continued.

Mmalebogo may have appeared to have behaved like a coward for asking for a guarantee that his life be spared. It may also have seemed as if Mmalebogo was losing the battle but the loss of life on the part of the attacking forces made the battle to seem in favour of Mmalebogo. It would seem that Mmalebogo was offering a very stiff opposition. Bulpin (1965: 379) recorded the following list of casualties in the battle:

Three more Europeans were killed and six wounded....By the 8<sup>th</sup> July, Joubert had lost six Europeans killed and twenty-one wounded...while fifteen of his African allies had died and another thirty wounded.

The researchers opinion is that Mmalebogo had a good reason to ask for guarantees that his life should be spared against the background of the people who were killed in battle by his troops. Joubert on the other hand did not want to commit himself with guarantees because of the realization that the battle he thought was going to be of short duration was dragging on for too long. In the end, Mmalebogo was forced to surrender because

it was no longer possible for him to defend his people. He asked his attackers to at least have the decency to allow the non-combatants to be taken out of the cave to surrender. This the aggressors were able to do. After the surrender of Mmalebogo, his people were made to suffer the humiliation of being taken into slavery as Bulpin was later to record:

The surrendered women and children were dished out to serve five-year terms as labourers on adjoining farms, while Mmalebogo himself was kept prisoner for a short time.

Why were women and children made to suffer the indignity of being sent out to slavery? Women and children were not combatants in this war but why were they turned into prisoners of war and what happened to the men who were taking part defending Mmalebogo?

At Modjadji, particularly after the Boers had trouble with Makgoba, the queen Modjadji became affected by the violence that was raging around her. Joubert demanded that taxes should be paid or Modjadji should come out and fight. Modjadji sent six of her headmen to ask for advice from the missionary Reuter. He asked them if they thought they could fight and they said no. He told them that if they are not able to fight, they know what to do. They paid their taxes and acknowledged the rule of the Boers.

Dispossession and displacement of people leads to their loss of *seriti*. The entire history of South Africa is a history of pain, suffering, separation and dispossession. One of the reasons why the Voortrekkers left the Cape was that they did not want to be equal to African people and that they wanted to be free to pursue their destiny.

One of these destinies was the idea of enslaving Africans in the interior of South Africa. Enslavement usually came in the form of demanding tax on the part of the settlers from the neighbouring African kings. If the kings did not have money or cattle to pay taxes, there was the inevitable spectre of defeat and loss of freedom at the hands of the settlers. Kinsey

(SAMHS: 1972, 1) reports that it was against this background that Sekhukhuni was forced to pay 245 head of cattle in July and August, 1877.

## 1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

Mönnig is to be given credit for concentrating on *seriti* as a concept among the Pedi, who are a constituent part of the Northern Sotho. In chapter two of his book, Mönnig (1967: 40) places a discussion on *seriti* under religion. Under this topic, he has a Pedi conception of God, Pedi world-view, ancestor worship, sin, impurity, taboo and so on. Mönnig (1967: 50) writes that *seriti* forms part of a human being. A human being is made up of body/*mmele*, soul/*moya* and *seriti*. *Seriti* as shadow is not just a shadow but the supernatural form of shadow. This shadow is seen in dreams. When a person dreams, it is the shadow of another person that he/she sees in a dream.

*Seriti* is also associated with personality and dignity. It is that attribute that distinguishes one person from another. At death, when severed from the body, *seriti* is the visual appearance of the soul.

Mönnig (1967: 51) writes that there are people with a strong *seriti* like the chief, medicine men, members of the chief's family, rich persons, and persons of influence. Love potions strengthen and protect *seriti* and amulets are worn to protect *seriti*. Medicine strengthens and heals *seriti*. Cattle and totem animals have a strong *seriti*. The sun, moon and stars are soul invested. At death the soul/*moya* and spirit/*moya* leaves the body to continue existence as a single entity.

First Mönnig pointed out that *seriti* is a constituent part of the study of the personality and dignity. Personality and dignity are category A *seriti*. He also pointed out that *seriti* is what people see when they dream of a person and it is also the visual appearance of a person when he is dead. This is category B *seriti* that encapsulates the role of ancestors as well as

the rituals that are dedicated to ancestors for the well-being of man/woman.

Mönnig pointed out issues that are of interest to the researcher. These are the fact that *seriti* is associated with the kind of luck that is always sought after in areas like love-making and medicine that are designed to boost the energy of an individual. This means that a person should live strongly and encouraged to live strongly. He did not mention that houses and other things like cars have to be protected so that sorcerers should not find them to be easy targets. Protection of houses and cars through medicinal means is something that is practised on a daily basis. During one of the researcher's visits to one of the African-initiated churches, his car was sprinkled with water to avoid things like accidents and other misfortunes associated with cars. Sometimes the body of a human being has to be sprinkled with water to avoid any malicious machinations of sorcerers. The focus of all these religious rites is to ensure that a person's *seriti* is rendered invulnerable.

The only problem that the researcher has with Mönnig is the assertion by Mönnig that cattle, trees and other inanimate things have *seriti*. This assertion makes everything to be invested with a soul or spirit. According to the Cambridge Dictionary ([dictionary.cambridge.org](http://dictionary.cambridge.org)), animism is the belief that all natural things, such as plants, animals, rocks, thunder and earthquakes, have spirits (beings that cannot be seen) and influence human events. Several traditional healers that the researcher was able to talk to stated that cattle, trees and other inanimate things do not have *seriti* in themselves but that they are merely tools to enhance the *seriti* of human beings.

Closer to Mönnig's contribution, Singleton (1977:5) quotes Mujynya as writing that *seriti* is the image of a person minus the weaknesses of the flesh.

It is obvious that there is a connection of ancestors and *seriti* (category B). Mönnig credits chiefs, medicine men, and persons of influence with *seriti*. This was the time when traditional structures were still intact, but it remains to be seen what the status of medicine men is going to look like in the modern times. Chiefs and people of influence still have *seriti* but their *diriti* are overshadowed by the *diriti* of the president, cabinet ministers and members of the executive committees which were not in existence at the time of the writing of Mönnig's book.

Among the Sotho-Tswana, Setiloane (1976: 32) devotes one chapter to a discussion of *botho*, and he subsumes *seriti* under the heading of *botho*. In this discussion, Setiloane traces the development of a human being from childhood, initiation and thereafter, *botho*, being human. It is not easy for Setiloane to separate *botho* and *seriti* because the one implies the other. Setiloane devoted three pages on the discussion of *botho* and thereafter, he discusses *seriti*. There is a serious overlapping between these concepts.

Setiloane begins the subsection on *botho*, the essence of humanity among the Sotho-Tswana by asserting that moral quality is not something that a person acquires only at initiation but rather something that grows with age and experience. He writes the following about Sotho-Tswana man:

A Sotho-Tswana man is one who follows the accepted pattern of social living, who shows equanimity and maturity. He is generous and kind, but also strong; not only physically but morally and spiritually. He supports his household, while they in turn support him and honour him with service.

A true woman, a woman with *seriti* according to Setiloane is:

Mmamotse/mother of a household-one who gathers all its members not only of her own "lapa" into her love and care. Over the years, she has increased in dignity, poise, diligence and resourcefulness; and now in her maturity of age she has become the stabilising factor, the backbone of her family, the ward and the village, loyal to her husband and reliable in all her actions and advice.

The ideal man and woman represent the researcher's category A *seriti*. It should also be noted that traits such as moral quality and following accepted patterns of social living are some of the attributes expected of modern men and women. Some of the attributes expected of modern men and women would be antiquated. Diligence, particularly in the domestic scenario is no longer the only option but instead there are many options due to changed circumstances.

Setiloane, like Mönnig, discerns ancestral connections with *seriti* when he writes that a person joins the ranks of *badimo*/ancestors to continue the influence.

To separate men from beasts, according to Setiloane, a human being has "*moya*" and when he/she dies it might be said "*o neela moya*." The crux of the matter for Setiloane is that there is no distinction between body and soul. Blood is one of the bodily fluids that have strong connections with *seriti*. At the annual "renewal of the marks," medicines for the strengthening of *seriti* are mixed with the blood flowing from newly made incisions.

Because there is this close connection between blood and *seriti*, traits of personality may be inherited from generation to generation. In Sotho-Tswana terms *seriti* may be "light" / weak or "heavy"/strong. It may be heavy with good or with bad. A child is born with a "light" *seriti*"; and this has to be strengthened, "made heavy" by the influence of the "*diriti*" of others who are strong for good. In contrast, the evil *seriti* of a sorcerer attacks and weakens the "*diriti*" (plural) of his victims, making them subject to all kinds of misfortunes. Setiloane's insights on *seriti* are very important particularly in the arena of *seriti* in connection with wisdom and morality. Setiloane has been able to summarise all the categories of *seriti* as outlined by the researcher.

Another important contribution by Setiloane is the fact that there is the evil *seriti* of a sorcerer which attacks and weakens the *diriti*/ (plural) of his

victims. This observation by Setiloane helped the researcher to see the emergence of category C *seriti*.

Berglund (1989: 82) subsumes the concept of a human being under shades. According to him, the Zulu do not divide a human being into body and soul. If the body is ill, it is the whole human being who is ill and not just his body.

Berglund writes that for the Zulu, ancestors appearing to survivors in dreams, visions, omens or through the medium of a diviner are regarded as being seen and experienced in a very real sense. He says that schooled Zulu will readily accept *umoya*/breath as a component of the human being. Conservative traditionalists will go so far as to deny that *umoya* has anything to do with man's composition.

According to the concept of *Inzimba* / the body is more than just the material body of a living human being. It implies the bodily appearance of a person. *Inzimba* describes a person's social status, dignity and prestige. Berglund (1989: 84) tells the story of a man who lost a court case which he was convinced should have had a favourable outcome. He says:

“It is clear that he (his opponent) had more *inzimba* (i.e the ability of arguing the case) than I.” Discussing the issue further with some friends, the man referred to his opponents ability and related it to the man's physical size and strength.

Berglund quotes Bryant as saying that *isithunzi/seriti* is the “shadow of man, the living principle in man, spirit (while living), shade (after death-idlozi), while Shooter, writing in the early 1850's says that “when a person dies his *ihlozse* or *isitute* survives. Dokes and Vilakazi as quoted by Berglund say *isithunzi* of firstly, the shadow; and secondly of moral weight, influence prestige. This clearly represents category A *seriti*.

Berglund's informants claim that *isithunzi* is associated with a clan and a definite lineage in the clan. Informants agree that *isithunzi* is related to the clan *isibongo* / clan name. According to Berglund, when a person dies, *isithunzi*, which is the man, goes to the place of the shades in the earth. *Isithunzi* according to Berglund is intimately related to the shadow cast by a person, his image in a mirror and the reflection cast in water. All three are referred to as *ithunzi*. Hence there is fear among particularly old and/or conservative people towards photography.

In sexual intercourse that leads to pregnancy, it is said that the *isithunzi* of the man and the man's ancestors combine to contribute to the shape of the child. This is an attempt to explain why a child sometimes resembles the parents. The *seriti* (shadow) of both parents combine to form the shape of the child.

Harwood (1970: 31) is one of those writers who links *seriti* with ancestors. It would appear that the death of a human being makes his/her *seriti* to be strong. In other words in the ancestors, the *seriti* of a human being becomes much more prominent. Harwood underscores this particular fact in the following words:

Dying, however is conceived as a permanent departure of the *inzyongoni* (*seriti*) from the body. In the case of permanent departure, the *inzyongoni* travels to the White Place (the realm of the ancestor spirits) and there becomes an *onzimu*, an ancestor spirit.

Khaphagawani, who concentrated on the Luba, quotes Tempels (1959) as writing that the word death indicates different degrees of the vital force (*seriti*). Death is not just a cessation of life like it is held in the western world. To die merely indicates different stages of the vital force (*seriti*) in terms of its levels of weaknesses or strength. To translate different modes of the vital force as "to die" and "to die entirely" does not do justice to the status of the vital force. The researcher assumes that Khaphagawani cannot think of the vital force as something that could be

associated with death but Berglund used the same words as “to die” and “to die utterly” within the context of the Zulu conceptions of death where he translates “to die utterly” as the kind of death that is caused by sorcerers when a dead person is transformed into a zombie. According to Berglund, when a person is transformed into a zombie, he/she loses contact with the ancestral abode. This for the Zulu is some kind of hell. Berglund’s observation that there is “death” meaning the weakening of the *seriti* through things like illnesses and “to die utterly” meaning the prevention of *seriti* from entering the ancestral abode should be retained.

A number of questions immediately arise in the Tempelsian Force Thesis. What is force in southern African languages and thought? And Chichewa, one of southern African languages, provides us with no clue as to how the word force is to be comprehended in Chewa thought and language. Even Tempels himself does not give an example of the possible translation and conception of force in the Luba language. The researcher shares Khaphagawani’s objections that Tempels fails to come up with the translation of the word “force” but it is easy to conclude what “force” is when Tempels suggests that a southern African black person wants to live strongly. According to the researcher, to live strongly is to live with “*seriti*.” Tempels concentrates on the whole human being but at times he emphasizes that the southern African Blacks would like to live strongly and to ensure that strength remains in their family. It is this strength that is translatable into moral weight by Dokes and Vilakazi and as moral and physical strength by Setiloane.

Tempels (1959: 55) insists on the distinction between “man” and “person” and claims, rather than “*munthu*” in Chichewa, for example, should not be translated as “man” but rather as “person,” because “*munthu*” signifies [the] vital force endowed with intelligence and will! Khaphagawani writes that one cannot help but ask what the term “human” means if it does not denote entities in possession of intelligence and will.

On this, writes Khaphagawani, Tempels leaves us in the dark as if there are humans (*wathu* in Chichewa) who do not possess intelligence and will. Once more there is a misunderstanding of Tempels assertion by Khaphagawani, which he later acknowledged. Among the southern African blacks, there is a distinction between a human being and a non-human being. A human being is the one that Tempels says is endowed with intelligence and will. There is an opposite of a human being who is simply called human because he/she shares many features with other human beings except generosity, kindness and moral strength.

In the communalism thesis, the researcher agrees with Khaphagawani's observation against Mbiti when the former asserts that although it is true that a child remains in ontological subordination to the forces which are his father and mother, communalism does not imply the denial of recognition of individual human beings qua individuals. African communalism takes cognizance of ontological pluralism. To say "we are" as Mbiti suggests presumes prior recognition of the individuality of those making up the majority.

That Mbiti is propagating a sociocentric view of personhood, in which the status of an individual is determined through cultural criteria, is quite evident from the assertion that a society "makes, creates or produces the individual."

Mbiti has a holistic picture of influences of forces from birth to death where the younger forces (*seriti*) are dependent on the elderly forces and so forth. This is obviously a traditional situation where wisdom and morality were believed to flow from the elderly people to the younger people. This is still the case in traditional societies where there is still respect for the elderly people.

The shadow thesis as labelled by Khaphagawani, and propounded by Kagame, is something that is closer to *seriti*. In his thesis Kagame writes that death marks the dissolution of the "shadow" and "intelligence" of a

person and after death, the “shadow” completely disappears. According to Khaphagawani, the Chewa do not mean that a dead person has no physical shadow, rather, what it seems to be meant is a symbolic or metaphorical shadow and that this shadow presumably refers to the departure or absence, at death, of an individual’s personality and individuality.

The southern African blacks not only possess intelligence, but also “the heart”. What is exactly this “heart?” In almost all black cultures in general, and certainly in Chewa culture, by “heart” is meant the personality of an individual human being; “in the heart lies the personality of man”; it is that by which this man is himself and not another. Thus the “heart” understood as personality is what characterises human beings, and is one of the criteria for distinguishing one person from another. This concept of the “heart” is much closer to *seriti* because according to the Northern Sotho, the heart, the blood and *seriti* are very important constituents of a human being.

In conclusion, according to the researcher, all the researchers under review have concluded that *seriti* is something that survives after a person has died. Mönnig writes that *seriti* is the visual appearance of the soul. At the same time, *seriti* is the sum total of the good that a person leaves behind when that person dies, as well as the good that is transferred to the ancestor. These are the personalities, dignities, kindnesses and generousities of a person when he/she is alive. According to Setiloane, this is the essence of a human being par excellence. But it could also mean the essence of an evil sorcerer as he was evil on earth and continues to be evil after death.

According to Berglund, *inzimba (seriti)* is the social status, dignity, and prestige of a person. Harwood agrees with Setiloane and Berglund that *inzyongoni (seriti)* becomes an ancestor after death. Berglund cites the possibility of *seriti* living in limbo as a result of witchcraft.

Khaphagawani argues that the individuality of a person should be retained in a communal situation because it is this individuality that adds up to a communal existence. Khaphagawani retains the conviction by Mönnig, Setiloane and Berglund that a dead person does have a “shadow” or *seriti* but this “shadow” is the individuality and the personality of a person which appears to be gone symbolically or metaphorically.

The researcher is interested in what *seriti* does amount to among the living both in the past and the present because what amounted to or approximated to *seriti* in the past has undergone a shift in emphasis. Science, especially psychology, has advanced theories about what is the mind and the soul of a human being. Things like blood, the heart and lungs of a human being can no longer be regarded as contributing anything to the personality of a human being. Psychology concentrates on the brain as the seat of all emotions, personality, and so on.

It is for this reason that the researcher has chosen to lengthen the debate by concentrating on kindness, generosity, natural genius, dignity and influence as a manifestation of *seriti* among the traditional and western-orientated Northern Sotho. These characteristics are still treasured by both the traditional and modern Northern Sotho. The researcher intends to pursue these characteristics in the form of category A, B and C *seriti*.

## **1.10 DIVISION INTO CHAPTERS**

Chapter one is the introduction where the researcher spells out what the researcher is doing. The researcher is writing on the Reality and Relevance of *Seriti* in the Past and Present: Its Essence and Manifestation in an African Religion Perspective. *Seriti* is something that manifests itself in a threefold way. The first manifestation has to do with what *seriti* is in

terms of definition. Second, there is a tripartite division of *seriti* into categories A, B and C. Category A deals with the ethical dimension of *seriti*. Category B with replenishing depleted *seriti* and *seriti*'s connection with ancestors (namely the ritual manifestation of *seriti* while Category C provides the other side of *seriti*, which concerns evil and which fosters the spirit of individuality. Chapter one discusses the modus operandi and methodology.

Chapter two focuses on *seriti* generally conceived in terms of what it is in traditional Northern Sotho terms and in other cultures. This chapter shall also focus on what the characteristics of *seriti* are in the present situation among the Northern Sotho. *Seriti* is implied in the circumcision ritual. There is also the *seriti* of the kings, chiefs, children and the youth. Ancestors as the pinnacle of *seriti* are also considered in this chapter. It is the conviction of the researcher that the more ancestors are castigated, the more there is a minimisation of this type of *seriti*. In certain instances they seem to form the very opposite of *seriti*, particularly in the eyes of the opposition, namely churches that are more spiritually inclined in the sense that they seem to regard ancestors as evil in the sense that they could be exorcised. On the other hand, however, one can blame the obscure knowledge of ancestors on the part of the people who believe in them in the sense that they seem reluctant to part with information, which leads to the misunderstanding and the clubbing of ancestors with other spiritual beings that are malicious. The conclusion of this chapter shall focus on what the present status of *seriti* is and what this implies for the future. In other words, of the three categories of *seriti*, which category is waning?

Chapter Three, focuses on the question of *seriti* as a phenomenon among women, taking into consideration what the situation was like in the past; and what the situation is like in the present times. Has there been a debunking of the Northern Sotho's traditional conception of *seriti*, among women? If there has been change, how much of the change has been

effected and if there has been no change, why has there been no change at all? The conclusion of this chapter would focus on the changed situation or lack of change of the situation in the conception of the *seriti* women. The question to be asked is which of the categories of *seriti* is waning out of categories A, B or C.

Chapter four gives us the vision of *seriti* among men in the past and in the present. What is it that has changed and what is it that has not changed. In other words, of the three categories, which one is waning and why? Lastly, do we have a vision of what the Northern Sotho man is going to look like in terms of his *seriti* in the future?

Chapter five will be a summary of the findings in chapters two, three and four and possibly a vision of what the future of the Northern Sotho is going to be in terms of the Northern Sotho's understanding of *seriti*. Has there been a shift in paradigms particularly in areas that have to do with children and the youth where the question of *seriti* is concerned? Children of today do not have the same status as children of the past and the youth of today do not have the same status as the youth of the past and this is partly due to the fact that in the past, there was a tendency for the youth to concentrate on communitarianism and doing things in a group context rather than to do things as individuals. Nowadays things are more centred on individuals and their rights as individuals rather than group rights.

# CHAPTER TWO

## **SERITI IN ITS TRIPARTITE MANIFESTATION**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher focuses what on *seriti* in its tripartite manifestation is among the Sotho speaking people of the Limpopo province and among other African cultures. African cultures, like their religions, are not uniform or monolithic. Since there is no uniformity in terms of cultural manifestations, there are no uniformities in the African perceptions of the concept of *seriti*. The chapter shall focus on whether the traditional image of *seriti* in the past has changed in its entirety or whether there are some traces of resilience. The researcher would also like to find out which of the categories of *seriti* are waning and which category of *seriti* is gaining prominence as well as the reasons for these phenomena. The researcher also focuses on ancestors and *seriti*. Ancestors are a personification of *seriti* and any factors that affect the belief in ancestors will also affect it. On the other hand, the less the people believe in ancestors, the less their tendency to believe in anything that is remotely connected with them. The material that deals with the latter section of the thesis comes from research results.

Category A deals with the strength of character in both the ethical and the mental dimensions among the Northern Sotho. The section that deals with the ritual factors that the researcher has termed category B *seriti*, considers ways in which the Northern Sotho protect themselves against the powers of evil and this is also the area where ancestors feature prominently. Lastly, category C *seriti* focuses on increasing one's *seriti* with a view of gaining advantage. Most of what is solicited for could be

gained at the expense of other people's *diriti* / *pl* (*seriti*). At the same time, what is solicited for could be gained without using other people's *diriti* (*pl. seriti*). This type of *seriti* is almost an antithesis of category A, as it is mostly man-made and focuses on the individual rather than the community. What the researcher aims to do with a division of *seriti* into three parts is to find out if these types of *seriti* exist in their original form or status or whether there are changes that have taken place. If there is a change what is the status of *seriti* today?

## **2.2 CATEGORY A *SERITI***

A person with *seriti* is a person who has the ability to speak and to speak very well in a tribal court situation. Oratory elevates the status of people to the highest level. Such a person is believed to have a prodigious memory and the highest form of intelligence. This person intersperses his talk with traditional tools like idiomatic expressions and folklore. He is a very intelligent person who plans before he speaks. In Northern Sotho, such a person has what is called a heart that plans // *pelotheri*. This person is a traditional philosopher and if he is also a traditional medicine person, his *seriti* doubles and he is "feared" by everybody. This man is "feared" not because he is a thug but because he is kind, generous and very hospitable. This is indeed the Northern Sotho idea of a gentleman. Ilogu describes a gentleman in the following manner:

A gentleman does not indulge in wickedness but rather through respect to elders and dead ancestors observes the customs for hospitality, generosity and kindness especially to less fortunate members of the community.

Kindness and generosity are some of the features that a person with *seriti* is supposed to have. A gentleman welcomes strangers into his house without inquiring or finding out what he could do for them. Biko illustrates the situation succinctly when he writes:

No reason was needed as a basis for visits. It was all part of our deep concern for each other. These are things that are never done in the Westerner's culture. A visitor to someone's house, with the exception of friends, is always met with the question, "what can I do for you?" This attitude of seeing people not as themselves but as agents for some particular function either to one's disadvantage is foreign to us.

Things have not changed because people or a group of men could decide to watch a match on television without making prior arrangements with the owner of the house.

### **2.3 CATEGORY B *SERITI***

This type of *seriti*, because of its connections with ancestors, has to do with them as active agents in the process of healing. This type of *seriti* also has to do with strengthening or making somebody strong against diseases, malevolent forces as well as general fitness and appearance of the body, as Mönnig (1965: 51) states:

It is therefore incumbent on all persons continually to strengthen and protect their *seriti* against the onslaught of outside forces, or to strengthen it in such a manner as to enable its possessor to attain any desired effects.

Illness makes a person to be weak. It attacks not only the body of a person, but also affects a person's dignity (*seriti*). The Northern Sotho like other southern African blacks; are interested in wholesomeness and well-being. Traditional healers from all parts of the continent have converged in the Limpopo Province. They bring with them promises of good health with the introductory fee of R30.00. Local traditional healers do not advertise their expertise. They rely on those who have been healed to pass stories of how they have been healed. In this kind of game there are also charlatans but those who believe in traditional medicine and healing say that it works for them. Here is an example of some of the

things that they advertise to claim that they can heal and restore the *seriti* of their clientele:

1. Do you want to know about your future?
2. Are you addicted to drugs and alcohol?
3. Men's (*sic*) penis which cannot erect powerfully?
4. We help single people to find partners/settle marriages (*sic*)
5. To bring back lost lover and love attraction.
6. Do you have symptoms of HIV/AIDS?
7. Are you being bewitched?
8. We send tokoloshe's packing.

The list is endless. The common denominator is the claim by the traditional medicine men/women to be able to cure every known condition by making use of their concoctions and other types of medicine. Healing has connections with ancestors who are the major agents in this game.

#### **2.4 CATEGORY C *SERITI*.**

This type of *seriti* could be enhanced with the sole purpose of either harming others or seeking unfair advantage over other people. Mönnig(1965: 51) states that it is possible for a person to change or strengthen his/her *seriti*. There are people who want to be richer than most people in the society and as a result, they look for means to harm others or to put others at a disadvantage. In the list that was quoted by the researcher earlier there are the following things that the traditional healers claim to be able to do:

1. We specialise in court cases, divorce and bad luck.
2. We specialise in making people to win lotto's, casino and gambling.

These are examples of the unfairness of the whole situation. What kind of a person would not resign herself/himself to their fate if for example they have either robbed or killed someone and are afraid to face the consequences? A person who is guilty should be made to face the

consequences of their actions. They should not strive to win court cases at all costs. Secondly, if these people are indeed specialists in making people to win the lotto, they should show the good example by winning the lotto themselves. These are some of the things that would lead to their lack of credibility as will be shown later.

Another bad side of category C *seriti* is the belief that human flesh has healing powers. A situation in Venda during the decline of homeland politics proves the case in point. Mihalik and Cassim (1990: 130), of the former University of Bophuthatswana argued that ritual murder was one of the major causes of the decline. Their argument is that chiefs were formerly appointed by the people in the past, but then the government (the South African government in the 1980's) decided that they were going to appoint the chiefs. The fact that the chiefs were appointed by the government made them shift their loyalties to the government as they were no longer accountable to the people. As a result of that, the status of being a chief waned in the eyes of the people they were supposed to rule.

This decline in the status of the chiefs needed a boost which was provided by the belief that certain organs of the body of a human being, if removed from a victim while he/she was still alive, could help to promote the dignity of the person in possession of such organs. What is important to notice is that ritual murders were never overtly condoned but were secretly practised by chiefs at the instigation of diviners, to gain prosperity and prestige.

Kings and chiefs would sometimes solicit for increasing their *seriti* or the *diriti* of their people by killing another person for medicinal purposes. This killing had to be done privately because if it could be done openly, there would be an outcry because such actions are not approved by the

society. The researcher shall now focus on *seriti* as a phenomenon in other African cultures to demonstrate the presence of the tripartite division of *seriti*.

## **2.5 GENESIS OF THE CONCEPT *SERITI* (CATEGORY A) IN OTHER AFRICAN CULTURES**

Rites of passage that are intended to guarantee *seriti* are not the same in the entire African continent and as a result of these differences, the goals or intentions of the rituals of passage are not the same. Since this is the case, the rituals of passage could be abolished or replaced by something else if they prove to be antiquated. Rites of passage are sometimes dictated by the needs of the times. If for example the needs of the times had to do with cattle raiding and consolidation of national power, rites of passage will be designed to meet such needs. The slow process of the rites of passage made certain kings, for example Shaka, to think proactively about finding manpower to deal with cattle raiding and extension of his frontiers.

Shaka is reputed to have replaced the circumcision ritual with army conscription. If Shaka could so dynamically change the age-old custom of circumcision, to suit the changes that he wanted to be effected, there are other areas that could be changed without affecting the quality of the product. The quality of the product would be characteristics such as bravery at war, eloquence in traditional courts and being generally a good and generous person. These things translate into *seriti*. In a traditional setting, such qualities are still held in high esteem but they do not prepare a person to live comfortably in the twenty first century. The twenty first century is mostly interested in the quality of the product.

If we focus on things that matter the most where the question of *seriti* is concerned, the outcomes of *seriti* such as bravery at war, and eloquence in traditional courts, are no longer things that are sought after. In traditional Africa, it was important for a person to be trained as a warrior but in modern Africa, we have people who are trained to defend the country. The training in areas of defence is much more specialised and it has taken the form, for example, of the training in nursing, medicine, policing, warfare, and other specific areas of defending the nation. In traditional Africa, a person who is trained only in waging war and who had the aptitude was held in high esteem. In the arena of speaking very well, or eloquence, we already have several professions that require speaking as a requirement.

Teachers, lecturers, preachers, lawyers, judges, magistrates and motivational speakers mostly use eloquence. Speaking is no longer something that must be practiced in traditional courts by the chosen few, it is now something that requires the speaker to be well trained in that particular arena of expertise. In the final analysis, when we speak of people who have *seriti* in the modern times, we speak of people who are highly professional and who have been given the highest level of specialization. If this is the case, what are we to say about a person who is gifted in traditional oratory? These people are not only gifted in traditional oratory, they are also custodians of traditions and philosophy. These traditions and philosophy have to be treasured and preserved so that scholars and other interested parties should revisit and reflect upon.

Let us focus on the Northern Sotho and the Zulu ways of being human with the view of picking up something that could be of use to us in the future. A comparison of the Northern Sotho and the Zulu ways of being human reveals certain subtleties and differences. Berglund (1989: 86), in

his endeavour to determine instances of what it means to be a person with *seriti* among the Zulu quotes the following words from his informant:

If a man does something that makes him honoured, like bravery, or cleverness in arguing, or gifted at handling medicines, then we say, “No, the *isithunzi* of this man is strong.”

Bravery, cleverness in arguing and being gifted at handling medicines make a person to have *seriti*. Bravery as it was pointed out is something that is anachronistic because we do not need everyone to be a soldier. In the past it was profitable for a person to be brave but in the present times, it is not necessary for a person to be brave because of an absence of war as well as the relative peace that South Africans are enjoying in the region. Within the arena of argument, we have people who do philosophy as well as lawyers, priests and teachers. When it comes to handling medicines, we have traditional doctors as well as western trained doctors. All these people are strictly speaking having *seriti*.

The Lovedu on the other hand have a different perception about being human. They prefer a young man to be reserved and to refrain from talking too much and from boasting. The Zulu, according to Krige (1965: 76) on the other hand appear to be the very opposite of the Lovedu:

...contrast with this the opportunities for and love for competition in Zulu society where every boy is constantly measuring himself against others, vying with them in fights, in dress, in lovemaking, in dancing, for leadership and praise.

This statement illustrates the differences between the Northern Sotho and the Zulu world-views in areas of socialization and upbringing and perhaps rites of passage into adulthood as well. The spirit of competition is clearly absent from the Northern Sotho while on the other hand there is competition among the Zulu. One wonders why there should be competition at this stage of the development of the youth while on the

other hand, such competition is supposed to be non-existent by the time a person reaches the adulthood stage. The idea of an existence of a competition presupposes the existence and promotion of individualism because when a person competes with others, he competes as an individual. The argument by people like Mbiti that in Africa, it is the group that is important and that the needs and aspirations of an individual are subsumed under the group does not correspond to reality in the case of the Zulu.

## **2.6 INITIATION/CIRCUMCISION**

Initiation/circumcision is a ritual which every young man/woman has to undergo. It is something that is deeply rooted in the past in the sense that every young man and woman learns more about traditional values and other customary practices. Saule (1998:13) writes that they are also trained in some virtues expected of them in adulthood. At initiation, there are oaths that are taken to maintain secrecy. These oaths are taken to preserve secrets related to certain functions and rituals that must be strictly concealed from the uninitiated. Krige (1976: 78) mentions the veil of secrecy that surrounds certain traditional functions:

Truth is not good in itself nor is a lie always evil. Lies are objected to when they are socially inconvenient. Yet not only is it expected that a man will lie to get out of difficulties but there are cases in which lying is prescribed, as when children are told to lie to strangers if asked about village affairs. To keep tribal secrets and the secrets of initiation schools is of far greater importance than to tell the truth.

Among the Northern Sotho, the initiation school is called a *koma*. The name itself alludes to the drum that is played during these times as well as the secret. So successful is the secret about the *koma* that hitherto there has been no details as to what exactly is being taught and how it is taught. One cannot help but admire the ingenuity of a traditional

Northern Sotho when he uses decoys to lure people away from the truth about the *koma*. Stories about the *koma* that have very little resemblance to the truth have been circulating. True stories are forever printed in the minds of those who have been to the *koma*.

Nowadays, the rite of initiation is waning because there are other areas that have abandoned this practice in favour of circumcising at hospitals. It should be noted that the *koma* cannot be replaced by circumcision alone. There are many things that are taught there that are more important than circumcision. Another reason why the *koma* is waning is that young men who go there are sometimes exposed to extreme weather as part of the training that is geared at turning young men into adults. Another reason is that some young men do not get properly circumcised and they get mutilated and even lose their manhood and later their lives.

In the Eastern Cape, many of these young men lose their manhood because of the conditions that prevail. The practice of circumcising itself requires that the surgeon should use one knife. This alone is problematic against the background of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

This practice has to change to accommodate new ways of carrying out the rite of passage harmlessly. It is no longer required that people have to be brave to wage war; as the premier of Mpumalanga Mr Mahlangu ([mpumalanga.mpu.gov.za](http://mpumalanga.mpu.gov.za)) stated. If the rite of passage was intended to prepare young men for war, why did Shaka abandon it? And if a war has to be waged; how is circumcision going to help?

Another good example is that one of the Xhosa who also circumcise their adolescents or young men coming of age. The writer or historian of national awards ([www.gov.za/awards/appendix\\_a.htm](http://www.gov.za/awards/appendix_a.htm). 3) had the

following to write to illustrate the state of readiness that was ushered by the circumcision rite:

“Young chiefs and their age mates, newly emerging from the circumcision lodge tried to mark their coming of age by raiding neighbours or traditional rivals. As a result raids were frequent, but wars were relatively rare.”

If there had to be a raiding of neighbours or traditional rivals, who are the neighbours and the traditional rivals in the present circumstances? Is this kind of talk not going to encourage people to attack people who do not go through the rites of passage but who use other means of the process of coming of age?

The rites of passage were not only aimed at preparing people for warfare as periods of seclusion were also used to prepare people who would be able to argue philosophically and using traditional idiomatic expressions to arrive at some truths about certain issues. This kind of preparation if taken to the extreme would mean the revival of African philosophy as well as rhetoric as studies that would be beneficial to initiates if the initiation rites have to be modernised.

Has the time not arrived for us to modernise initiation rites and make them more attractive to the modern man/woman? Some military barracks could be turned into a site for initiation programmes where there are properly trained doctors who themselves had been to initiation rites. A military programme could be followed by the initiates where the endurance level as well as the intellectual levels would be tested. Another phase of the programme would be aimed at teaching the initiates about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. This programme would become a reservoir of rugby players, soccer players, and other types of sports as

well as intellectual exercises. Those who would like to be soldiers would immediately go into military training after completion.

Mathematical and analytical knowledge as well as folklore would be introduced so that the entire experience by an initiate would form some kind of continuity with what is happening at school. The period of initiation should last from six months to a year. At the end of the programme, a student would be presented with a certificate of competence. The experience at initiation would be hard, intense and exciting and yet very educating at the same time. The old initiation programme was aimed at making a man or woman of an initiate. The new programme would not only be aimed at making a man or woman out of an initiate, it would be one of those important steps that would be taken to prepare a man/woman to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

Interest in African philosophy could also be generated by the kind of arguments and knowledge that was displayed by the Lega. Zuesse argues that the *Lega*, in their practice of Bwami have to memorise as many proverbs as they could and even enact and learn some symbolism. According to Zuesse (1975:68) the Lega, find in Bwami, cult proverbs that emphasize integrity, compassion, quiet strength, self-control, and deep insight.

A comparison of the Northern Sotho and the Lega concerning the rites of passage reveals that although both the nations take different routes in terms of the rituals of passage, they arrive at the same destination. The Northern Sotho circumcise while the Lega, in their practice of Bwami, scar their faces as a token of having gone through a transitory stage. The end results of the practices of both these nations are the transition into adulthood or the arrival into adulthood. The end results of going through

the initiation period for both the Lega and the Northern Sotho are integrity, compassion, quiet strength, self-control, and deep insight, which translate into *seriti* for the Northern Sotho. The only difference is that in the case of the Lega, there is the belief that Bwami has magical qualities as Zuesse (1975: 68) stated that the purity and truth of Bwami cleanse all things from death, witchcraft, dissention, sterility and famine.

## **2.7 KINGS, CHIEFS AND *SERITI***

Among African kings, *seriti* is something that is valued by the followers. A charismatic leader has to possess some degree of dignity particularly in the arena of protecting his subjects against attacks of any kind and this includes natural phenomena such as the locust plagues and diseases in general. Chief amongst the characteristics of a king is the ability to provide material things for the people. Gulbransen does not make any mention of the concept *seriti* but he gives an idea of what it means to be a good king.

In addition, Gulbransen argues that among the Batswana kings, a king should be a person from whom good things come – a *motswadintle*. One of the characteristics of a good king is that he does not practise nepotism. According to Gulbransen (1993: 45-46) a king should be strong and independent and should enforce decisions that ensure the prosperity and welfare of the entire nation. In contrast to the good characteristics reflected above, there may be a chief who is weak and poor and therefore very dangerous to the nation. Such a king would be bereft of *seriti*.

According to Gulbransen (1993:47) characteristics worth considering are the king's ability to gain knowledge that is of strategic importance for the benefit of his people. Such strategic knowledge includes adopting Christianity as well as the white man's way of dress and waging war

during the colonial period. This adoption of strategic knowledge could sometimes be very tricky. When a king adopts a new culture, his relatives and his deputies should be in the position to approve such an adoption. Sometimes the relatives and the deputies of the king do not approve and if the king is weak, he might not succeed in convincing his relatives that there is merit in becoming a convert. Some charismatic kings are able to convince the traditional court that it is advantageous if changes that are brought by the missionaries are not resisted.

Christianity as a religion could be understood positively as a religion that invests human beings with *seriti*, understood in the modern sense. At the same time, Christianity is iconoclastic in the sense that it criticises traditional cultures and ways of life. One form of *seriti*, represented by the western form of life, stands over and against another form, namely *seriti* in the traditional Northern Sotho sense. The king has to be physically strong, an orator who has the ability to control the most powerful magical charms.

Gulbransen's article attempts to show that the king as a charismatic leader had to develop initiatives that were going to project him as a person from whom good things come – a *motswadintle*. In this exercise, Gulbransen proved that those kings who adopted the gospel found such an exercise working towards the material benefit of their people while those who adopted the gospel half-heartedly, discovered that some material benefits like procuring guns for defence against the Boers and other forces were not beneficial in the event of defeat.

People such as Khama and Bathong retained their dignity as they became successful in enforcing the adoption of Christianity as a religion in their chiefdoms. Khama and Bathong in the eyes of their subjects, were the

*Batswadintle* //people from whom good things come according to Gulbransen.

Kings who were able to defend their people against hunger, disease and war were able to retain their *seriti* in the eyes of their people. They were doing what was expected of them because they were people from whom good things come. Promoting the dignity of others is an exercise in preserving their *seriti*. It is clear that in their conception of a king, some Batswana subjects looked upon their king for guidance while some did not consider the advice of the kings. Those who obstinately adhered to a traditional model of survival looked upon the introduction of the gospel and its attendant benefits with suspicion and lost their freedom while those who knew that they had to produce something good for their people were open-hearted and rewarded with *seriti*. It was only kings who were able to weigh their options who were able to assure the survival of their people.

Lastly, there is no doubt that the black consciousness philosophy was a philosophy that advocated for *seriti* as dignity. Exponents of the black consciousness philosophy were always concerned about the question of human dignity particularly during the days of apartheid in the sixties, seventies and eighties. One such exponent was the former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – Central Diocese, Bishop Manas Buthelezi when he was complaining about the indignities of being stopped at a roadblock and being forced to step out of a car so that the security forces could search the trunk of a car. Other indignities included the government having to subject elderly black people to a curfew as if they were teenagers. These indignities are well documented in most black consciousness writings like Steve Biko's "I Write What I Like."

The previous section was mainly dealing with human dignity as a phenomenon that is taken seriously by the Northern Sotho. The next section deals with the research report where the researcher demonstrates that notions of *seriti* in the past have either survived to the present times or have died or are in the process of disappearing.

## **2.8 SERITI IN THE MODERN TIMES**

To arrive at a modern perception of *seriti*, the researcher asked several questions that have to do with *seriti*. These questions were directed at respondents aged between 20-40 and thereafter the ages 40 and over. Furthermore, the researcher has divided the respondents into both male and female. These responses are very important for the researcher because of the fact that the researcher believes that knowledge on *seriti* would be scanty in the case of those people who are aged between 20 and 40 while on the other hand those who are 40 and over would have more knowledge on *seriti*. Lastly the researcher would state the educational standards of the respondents to find out if educational standards have a bearing on the knowledge of *seriti*.

The first characteristic of *seriti* is that a person with *seriti* had to be morally good. The answers by those who were between 20-40 indicated that 37.5% of the respondents agreed that a person with *seriti* had to be morally good, while the same number of people, namely 37.5% disagreed. The remaining 25% were undecided. This therefore means that there is some degree of uncertainty pertaining to the question of being morally good as part of *seriti* among those respondents aged between 20-40 years. In the case of those who are above 40, there were 45.7% who responded positively to the idea of *seriti* having connections with being morally good; while on the other hand, 40% disagreed. Those who were undecided amounted to 14.3%. The responses according to educational standards

rated in the following manner: 33.3% of those in secondary schools agreed that being morally good is part of having *seriti*. 44.4% disagreed while 22.2% were undecided. 37.9% of those with diplomas said *seriti* has to do with being morally good, while 41.4% disagreed and those who were undecided represented 20.7% of the respondents.

There is not much difference between those with secondary certificates or who are still at high school and those who have diplomas. Among the graduates, 57.1% agreed while 9.5% were undecided. 33.3% disagreed. This therefore means generally that the groups are not satisfied with the idea of *seriti* having connections with being morally good. Those who are more educated and those who are a bit older have a better understanding of *seriti* because more of them, about 57.1% agreed that *seriti* has to do with being morally good. Those were followed by the ones who have diplomas with the following percentage: 41.4%. In the case of these two categories, one can conclude that there is some agreement and unanimity. Those who are at secondary school are uncertain. Those whose ages are between 20-40 are more doubtful.

As time goes on, say in 20-30 years, knowledge of *seriti* and its connection with being morally good shall disappear or there still would be a small percentage of people who will be able to connect the two. This synopsis shows that the connection of *seriti* with being morally good is disappearing among the youth in general.

The second characteristic has to do with *seriti* as having connections with good speech and a good memory in a tribal court. 58.3% of those who are between 20-40 years agreed, while 16.7% disagreed. 25% were undecided. Those who are 40 and over, responded in the following manner: 54.5 agreed, while 18.2% were undecided and 27.3% disagreed. When we focus on the differences between males and females, 72% males

agreed, while 16% were undecided and 12% disagreed. 77.8% of those at secondary school agreed, 11.1% were undecided and 11.1% disagreed. 56.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 20% were undecided and 23.3% disagreed. 50% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 22.2% were undecided and 27.8% disagreed.

There is unanimity about good speech and good memory as characteristics of having *seriti*. It is very interesting that good speech as one of the traditional characteristics of *seriti* is still welcomed in the modern times and this is mainly because there are many people whose work is to speak in the modern times more than it was in the past.

The third characteristic included kindness where 92% of those who were aged between 20 and 40 responded positively to the idea that *seriti* is connected with kindness and generosity. 8% of the respondents were undecided while there were no disagreements. Those who are 40 plus responded in the following manner: 81.1% agreed, 10.8% were undecided while 8.1% disagreed. The differences between the male and female responses are tabled in the following manner: 86.2% of the male respondents agreed, 10.3% were undecided while 3.4% disagreed. 85.3% of the females agreed, 8.8% were undecided and 5.9% disagreed.

The differences in terms of responses according to educational standards were reflected in the following manner: 90% of those at secondary schools agreed, while 10% disagreed and the number of those who are undecided is non-existent or zero. 90.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 6.5% were undecided and 3.2% disagreed. 81% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 14.3% were undecided and 4.8% disagreed. There is also some unanimity about *seriti* having connections with kindness and generosity.

*Seriti's* connections with being merciful was responded to in the following manner among people aged between 20 and 40: 84% of the respondents agreed, 12% were undecided while 4% disagreed. Those who are over 40 years responded in the following manner: 83.8% agreed, 8.1% were undecided while 8.1% disagreed. The characteristics in terms of the differences between male and female respondents were reflected in the following manner; 86.2% agreed, while 10.3% were undecided and 3.4% disagreed. Differences in terms of educational standards were reflected in this manner: Those in secondary recorded a 100% agreement, while those who have diplomas had a 90.3% agreement, a 9.7% were undecided while there was a 0% disagreement. This is an overwhelming response in favour of *seriti's* connectedness with being merciful.

Honesty as one of the characteristics of *seriti* was reflected in the following manner: 84% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that honesty is one of the characteristics of *seriti* and 16% were undecided. Those who are 40 plus responded in the following manner: 86.5% agreed, 8.1% were undecided while 5.4 disagreed. Gender differences were reflected in the following manner: 93.1 males agreed while 6.9% were undecided. The female gender was represented in the following manner: 79.4% agreed, 14.7% were undecided and 5.9% disagreed. This is also an overwhelming response in favour of honesty as part of *seriti*. 100% of those at secondary school agreed. 90.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 9.7% were undecided and there were no disagreements.

Being loved and being chosen by ancestors, namely being a traditional healer and a diviner as part of having *seriti* received the following response: 20% agreed, 36% were undecided while 44% disagreed. This was a response from those who were 20-40 years old. Those who were above 40 responded in the following manner: 24.3% agreed, 29.7% were

undecided while 45.9% disagreed. The differences in terms of gender were reflected in the following manner: 27.6% of the males agreed, 37.9 % were undecided, while 34.5% disagreed. 17.6% of the females agreed, 29.4% were undecided and 52.9% disagreed. Educationally, those who were in secondary schools responded in the following manner: 30% agreed, 30% were undecided while 40% disagreed. Those with diplomas responded to the question in the following manner: 16.1% responded in the positive, 45.2% were undecided while 38.7% disagreed. In other words, being loved by ancestors does not guarantee any *seriti* by the recipients of such love. More will be stated on this issue.

Does the fact of one being a diviner/traditional healer guarantee *seriti*? 33.3% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 agreed, 37.5% were undecided while 29.2% disagreed. 23.5% of those who are 40 plus agreed, 32.4% were undecided, while 44.1% disagreed. Gender differences were reflected in the following manner concerning this question: 25.9% males agreed, 29.6% were undecided and 44.4% were in disagreement. The female gender was represented in the following way: 31.3% agree, 37.5 were undecided and 31.3% disagreed. In other words, we get 31.3% females agreeing and 31.3% of them disagreeing.

If we divide the respondents into those who are in secondary school, those who have diplomas and those who are graduates, the situation is reflected in the following manner: 37.5% of those who are at secondary school agree, 25% disagreed and 37.5% disagreed. 26.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 46.7% were undecided and 26.7% disagreed. 30% of graduates agreed, 15% were undecided while 55% disagreed. There is no outright unanimity in this scheme but the responses are placed side by side, there is more inclination to disagree than to agree. In some few years to come, there will be a much more unanimity about this question.

Respondents were asked whether the diviner/traditional healer's homes have *seriti*. Those who are aged between 20 and 40 years responded in the following manner: 29.2% agreed, 50% were undecided and 20.8% disagreed. Those who are over 40 years responded in the following manner: 31.4% agreed, 40% disagreed and 28.6% disagreed. Those who are male responded in the following manner: 22.2% agreed, 48.1% disagreed and 29.6% disagreed. Those who are female responded in the following manner: 39.4% agreed, 39.4% disagreed and 21.2% disagreed. Those who are at secondary responded in the following manner: 37.5% agreed, 25% disagreed and 37.5% disagreed. Those with diplomas responded in the following manner: 26.7% agreed, 56.7% disagreed and 16.7% disagreed. Graduates and post-graduates responded in the following manner: 38.1% agreed, 28.6% were undecided and 33.3% disagreed. There was generally a lack of unanimity on this particular question but the trend is more towards disagreement as the graph will show.

Respondents were asked whether protection of oneself with strong medicine guaranteed having or acquiring *seriti*. 12% of those aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 20% were undecided and 68% disagreed. 18.9% of those who were over 40 years agreed, 13.5% were undecided while 67.6% disagreed. 20.7% of the males agreed, 13.8% were undecided while 65.5% disagreed. 14.7% of the females agreed, 17.6% were undecided while 67.6% disagreed. 20% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 70% disagreed. 9.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 16.1% were undecided and 74.2% disagreed. 28.6% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 14.3% were undecided and 57.1% agreed. Protection of oneself with medicine to guarantee *seriti* is not supported by evidence. People are more self-reliant today than they were

about 40 years ago. This also means that magico-religious beliefs are disappearing to be replaced by a more western orientation of life.

The respondents were also asked if they could use medicine to solicit for good luck. 12% of those aged between 20 and 40 agreed, 8% were undecided and 80% disagreed. Those who are over 40 years responded in the following manner, 21.6% agreed, 8.1% disagreed and 70.3% disagreed. 24.1 of the males agreed, 6.9% were undecided and 69% disagreed. 30% of those in secondary school agreed, and 70% disagreed. 9.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 9.7% were undecided and 80.6% disagreed. 23.8% of graduates and postgraduates agreed, 4.8% were undecided and 71.4% disagreed. Using medicine to solicit for good luck as part of attaining *seriti* is not supported by evidence. More and more people have realized the lie of traditional medicine particularly in areas that have to do with good luck and acquiring jobs. More and more people have come to realize how important education is as compared for example to chance.

The next question had to do with whether the use of body parts of human beings as part of medicine confers *seriti* on the user. None of those who are aged between 20 and 40 believed that human flesh garnished with medicine gives anyone *seriti*. 16% were undecided while 84% disagreed. 8.1% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 8.1% were undecided and 83.8% disagreed. 3.4% of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 86.2% disagreed. 5.9% of females agreed, 11.8% were undecided and 82.4% disagreed. 10% of those in secondary were undecided and 90% disagreed. 3.2% of those with diplomas agreed, 9.7% were undecided and 87.1% disagreed. 9.5% of graduates and undergraduates agreed, 9.5% were undecided and 81% disagreed. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there is such uncertainty around the question of traditional

medicine men and diviners. Recent reports have linked traditional medicine men and diviners with using human flesh in some of their medicines. More about this shall follow.

The question of accumulating *seriti* or being feared because the person is a thug /rascal/killer was the last question in this category. 16% of those between the ages of 20-40 were undecided and 84% disagreed. 10.8% of those who are over 40 agreed, 16.2% were undecided while 73% disagreed. 3.4% males agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 75.9% disagreed. 8.8% females agreed, 17.6% were undecided and 73.5% disagreed. 10% of those in secondary school agreed, 10% were undecided and 80% disagreed. 6.5% of those with diplomas agreed, 16.1% were undecided and 77.4% disagreed. 4.8 of graduates and undergraduates agreed, 23.8 were undecided and 71.4% disagreed. There are so many people who are not in favour of the idea that a person accumulates *seriti* because he is feared thug/rascal/killer.

What could happen with a person who is feared because he is a thug/rascal and killer could be the fact that traditionally, it is believed that a person who kills other people does not find any respite. The shadow of his victims hovers around him like a dead albatross. When the people look at such a person, they do not see anything but they experience the heaviness around his personality. When a person is this heavy, he is believed to have an aura of darkness around his personality. This darkness is called *sefifi*.

## **2.9.SERITI AND ANCESTORS OR ANCESTRAL VENERATION**

Questions number 8.6, 8.7 and 8.8, which more or less imply a connection with the ancestors, prompts the researcher to put the ancestors on the spotlight. These questions have to do with the fact that a person who has *seriti* is loved and chosen by ancestors, to be a diviner and the fact that diviner's homes have *seriti*. A person who has been chosen by ancestors because he/she is loved by them may be a diviner but it doesn't necessarily mean that he/she must be a diviner. A more direct question has to do with diviners. According to this question, being a diviner is part of having *seriti*. Another question had to do with the fact that diviner's homes have *seriti*.

On the first question, namely 8.6, that people who have *seriti* are loved and chosen by ancestors, the tendency of the respondents tilted towards disagreement. On the second question, namely 8.7, that being a diviner invests a person with *seriti*, there was no outright unanimity. Respondents tend to be more neutral than to agree. Question 8.8 there is a tendency by the respondents to agree that diviners homes have *seriti*.

The fact that there was no unanimity in question 8.6 and 8.7 does not mean that a vote of no confidence has been cast against ancestors but recent research does in fact point towards the direction of a decline in the esteem of ancestors. Research that has been conducted in this area is too serious to ignore. Attention shall therefore, be focused on this researches.

Setiloane (1976) already pointed out that men and women who already had *seriti* enjoy a prolonged type of life and status of *seriti* as ancestors.

The status of ancestors has undergone a shift in terms of the question of intentionality. Researchers and anthropologists in the past, namely Hammond-Tooke (1975: 328), Ashton (1967: 328-329), Brown (1926: 326-329), Mönnig (1967: 128-130), Hammond-Tooke (1968: 26-48) and Bigalke (1969: 76) have already stated that ancestors are not object of worship. In recent years, ancestors have been treated as objects of derision and they have even been comparable to demons.

This therefore implies that ancestors have graduated from being humans of heightened *seriti* into an undesirable concept from Christianity which is; demons who do not have *seriti* at all. This new perception of ancestors as demons in disguise is not due to the fault of researchers but due to changed perceptions of the Christianised world in South Africa and some African countries like Congo and Ghana. Some Christians have adopted ancestral veneration into their churches while some treat them as an ugly intrusion in the lives of Christians.

The entire concept of *seriti* hinges upon ancestors. Viewed in this way, *seriti* is the quintessential human being, the essence of what a human being really is because it is this *seriti*; which when united with the breath, becomes an ancestor. *Seriti* then becomes the essence of what a human being is without the weaknesses of a human being. There is no conception of human weakness in the idea of *seriti*. *Seriti* is still dignity through and through because even when a person is dead, he/she is dignified and all the weaknesses that he/she had, become non-existent or are forgotten.

But recent scholarship is parading ancestors as demons in disguise. There are also claims that ancestors are feared because they are dangerous. Gable (JRA, Vol xxvi, 114) interpretes a Manjaco who was communicating with his ancestors in the following manner:

The tone that the man takes is on the whole apologetic, distancing. But he also conveys, both in what he says and in what he leaves purposefully unsaid, that ancestors are violent beings.

In another context, also in West Africa, Idowu (1975: 173) writes the following about the inherent fear of the ancestors that people usually have:

It is certain that the irrational fear of the dead is not uncommon and is still with us in every culture. There are people who relate their dreams, their experiences of haunting, or even what they believe to be ocular evidence of the movements and doings of the deceased.

This fear of the ancestors is also partly the concern of Ranger (1999: 180) who reinstates the missionary discourse when he writes that conversion freed Africans from fear of the ancestors, fear of evil spirits and fear of witches.

If the major part of African religion, namely ancestral veneration, is thus castigated, then the entire religion becomes suspect. There is evidence that a program of diabolising African religion via the ancestral veneration has already begun. This program of treating African religion as if it is something that was brought into existence by the devil whose sole intention is to confuse Africans is something that takes place among Africans themselves. According to this research, Africans take the side of the missionary who criticised African religion a long time ago. When Africans diabolise African religion, they do so without being aware that they are taking the side of the missionary who demonised African religion a long time ago. The task of the missionary then was to pave the way for Christianity and anything that stood in the way of this mission was termed diabolical. Chiefs and traditional healers who were once

accorded *seriti* became the focus of criticism once it became clear that they were not ready to convert to Christianity.

The researcher once distributed questionnaires on ancestors to a group of people who came from illustrious families of diviners. There were a group of these people but among that group there was a teacher who came from such a family who had since converted to Christianity. The researcher left some questionnaires in the custody of the teacher to be further distributed by him to other people. There was some money involved and so, the papers were distributed to the colleagues of the teacher who shared the same world-view or so the researcher believed.

When the questionnaires were brought back to the researcher, all the answers on the question: "who are your ancestors?" were given the same answer. The answer itself was like a confession of faith. "I have no ancestors, Jesus is my Saviour," was the answer written over and over again to the same question. The teacher answered the questions the same way over and over again. Obviously the teacher did not distribute the questionnaires but instead, he filled in the answers himself. The handwriting that was used to fill in the questionnaire was the same. It was the handwriting of the young man from the traditional healer's background.

The questionnaire on ancestral veneration had suddenly become irrelevant for this young man who came from an influential diviner/traditional healer family. In his own words, which surprised the researcher, the work of a traditional healer is the work of the devil. This new convert to Christianity found renewed strength and vitality to condemn everything that represented tradition. Meyer (1998: 319) in a context that is more or less similar to that one of the young man wrote the

following about the process of conversion to Christianity as some kind of relief:

Indeed, diabolization of Ewe religion was a characteristic feature of missionary discourse, which represented conversion to Christianity as a turn away from the power of the Devil and his agents, that is, the local gods.

This young man was once an insider where the question of traditional healing and diagnosis is concerned. He should not be taken lightly when he states that he has found a new life and a new Saviour. His experience should be taken as a genuine and legitimate experience. The researcher does not have a problem with such experiences. The problem that the researcher is having is that just because the young man has found a new religion does not mean that the old religion is demon infested.

The kind of experience, namely, that of a radical break with the past is not unique. In Venda, there are many young pastors who have had such a break with ancestral world-views. They have added a very meaningful dimension to the propagation of the gospel but these people are useless when it comes to seeking insider information about ancestral veneration, healing, prognosis and so on because they tend to present their perspective on things. It is very frustrating for a student of religion to be confronted with a group of people who once belonged to traditional healer/diviner families. There isn't much that a student of religion is likely to learn.

The point the researcher is trying to make is that it is easier for a person from a traditional background, whose mind has not yet been corrupted by Christianity, to learn or study other religions. It becomes more difficult for a Christian to learn other people's religions because the Christian

student unconsciously promotes his/her own religion at the expense of other religions.

The researcher focuses on the dichotomy between African religion (ancestors included) standing for or representing the devil and the Christian religion via Pentecostalism and other Christian religious expressions representing God. With this kind of scenario in mind, the researcher shall keep the youth in the background. Scholars who have captured this dichotomy or even polarisation are the following: Meyer, Wild, and Anderson.

The apparent dichotomy or even the polarity between traditional religion and the Christian religion needs special reference at this stage. It should be noted, however, that scholars who are making such presentations are frequently merely portraying the arguments of the people among whom they conducted research rather than stating their own opinions as well.

Meyer (1998: 319) voices the opinion of the opponents of Africanization of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana by stating:

To its members, the determined positive incorporation of tradition boiled down to the invitation of Satan himself into the church.

This statement clearly evinces that tradition, and, therefore, anything that is African, stands for evil or even the devil and therefore does not deserve to be credited with *seriti*. Another instance where there seems to be a polarisation between African religion and Christianity is the account by Wild (1998: 450) where she describes the challenge that was posed by the Mai-Mai when they were able to defeat the army of Mobutu Sese Seko. According to her, the Mai-Mai conquered Mobutu's forces with relative ease and with as little bloodshed as possible. She argues that the stories

circulating around the Mai-Mai did severe damage to the morale of Mobutu's forces. Some of these stories were that bullets from guns of the government's forces (Mobutu's) turned into water and that a small number of Mai-Mai armed with machetes defeated government soldiers who were well armed with guns and rocket launchers.

The Christians of the Eastern Congo were relieved by the apparent absence of bloodshed but they concluded that the power behind the defeat of the government forces had to be evil. Wild herself had to address the Christians about their conceptions of what is good and evil. The Christians of the Congo came to the conclusion that even the evil forces could be used to accomplish God's purpose. For the Christians, prior to coming to such a conclusion, their conception of evil was that it has a source and that source is traditional religion.

What is important about Wild's interpretation of the situation is that she succeeded in convincing the Christians of the Congo that reality is not just divided into good and evil with Christianity being the good religion and traditional religion the bad religion associated with the devil. She has also been able to convince the Christians that it frequently takes a little bit of evil to accomplish something good as in the case of Mai-Mai, who were considered to be agents of the devil by Congolese Christians.

Closer to home, Anderson (1994: 83) distinguishes between normal communication with the ancestors and those ancestor visitations which are malevolent and disturbing to the normal disposition. These disturbing visitations Anderson calls "possession." Anderson portrays the spirit-type churches as churches that do not accommodate ancestors. In other words, the Holy Spirit is against the ancestors. This is against the assertion that the traditional concept of ancestor spirit has simply been transferred to the Holy Spirit.

Anderson continues to argue that the weight of evidence in Southern Africa points to the fact that for many of these spirit-type churches, contact with ancestors is rejected. The “ancestors” they believe are not ancestors at all, but demon spirits which need to be cast out. Anderson’s work captures the mood of an interaction between traditional religion and spirit-type churches.

In the research that he carried out at Soshanguve, Anderson reinstates the ideas found in: *The Holy Spirit in an African Context* and according to these ideas, the ancestors are equated with the devil and what is more, they are demonic. The most devastating attack against the ancestors is that “the devil is able to disguise himself in the form of a person who died a long time ago.” In conclusion, Anderson mentions that his research tends to establish the findings of other researchers, notably Daneel, that they have evidence of a spirit-inspired confrontation with the ancestor cult which has replaced the traditional beliefs with a truly Christian alternative. The sum total of the import of this argument is that Spirit-type churches have the status of *seriti* while ancestral veneration is given the status that is bereft of *seriti*.

It seems as if there is a conspiracy to obfuscate the issue of ancestral veneration. The conspiracy comes in this way: that in the first place, there are very few people who know who the ancestors really are. Secondly, the few who really know who the ancestors are want to keep this knowledge to themselves. When this kind of thing happens it results into a situation where bastard knowledge becomes the one that prevails over and against the real knowledge.

This bastard knowledge of ancestors and ancestral veneration tends to divide things into good and bad. The reason why the custodians of bastard knowledge tend to divide things into good and bad is that in the

world of spirits, there is more than meets the eye. In the spiritual world, we have good and bad spirits, there is no question of neutrality. Ancestral spirits are an enigma in themselves. The Christians, in exception of the Catholics, have nothing for ancestral spirits except that they should be castigated wherever they are encountered. The reason why the ancestral spirits have to be castigated is because for the Christians, who only know the Holy Spirit, all the other spirits that are not known are dangerous. The world of the ancestors remains largely unknown by most Christians and because this world is not known, it becomes the object of suspicion. In the end the Christians find other unknown spiritual phenomena suspicious and as a result of that, the ancestors have to be exorcised whether they are good or bad.

What then is a good ancestral spirit and a bad ancestral spirit? Traditional African knowledge about ancestors places them in a very different category as compared to Christian and other religious spiritual experiences. Harriet Sibisi clarifies what is meant by an evil spirit in an African context. According to her, when a spirit could be identified as not belonging either to the people of the father of the person possessed, it has to be regarded as evil. In other words, spirits of people who were not known or people who died away from their homes that happen to be outside South Africa, are spirits that have to be treated with caution. The normal procedure is that a spirit usually identifies itself when questioned as to who he/she is. If it happens that a spirit is unknown in the sense that it cannot be identified either with the mother's people or the father's people, then that spirit is evil, as Harriet Sibisi (1975: 53) mentions:

The notion of evil brought about by spirit possession in the case of *indiki* or *ufufunyane* is conceptualised as violation of the principle of patrilineity. A spirit that takes possession indiscriminately outside the patrilineal descent principle is thus regarded as evil. The evil is inherent not so much in the spirit

itself but in confusing categories. In other words spirits within their proper place have no evil connotations.

In conclusion, one has to state the fact that ancestors as a phenomenon have undergone a reduction in their status and their *seriti*. Those who hardly ever know ancestral veneration dismiss this phenomenon as part of demon possession and among these people, we count people from apostolic tradition as well as churches that sprouted as a result of the missionary effort. Among these churches, there are the Lutherans, the Dutch Reformed Church, Anglican, Methodists and some African Initiated Churches.

First, it is stated that ancestors are demons in disguise. This idea has been going on for some time but it would be very interesting to verify this particular statement. The results of this research has already indicated that modern people dislike those institutions that are connected with ancestors (who are a focus of veneration for traditionalists) and that there has generally been a conspiracy against ancestral veneration. Another phenomenon, just like ancestors, that was hitherto believed to have *seriti*, but has diminished in terms of *seriti* is the phenomenon of traditional healers as the results from the questionnaire has already indicated.

Traditional healers are gradually losing their *seriti* because in the past, being a diviner and a healer was a calling. Nowadays, being a diviner and a healer is some kind of business transaction. Traditional healers nowadays market their trade whereas in the past, the reputation of a healer was something that circulated among a few people. These few people in turn informed other people about the good traditional healer and so on.

One weakness of the diviners/healers is that they do not seem to have respect for one another. They get involved in pointing out one another as

witches. In the asylum village called Helena, north-west of Polokwane, there are a great number of traditional healers who have been pointed out by others as witches. The researcher was able to count about six of those people in a very small population. It is unusual for such a small population numbering about twenty families, to have such a high concentration of traditional healers.

Category B and C *seriti* are in danger of being extinct as more and more people are getting less and less gullible about the lies they sometimes get from traditional healers. It gets very difficult for an individual for example, to believe that a traditional healer has the power to heal HIV/AIDS when such healing is not testable via laboratory experiments. It is easy for a person to opt for viagra, which has been scientifically tested than to opt for the uncertainty of a placebo whose medicinal qualities has not been proven by anyone.

To conclude this section, ancestors and traditional healers, who were once treated with respect and awe, (and who represent the category B *seriti*), are now viewed with suspicion and are paraded as agents of the devil by spirit-type and other churches. Any suggestion to incorporate ancestors in the church is resisted vehemently. Ancestors have not been rejected entirely but there is a graduated form of rejection by people who suspect them to be agents of the devil. Traditionalists, who are getting smaller in number still believe that ancestors have *seriti*.

## **2.10 SERITI IN CHILDREN**

Several of the proverbs would be sufficient to illustrate the position of children in a traditional setting. The position of children in a traditional setting in terms of the philosophy of *seriti* comes out very clearly in the following examples.

The first illustrations are on the importance of obedience on the part of children. In a Northern Sotho traditional setting, a child should always be ready to run an errand for elderly people. By elderly people we mean any elderly people in the community including the parents of a child. Such a child is desired and loved by everybody as he/she is an ideal child. The idiomatic expression that illustrates the position of a child in the community is as follows:

*Makhura a ngwana ke go rongwa // Children derive their fat or fuel from running an errand for their parents and neighbours.*

The most literal meaning of that proverb is that by running an errand, children sweat in the process and as a result of that, it is not necessary to apply fat on their skin because the exercise of running itself makes sweat and fat to come out. The act of running an errand becomes beneficial for the child as his/her skin shall never be dry. The figurative meaning of the same expression is that a child who does not refuse to run an errand is sometimes rewarded with a gift for his/her effort. Another meaning of this proverb is that a child who does not refuse to be sent or to run an errand is securing for himself/herself the possibility of becoming rich one day. To have fat is to be rich. It also means that blessings come to the hard working child in terms of future acquisition of cattle and other animals. A child that does not refuse to be sent is loved by everybody in the community and as a result of that communal blessings pour out towards such a child and this increases the standing of such a child in the community.

Among the Northern Sotho, to be an orphan is not the end of the world as a child basically belongs to the community hence the saying that: “An orphaned child derives precepts from the tribal court” /*Ngwana wa tšhiwana molao o tšea kgorong*. This proverb means that although a

child could lose both parents, he/she shall use other people as role models and people to look up to where the question of being human or *seriti* is concerned. Just because all the parents are dead does not mean that such a child does not have to be treated humanely, the issue of adoption of orphans that are not known by people within the context of the community is not encouraged. In the case of people adopting orphans whose parents are not known, there are a few of such cases and if they are present, they are very exceptional.

Sometimes it is difficult for a person to notice that there is an orphan in the house because the community and relatives have to look after the child. Sometimes the word orphan does not only mean a person who lost both parents. It also means a person who does not have the backing of the community because such a person happens not to have any close relatives in the community. One can notice that there is a transfer of meaning from the original meaning of orphan as a person who lost his/her parents and an orphan as a person who is not known in the community and as a result has become an “orphan.”

To illustrate this point of a transfer of meaning, focus shall be on the following proverb:

Tšhiwana ga e apare pheta ya thaga // An orphan cannot wear a necklace of beads.

A necklace of beads is not just an ordinary necklace, it is a special necklace made of beads. This is a necklace that is worn only by people of royal blood. The metaphorical meaning of that proverbial expression is that it is difficult for a person who is not anchored in the community to be praised by the community no matter how clever such a person could be.

The question does this arise as to the interpretation of this proverb or idiomatic expression? Should it be regarded as xenophobia? In communities of small-scale nature, outsiders are often not treated kindly. It would sometimes be better for a person to be with his/her own people, as the proverb after the following sentence suggests. Xenophobia among a people should be acknowledged and discouraged.

It should be pointed out that despite the existence of proverbial expressions such as: "I am because you are and because you are therefore I am" there has always been the problem of xenophobia. Strangers are, for instance, frequently accused of witchcraft related incidences. Although there have always been traces of xenophobia, Northern Sotho writers discouraged its recurrence.

Health is one of the most important characteristics for children to survive. It is something that is treasured by the Northern Sotho. Almost every child in the Limpopo Province has been immunised the traditional way in the home. What follows is an impression of children with *seriti* among the Northern Sotho speaking people:

On the question of whether children have *seriti* when they are healthy, 72% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 16% were undecided and 12% disagreed. 47.2 of those who are 40 plus agreed, 22.2% were undecided and 30.6% disagreed. 48.3% males agreed, 27.6% were undecided and 24.1% disagreed. 63.6% females agreed, 15.2% undecided and 21.2% disagreed. 70% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 20% disagreed. 58.1 of those with diplomas agreed, 22.6% were undecided and 19.4% disagreed. 50% graduates agreed, 20% were undecided and 30% disagreed. The general trend shows that the majority believe that children who are healthy have *seriti*.

Those who believed that children have to be treated the traditional way when they are ill were reflected in the following manner: 32% of those whose ages range between 20 and 40 agreed, 24% were undecided and 44% were in disagreement. 35.1% of those who are 40 plus agreed. 21.6% were undecided and 43.2% disagreed. 27.6% males agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 75.9% disagreed. 38.2% females agreed, 23.5% were undecided and 38.2% disagreed. 30% of those in secondary schools agreed and 70% disagreed. 35.5% of those with diplomas agreed, 25.8% were undecided and 38.7% disagreed. 33.3% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 42.9% disagreed. Generally the trend reflected here suggests that people do not want their children to be treated the traditional way. This is another instance of the waning of traditional healers and their medicines. Nowadays no one wants to take their children to them because of the fact that at the back of their minds, people cannot get over the idea that the medicines of some traditional healers have a small percentage of human flesh. Human flesh could be very dangerous nowadays because people, particularly young people are infected with HIV/AIDS.

Those who believed that children should be cured the western way were reflected in the following manner: 60% of those aged between 20 and 40 agreed, 24% were undecided and 16% disagreed. 59.2% of those who are over 40 agreed, 27% were undecided and 13.5% disagreed. 72.4% males agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 10.3% disagreed. 50% females agreed, 32.4% were undecided and 17.6% disagreed. 80% of those at secondary school agreed, 10% were undecided and 10% disagreed. 71.4% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 9.5% were undecided and 19% disagreed. There is general unanimity on the question of those who believe that children should be treated the western way to avert diseases.

On the question of whether a mixture of western and traditional medicine is good for children or not, the results were reflected in this way: 48% of those aged between 20-40 years agreed, 40% were undecided and 12% disagreed. 45.9% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 35.1% were undecided and 18.9% disagreed. 48.3% males agreed, 27.6% were undecided and 27.6% disagreed. 47.1% females agreed, 44.1% undecided and 8.8% disagreed. 40% of those at secondary school agreed, 20% undecided and 40% disagreed. 48.4% of those with diplomas agreed, 38.7% were undecided and 12.9% disagreed. 52.4% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 14.3% disagreed. The trend seems to favour a mixture of western and traditional medicine.

It was generally agreed that disease diminished the *seriti* of a child. 56% of those between the ages of 20-40 agreed, 32% were undecided and 12% disagreed. 50% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 19.4% were undecided and 30.6% disagreed. 48.3 males agreed, 31% were undecided and 20.7% disagreed. 57.6% females agreed, 18.2% were undecided and 24.2% disagreed. 50% of those at secondary school agreed, 30% were undecided and 20% disagreed. 64.5% of those with diploma certificates agreed, 25.8% were undecided and 9.7% disagreed. The numbers and statistics reflect that disease diminishes the status of a child.

## **2.11 SERITI AND THE YOUTH**

The sources that deal with the question of the youth are novels. Novels are not always derived from the truth and that means that they do not always project what takes place in reality. Novels are the desires or the attempts of the novelist to arrive at what is ideal or what is mostly desired. In one such novel, Mminele portrays a xenophobic young man who wanted to be a school principal because he was the son of the soil.

Being a son of the soil means that a person emerges or comes from that particular geographical area where he was a teacher.

The young man was always eager to introduce changes that appeared to the principal as quite reasonable albeit the changes were designed to put the latter in a bad light. In the end, the young man had to go and teach at another institution because he was aspiring to become the principal of the school. The reason for these aspirations was that the young man was a son of the soil.

The young man's xenophobic attitudes did not succeed because in the end he was thrown into the deep end by being appointed at an inter-ethnic institution which did not recognise any amount of xenophobia. The lesson of the story is that in a large-scale phenomenon such as education, what is given recognition is whether a teacher works very hard to produce good results. It has sometimes happened that a teacher who has found residence among his/her people is sometimes tempted to assume a position of power when it seems as if he/she is better qualified than the school principal.

This kind of temptation keeps on raising its ugly head now and then in the Limpopo Province. People are also tempted to work nearer home because of the life-long experience of the inventor of the proverbial expression that says that a particular type of wildcat shines within its own territory. The proverb is in direct contrast to the Biblical one that says that a man cannot be a prophet in his own hometown or among his own people.

According to Rakoma (1986: 181) the proverb: "a wild cat shines within the context of its own territory," has the connotation of a person who is always happy to be among his/her own people so that he/she could

shine. Another meaning, which does not differ from the meaning by Rakoma, is that of Mokgokong and Ziervogel (1975). In one's family or one's tribe one is generously praised. The transference or the transportation of meaning from one context to another becomes clear when a *tšhipa*, a grey wild cat, understandably a territorial animal, becomes transposed into a human being, within a community. In its habitat, the grey wildcat moves gracefully, catching prey and other little wild animals. Such an animal becomes a beautiful spectacle to watch. The gist of this argument is that the community takes pride in promoting the interests of its own people rather than those of strangers. Another proverb that seems to be antithetical to the former is the following: *Moeng etla ga gešo re je ka wena //* visitor, please come to our home so that your presence could generate some culinary exploits. Green (1983: 16) correctly makes the following statements about hospitality although the researcher does not share his reasons why he finds that Africans are hospitable:

Africans are fearful of denying hospitality to a stranger or to a distant kinsman, for example, because they fear the visitor may turn out to be a witch. Similarly, a man fears to display partiality to one of his wives because he thus invites witchcraft or sorcery from other jealous wives.

The reason for their hospitality has nothing to do with fear for witchcraft but has to do with an ongoing co-operation among the Africans themselves as part of survival. The saying that a human being is a human being only in relation to other human beings would not make sense if fear for witchcraft was the reason why Africans are hospitable. The self makes sense only against the background of the presence of other people who assist him/her to find meaning within the community.

What happens to a child or an individual who does not wish to heed advice? This child or youth becomes the focus of communal ridicule.

There are many examples of children or the youth who became wayward and were eventually ensnared by danger and misfortune. The following proverb says it all:

*Ngwana wa magana go botšwa o wetše dikomeng tša batho a re dikoma ke tšešo.*

Translated, it means that a child who refused to be the recipient of good advice, went against the advice of the elders and instead went to a strange *koma*/a place of initiation, saying that the place of initiation belongs to his own people. Phatudi wrote a book to show that if a person insists on having things done his way, he is likely to experience some danger. Phatudi illustrated that there should be respect amongst siblings.

The physically weaker sibling, called *Monanye* was supposed to go to the initiation school but *Tladi* the physically stronger younger brother insisted that it was his turn to go too. *Tladi's* parents refused to give him permission and against the advice of his parents, he went to an initiation school very far away from home. In those days it was believed that if a person went to one of these far away places which were strange, there is the likelihood that they might not return. *Tladi* left for one of these initiation schools and it was while he was at this particular school that he became ill. The illness led to his death. In the meantime, *Monanye* who was his elder brother graduated without any problem at the local initiation school.

The story was intended to illustrate that the Northern Sotho do not approve of a child who does not listen to advice. The proverb: *Ngwana magana go botšwa o wetše dikomeng tša batho are dikoma ke tšešo* //A child who refused to heed advice went ahead to graduate at a strange initiation joint, claiming that the initiation joint was his people's. This was the picture of the youth in the past.

Nowadays, the youth are the nation's pride in the sense that a lot of money is invested in their development. The first thing to be considered among the children is education. A nation should not end up with a horde of the youth who are half-baked educationally while at the same time they are ambitious. When they are not properly educated they are such a great embarrassment particularly in their dealings with people who are not even their equals.

Young men and women should learn the value of respect. It is very embarrassing when young men enter the debate with elderly people where they use any language they deem fit. If they are not properly educated they are likely to say things that are very embarrassing at a time when they were supposed to keep quiet. The respondents were asked the question about education being one of the things that elevates the status of the youth. In other words, does education have any incremental value to the *seriti* of the youth? Secondly education is something to hold on to when everything is gone.

For example, many of the youth have tried their luck by generating a lot of money much quicker than anyone. This has resulted into two options. One easier but dangerous route is the way of armed robbery. Some get lucky and manage to rob big companies without risking their lives or killing anyone. Some get caught and end up in jail. Nowadays it is very risky to steal cars and rob banks. There are those who became very lucky by becoming kwaito singers. This kwaito thing was once a very profitable business but nowadays, the audience is clever and does not want to listen to any of this kwaito nonsense. More and more of these singers left school to join others in lining their pockets with other people's

money through singing songs that usually insult the intelligence of Africans.

People are now clever and they are no longer buying this nonsense. Most of these kwaito singers, being school dropouts, are now too old to go to school and start all over again. It is very important for the youth to realize the importance of good schooling and to appreciate what the department of education is doing today to see to it that the youth do not miss out on this important dimension in their lives.

75% of those aged between 20 and 40 years agreed that education increases the status and *seriti* of the youth. 16.7% were undecided and 8.3% disagreed. 88.9% of those aged between 40% and over agreed, 5.6% were undecided and 5.6% disagreed. 86.2% of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 3.4% disagreed. 81.3% of the females agreed, 9.4% were undecided and 9.4% disagreed. 90% of those at secondary schools agreed, 10% were undecided and none disagreed. 80% of those with diplomas agreed, 13.3% were undecided and 6.7% disagreed. 90% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, none were undecided and 10% disagreed.

Does the rite of initiation elevate the status of the youth? 33.3% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 33.3% disagreed. 27.8% of those who are above 40 years agreed, 27.8% were undecided and 44.4% disagreed. 32.1% of the males agreed, 25% were undecided and 42.9% disagreed. 30.3% of the females agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 36.4% disagreed. 10% of those at secondary schools agreed, 20% were undecided and 70% disagreed. 37.9% of those with diplomas agreed, 27.6% were undecided and 34.5% disagreed. 33.3% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 33.3% disagreed.

Those who are between 20 and 40 have 33.3% agreeing and 33.3% disagreeing. This therefore means that the situation is even. From those who are over 40 to those who are at secondary school, the researcher discerns disagreement with the question of initiation as a rite of passage that elevates the status of the youth. Those who are at secondary school are more strident with 10% in agreement and 70% in disagreement. Those with diploma are the only ones who agree marginally with 37.9% and 34.5% in disagreement. The last ones are even with 33.3% in agreement and 33.3% in disagreement. One can safely conclude that the trend registered marks a move away from initiation as a rite of passage that elevates the status of the youth. It is very interesting that those who are currently undergoing this program, namely those at secondary schools are the ones who are so negatively disposed towards the initiation program.

Last year the researcher went to visit a chief at Sekhukhuniland during the initiation period. The chief was lamenting the fact that many of the youth are no longer observing the initiation ceremony in large numbers. Many prefer to go to hospital for the necessary operation. He said, however, that those who go to hospital miss the vital dimension of the initiation program through the teachings. He said it is actually the teaching that turns a youth into a man.

Does both the initiation and education elevate the status of the youth? 41.7% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 45.8% were undecided and 12.5% disagreed. 35.1% of those who are above 40 years agreed, 29.7% were undecided and 44.4% disagreed. 34.5% of the males agreed. 34.5% were undecided and 31% disagreed. 39.4% of the female population agreed, 39.4% were undecided and 21.2% agreed. 40% of those at secondary schools agreed, 20% were undecided and 40%

disagreed. 40% of those with diplomas agreed, 43.3% were undecided and 16.7% disagreed. 33.3% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 33.3% disagree. Although there is generally some agreement, it is very little in terms of percentages. Those who are over 40 years disagree. The truth of the matter is that once a person has been to the initiation school, he/she is already a man/woman. This therefore means that going back to school after the period of initiation seems somewhat of a step backwards. It also seems as if the initiation makes this person resistant to education.

Does church membership and education elevate the status of the youth? 41.7% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 20.8% were undecided and 37.5% disagreed. 37.8% of those who are above 40 years agreed. 21.6% were undecided and 40.5% disagreed. 34.5% of the males agreed, 24.1% were undecided and 41.4% disagreed. 45.5% of the females agreed, 18.2% were undecided and 36.4% disagreed. 90% of those at secondary schools agreed, none were undecided and 10% disagreed. 28.6% of graduates and post-graduates agreed. 23.8% were undecided and 47.6% disagreed. In this particular case we have three (3) constituencies agreeing and three (3) others disagreeing. Those who are between 20 to 40 years agree, those who are female agree and those who are at secondary school agree. Those who disagree are those who are over 40, the males and the graduates and post-graduates. Those who are at secondary school are very vociferous with 90% agreement.

One of the most dangerous impediments to the progress of the youth is drunkenness. The drunkenness and drug taking of our youth has reached epidemic levels. There are many drug lords and the law enforcement agencies do not seem to cope with the level of crime pertaining to the drug scenario.

The question that the researcher asked came in the form of a statement. Does the fact that a youth gets drunk a sign that the youth has come of age. 8.0% of those aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 8% were undecided and 84% disagreed. 5.4% of those aged above 40 years agreed, 5.4% were undecided and 89.2% disagreed. None of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 89.7% disagreed. None of those who are at secondary school agreed, none were undecided and a 100% disagreed. 9.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 6.7% were undecided and 83.9% disagreed. 4.8% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 4.8% were undecided and 90.5% disagreed. There was an overwhelming response against the idea that getting drunk is a sign that a youth has come of age.

Drugs and intoxicants do not help the status of the youth was the next question to be handled. 83.3% of those aged between the ages 20 and 40 agreed. 12.5% were undecided and 4.2% disagreed. 86.1% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 8.3% were undecided and 5.6% disagreed. 85.7% of the males agreed, 14.3% were undecided and none disagreed. 11.8% of females agreed, 2.9% were undecided and 85.3% disagreed. 100% of those at secondary schools agreed, there were none who were undecided and none disagreed. 90.5% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 9.5% were undecided and none disagreed. Again there was an overwhelming number of people against the idea that drugs and intoxicants do not help the status of the youth. Prominent young people in the black community have been killed by drugs in 2005. This alone should serve as a deterrent but it is not because more young people take drugs.

Does volunteer work elevate the status of the youth? 72% of those whose ages range between 20 and 40 agreed, 16% were undecided and 12%

disagreed. 81.1% of those who are above 40 agreed, 10.8% were undecided and 8.1% disagreed. 82.8% of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 6.9% disagreed. 73.5% of females agreed, 14.7% were undecided and 11.8% disagreed. 100% of those at secondary schools agreed. 74.2% of those with diplomas agreed, 19.4% were undecided and 6.5% agreed. 76.2% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 4.8% were undecided and 19% disagreed. Volunteer work does elevate the status of the youth. Many youth who are out of school and not working should be opting for volunteer work which would ultimately ensure a good curriculum vitae. No one could cultivate some respect for the youth who do not have anything to do.

On the question as to whether westernisation has under-developed our youth, 28% of those aged between 20-40 years agreed, 36% were undecided and 36% disagreed. 31.4% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 22.9% were undecided and 45.7% disagreed. 29.6% of the males agreed, 25.9% were undecided and 44.4% disagreed. 29.4% of the females agreed, 32.4% were undecided and 38.2% disagreed. 44% of those at secondary agreed, none were undecided and 55.6% disagreed. 20% of those with diplomas agreed, 43.4% were undecided and 36.7% agreed. 38.1% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 19% were undecided and 42.9% agreed. A greater number of those who answered that question disagreed that westernisation has under-developed our youth.

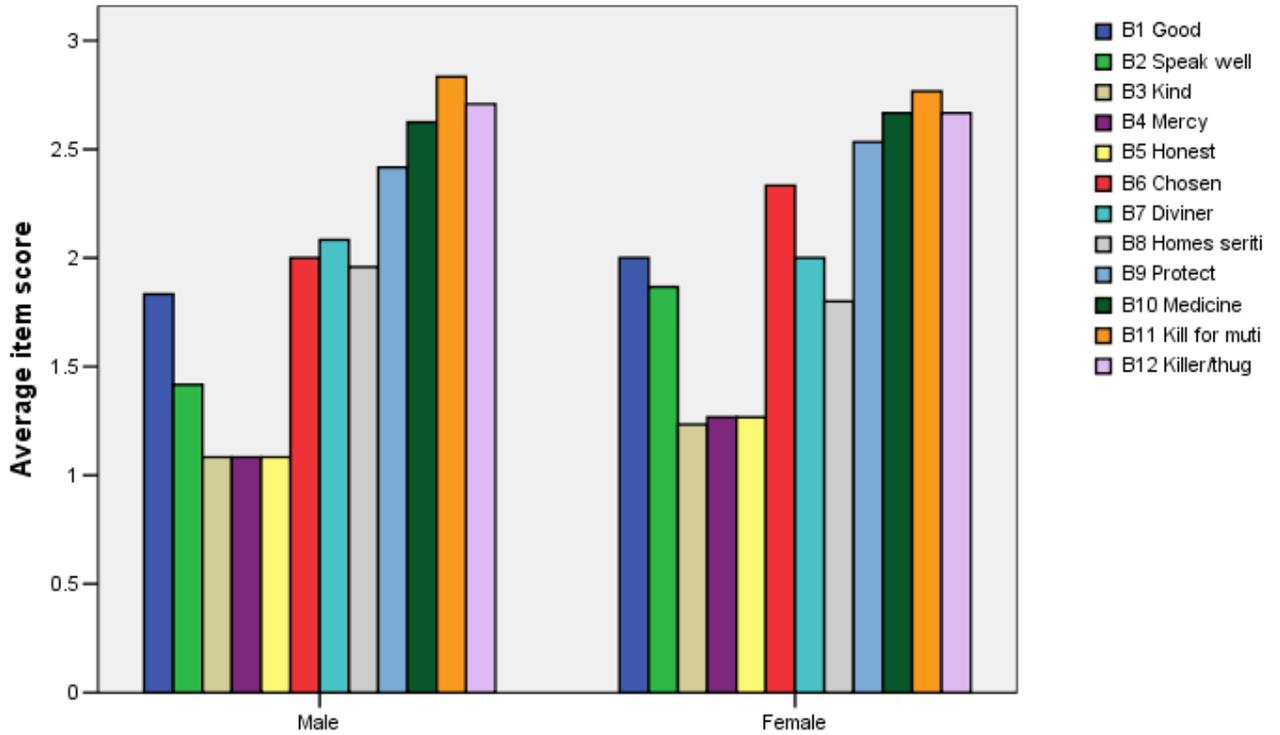
## **2.12 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

It appears that of the three categories of *seriti*, namely category A, B and C, category B and C are disappearing because it is mostly in category B and C that the researcher is not able to get unanimity. In other words, being loved and chosen by ancestors, being a diviner/traditional healer,

protection of oneself with strong medicine, using medicine to solicit for good luck and being feared because a person is a rascal/scoundrel/killer have been generally rejected by the respondents. There is also the problem of a rejection of the bulwarks and custodians of tradition like traditional healers. This therefore means that while there is a diminishment of category B and C *seriti*, there is retention of category A *seriti*. There is a new vision on the horizon about what the modern Northern Sotho is going to look like in terms of his/her *seriti*.

Among the youth, the question that initiation elevates the status of the youth was fervently rejected. There was not much improvement when the researcher paired education and initiation. These two factors were the most important cornerstones of the development of the youth. The next chapter deals with the concept of *seriti* among women. The most important question is to find out what a woman of *seriti* is among the Northern Sotho.

### Seriti - The Characteristics



In all the graphs, namely the one in chapter two, three and four, the average item scores on the left are numbered from 0 to 3. The item score representing agreement is numbered from 0 to 1.5 while the item score representing disagreement is numbered from 1.5 to 3. This therefore means that numbers that fall under 1.5 register an agreement while those that are above 1.5 register a disagreement.

In the graph, the characteristics are shaded according colours from B1 to B12. These characteristics are the following: B.1, Being morally good; B.2 having a good memory and speaking well; B.3 To be kind and generous; B.4 to have mercy; B.5 To be true to oneself and to be honest; B.6 To be loved and chosen by ancestors; B.7 To be a diviner; B.8. The

diviner's home has *seriti*; B.9 Protecting oneself with strong medicine; B.10 Using of medicine to solicit for good luck; B. 11 To kill people and use their body parts as *muti*/traditional medicine; and B. 12. To be feared because a person is a rascal/thug/killer.

These characteristics have been shaded according to gender with the male gender on the left and the female gender on the right. On the extreme left are the average item scores. If we focus on the fact that a person has *seriti* because he/she is morally good, the responses for both the males and the females are coloured with the same colour according to the keys provided on the extreme right at the top. The response according to B.1 is just above 1.5 for the males and almost approaching 2 for the females. This means that although there is agreement, it is almost bordering on the average item score indicating undecided which is 2.

Speaking well in a tribal court, notches just under 1.5 for the males, while for females, the notch almost approaches number 2. This therefore means that the males are in more agreement than the females that for a person to have *seriti* he/she has to have the ability to speak very well.

Most of the males as well as the females are totally agreed that B3, B4, and B5, namely, to be kind and generous, to be true to oneself and to have mercy, form the essence of *seriti*. One notices general discontent among the males and the females about *seriti* having connections with being chosen, being a diviner and the fact that a diviner's house has *seriti*. Although there is disagreement in general, there is also a slight agreement that a diviner has *seriti*.

Protecting oneself with strong medicine, using medicine to solicit for good luck, to kill people and to use their body parts as parts of *muti* /traditional medicine and to be feared because a person is a

rascal/thug/killer are some of the practices that are disapproved by the respondents.

Lastly, the explanation of this particular graph is contained in more detail in the rest of the chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE

## WOMEN AND *SERITI*

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher concentrates on women. Firstly, the researcher first presents a picture of a traditional woman and thereafter presents a picture of a modern day woman. Secondly, the researcher focuses on the research results to find out what men and women say about a woman and *seriti* in general. In conclusion, based on the outcome of the research results, the researcher makes a synopsis of what people generally think a 'woman of *seriti*' ought to look like.

### 3.2 WOMEN OF *SERITI*

Traditional Northern Sotho people do not put too much premium on a beautiful woman. To them, a beautiful woman might be a witch or a very bad woman. They usually compare a beautiful woman with a certain kind of berry that looks too beautiful on the outside but very bitter inside. According to the Northern Sotho people, a woman should work very hard in looking after her place of residence and she is expected to work very hard in looking after her children. We discover what a traditional woman should be from folk tales and legends.

Peter Thomas (Parabola 1979) in his *The Secret Son* exemplifies the idea of a good woman in traditional society. This woman's name was *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashes*. She was not as good looking as the rest of the women that the king married. She had been very good looking at first but through witchcraft

and jealousy, she appeared just like an ordinary person. Because she was not beautiful in the eyes of the king, the king intensely hated her.

The king in the meantime did not have a son and an heir to the throne. His other wives were unable to give him a male offspring. Every birth by his wives produced a female offspring. The king and his wives went consulted a certain wise lady to obtain advice. He was given a potion that had alligator pepper for his wives to drink. All his wives drank it but the taste was bad. One woman who was a friend of *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashes* took the potion to her. She drank the potion with the alligator pepper.

The same woman helped her to disguise herself and to get to the king's chamber. This resulted in *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashe's* pregnancy. She gave birth to a handsome baby boy. The king's wives who were acting as midwives threw the baby in the river. The king of the river Gods saved the child and raised him, feeding him with chalk. Later, a character by the name of *Mother-of-All-Women* took over in raising the boy.

One day, *Mother-of-All-Women* announced that the king had an heir. A day was appointed to present the youth to his father. There was a process to determine the mother of the boy. A gourd was balanced on the boy's head so that anyone who threw a piece of wood and drops the gourd would be the mother of the boy. All the women tried their luck but failed until *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashes* came and knocked the gourd from the boy's head without taking aim.

When the king approached *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashes* he discovered that she had always been beautiful but his most favoured wife had given her a charm that made the king to hate her. But the charm had lost its power and the king

was so overjoyed that he rushed to the side of his son and his long rejected wife and embraced them both. The wicked wife who had kept them apart was sacrificed to *Nzemu* who lived on blood. *Mother-of-all-Women* was given a position in the palace.

There are certain stereotypes that are projected by the story of *The Secret Son*. First, witchcraft features more prominently in this particular story and in traditional society in general. *Carrier-of-Wood-Ashes* becomes the victim of witchcraft. She was beautiful at first, but her beauty was taken away by one of her fellow women in a polygamous household.

Secondly, for a king, a male heir to the throne was a very important thing. Female children are not given the same value in a traditional society; it is male children who could be kings. As a result of that, a woman who could give a king a male child was rated highly by the king. In this situation, a woman is used for the gratification of a man's desire. All the women vie with one another to get the chance to please a man; namely to give birth to a male child because their lives depend on them getting male children.

Thirdly, a traditional man does not regard himself as fully man if he cannot produce a male child; but at the same time, if he keeps on begetting male children, chances are that he might end up being a very poor man. Female children assist their parents to generate wealth in the form of *magadi*: the bride price.

The position of women in the traditional culture of both the Lovedu and the Sotho-Tswana in particular, and the Africans in general should receive attention too. Setiloane, Moffatt, Krige, and Shorter give us a glimpse of what the position of women in these cultures, was. What is interesting is

that the focal point of the activity of a woman in the case of the Sotho-Tswana was the home as well as outside the home. For the Northern Sotho, it was the home that formed the centre of influence. Setiloane (1976:40) defines a woman of *seriti* in the following manner:

Similarly, a true *mma-motse* (mother of a household) gathers all its members, not only those of her own lapa into her love and care. Over the years she has increased in dignity, poise and resourcefulness; and now in her maturity of age she has become the stabilising factor, the backbone of her family, the ward and the village, loyal to her husband and reliable in all her actions and advice.

What is of paramount importance here is that she is not only the mother of her own biological children, but is also a mother of those children who are not even hers. Another notable factor is that Setiloane does not say anything about the amount of work she has to do to qualify to be a woman of *seriti*. It is in the work arena that women were made to qualify as fit for running families. Magesa (1997: 19) underscores the worth of a hardworking woman as against the beautiful type:

As the Kgatla put it, "A pretty girl either steals or wets her bed." They mean by this that physical beauty alone is not the most important thing to look for in a wife. Industry in physical work, a respectful demeanour towards elders and a generally good reputation as defined by ethnic group, are the most significant characteristics for both parents.

Krige (1965: 72) on the other hand describes a situation where the mother-in-law literally becomes the slave driver of her daughter-in-law. She writes for example that the poor woman (the daughter-in-law) would work for the whole day with her child on her back. She would sweep the floors, smear the rooms with cow-dung, cook, and fetch water as well as wood from the

river. She sums up the dependence of a woman on her mother-in-law in the following manner:

Strictly speaking there is no limit to the length of time a wife should cook for her mother-in-law. If she has married an only or the youngest son, she will continue doing so all her life; otherwise she is generally given her own hearth when the next brother marries and a new bride enters the household.

There is always a problem when one person from an alien culture looks at another culture from the viewpoint of observer rather than from the inside knowledge of cultural issues at stake. The comment made by Krige, who was a woman, does not supply us with the reason why the bride is subjected to such hardships. She looks at the bride and whatever the bride might be doing from the sympathetic viewpoint as a woman. To her a woman is subjected unnecessarily to the hardships of toiling for the mother-in-law.

This was certainly not the intention of the mother-in-law. What the mother-in-law intended was to assist her daughter-in-law to be a woman of worth or note at least from the traditional point of view. The mother-in-law reinforces what her daughter-in-law was taught at a female initiation school. It should always be remembered that hard work made a woman to stand out amongst other women.

The rite of passage from childhood to womanhood is something that was extremely important in Africa. Women were often very proud of having been to initiation although most women who had been there would never tell anyone that they had been there unless someone questioned them. If they were pressured to offer details they would refuse to explain what had happened there. Moffatt (1842: 250) gives the following description of women who had just returned from the initiation programme:

The girls also, when they have gone the round of weeks, drilling, dancing, singing and listening to the precepts of the grave old women, have a piece of iron rather hot put into their hands, which they must hold fast for a long time, though painful, to show that their hands are hard and strong for labour...raised thus from comparative infancy to what they consider woman-hood, they view themselves with as much complacency as if they were enrobed in the attire of the daughters of an eastern potentate. They have reached nearly to a climax in their life, for they expect soon to be married, and to be a mother they consider the chief end of a woman's existence.

Moffatt is thus describing the important rite of transition into womanhood. Such a transition was an occasion for the accumulation of *seriti* – a great amount of it. The women of Botswana were supposed to endure hardships. Part of the exercise of endurance was to have a piece of hot iron placed in the hands to test the endurance level. There is this belief that a woman cannot burn her hands.

Moffatt (1842: 252) gives the following description of the hardships that women had to endure when he witnessed some women building a house, a task which women were supposed to do:

While standing near the wife of one of the grandees, who with some female companions was building a house, and making preparations to scramble by means of a branch on to the roof, I remarked that they ought to get their husbands to do that part of the work. This set them all into a roar of laughter, Mahuto, the queen, and several of the men drawing near to ascertain the cause of the merriment, the wives repeated my strange, and to them, ludicrous proposal, when another peal of mirth ensued...

The main reason for the outburst of laughter was because Moffatt suggested that the women should ask their husbands to build houses. This act alone (the act of building a house) would have constituted some kind of taboo at least in the eyes of the women, but at the same time, the reaction of Mahuto,

the queen suggests, although jokingly, that Moffatt (1842: 253) should be the one to talk to the men/women about this change to western customs.

If there has to be change, it is something that should be sanctioned by the men because they were to be affected by this change. The change itself would have affected the dignity (*seriti*) of the women and hence the women themselves, as represented by Mahuto, the queen, who wanted Moffatt to be the herald or agent of change. Women needed to work very hard because their dignity (*seriti*) depended on it.

Another thing that has to be taken into account is whether, according to traditional women, it was important for them to be accorded a status that was equal to that of men. Of importance was the fact that there was a clear-cut division of labour where the men were encouraged to perform certain duties and the women were supposed to perform duties commensurate with their status as women. This suggests that women who engaged themselves in men's work were to be treated with contempt and vice versa.

There were and still are places that have been prohibited for men. The kitchen has been one of these. There were so many taboos built around the kitchen that only very few brave men have been able to venture into it. Men have been discouraged from eating anything from a pot for example. It was argued that the reason why men were not supposed to eat from a pot was because on the day such men would be getting married, there would be rain, which is an unwelcome phenomenon at weddings.

Men have been responsible for the slaughtering of cattle whenever there are funerals or weddings, while women should handle the entrails of the cow

and clean them. There was no need for men to venture into an area of specialisation dominated by women and vice versa. Things like these were taught and internalised at initiation or rites of passage for both boys and girls.

It was important then for women to still continue to do what they did to the best of their ability and this ability alone credited them with worth rather than diminished their status as human beings. Shorter ([isizoh.net/afrel/shorter.htm](http://isizoh.net/afrel/shorter.htm)) in his topic entitled: “*Concepts of Social Justice in Traditional Africa*” article captures the mood and context of this distinction in the following lines:

The status of women in traditional Africa was much higher than they (the anthropologists) imagined; and if women were still at a disadvantage, it was pointed out that nowhere in the world did women really enjoy complete equality or inequality, when women had no apparent ambition to do the things that women did. It may be that the areas of greatest inequality were of the least importance to women.

In addition, other characteristics have added significant dignity to traditional women as well. A traditional woman always sees to it that her home, which is the centre of most activities, is beautiful and attractive to strangers. The surroundings of a traditional woman on the home front are the means through which she reveals herself as a human being in society. If she is the kind of a woman who does not indulge herself in hard work, she will lose not only the respect of her peers but also of those people who are the most important in her life; namely, her in-laws. Diligence in all its manifestations has been the key to good home-building and home-making.

### 3.3 WOMEN IN PROVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS

Women feature prominently in proverbs. Their appearance in proverbs reflects the spirit of traditional Northern Sotho cultural perceptions about how a woman with *seriti* was supposed to behave or look like. Such perceptions are anathema to proponents of women empowerment as well as those people who have adopted feminist attitudes to life in general. At the same time, these very attitudes defined what a woman with *seriti* had to do and what she had to avoid.

One needs also to add that what has been prescribed by traditional culture and ethos concerning women is still appreciated by many people, especially by men who are attracted by traditional culture and values. On the other hand, one should add that there has been a gradual shift away from treating women as carriers of water and hewers of wood. The researcher intends portraying objectively in the form of proverbs, things as they were without any bias. The researcher will finally endeavour to pinpoint those areas in traditional culture that are repulsive and objectionable to women currently due to changed circumstances.

The traditional Northern Sotho appreciate a woman who dresses properly and who does not expose her bodily features. Rakoma's collection of proverbs listed alphabetically rather than thematically, reflects this attitude as the following proverb reveals:

*Gabonnenyana bolopela bo khuparetšwa ka seatla*

A rough translation of that proverb is that a virgin should cover her nakedness with her hand. The interpretation of this proverb is that the front part or the back part of a virgin should not be exposed because of its

role in giving birth to generations. Boys should not be exposed to those particular parts. This means that when a young man loves a virgin, he should immediately make arrangements to send his parents to the virgin's parents so that they should pay something by way of betrothal which signified a strong statement of his intention to marry the virgin in the near future. The young man should not seduce and then leave the girl and in this way, ruin her chances of getting a future husband. Girls who have been seduced were usually offered in marriage to elderly men who were sometimes old enough to be their fathers as punishment.

In a proverb that is not metaphorical, Rakoma states the Northern Sotho concept of the role of a woman as a parent. The exact wording of the proverb is as follows: *Mosadi o hlaletša ngwana bolwetsi bo a fola//* when a woman plays with her baby, her disease (of childlessness) comes to an end. Child bearing in a marriage is very important to the Northern Sotho as the researcher pointed out before. It is an accomplishment or the goal towards which every woman should be aiming.

The position of a woman who is childless is rather shaky. When a woman is unable to give birth, she becomes the subject of abuse and ridicule among other women. Furthermore, such a woman is seen as the cause of the failure to give birth. A woman divulged to the researcher that she had been in a childless marriage and was the one blamed by the husband. Because of the fact that she could not conceive, her husband subjected her to psychological and physical abuse. This went on for a long time until he divorced her. She met another man and now she has two male children. The man who divorced her wanted her back.

If the Northern Sotho realise that their sons could not have children after repeated attempts, they sometimes make arrangements that would finally ensure an offspring by letting the woman have children with the brother of the man who could not have children. The children would not belong to the brother of the man who could not conceive but instead, belong to the man who could not make the woman pregnant.

A woman who could not have children was not abandoned. If she had a sister, she could make arrangements with her sister to assist her in the act of bearing children on her behalf. Once the sister of the woman who could not bear children agreed, she had helped her sister to regain her status in the community and in this way given her *seriti*. The children that were born as a result of such an arrangement did not belong to the woman who had agreed to have children on behalf of the sister but to the woman who could not have children. This, therefore, resulted in a man unwittingly practising bigamy.

In another well-known metaphorical proverb, a woman is portrayed as a person who is emotional and outwardly manifests pain and sorrow. A man, on the other, hand is portrayed as a fierce and brave person, as Rakoma mentions:

*Mosadi ke pudi, monna ke nku*

A woman is a goat while a man is a sheep. The other side of the proverb is rendered in the following manner:

*Monna ke nku, o llela ka teng//* a man is a sheep, he cries from within.

The interpretation of the first and the second proverbs gives an idea of how a man and woman behave in the midst of a crisis situation. A goat makes loud sounds when it is slaughtered while a sheep does not make any sound. The behaviour of these two animals are transferred first to a woman, who makes audible sounds when she suffers pain, and a man who stoically accepts pain without making a sound. People born in Britain and other English-speaking people also have the same proverb in terms of interpretation only. They say that a gentleman should have a stiff upper lip. These proverbs mean that a woman is allowed to show emotions during for instance a funeral while the man is not supposed to weep or show any emotion.

### **3.4 MODERN DAY WOMAN AND *SERITI***

A comparison between the behaviour of woman and man in the past and the present from a particular perspective will be given. In this instance, Jean Grimshaw's ideas as quoted by Rachels on the female ethic would be sufficient for our analysis.

Grimshaw (1999: 23ff) argues that in the eighteenth century the ideas of female virtue were femininity and female consciousness. A woman was viewed as a wife and a mother. Virtue was understood as dependence and subordination in marriage. Domestic life was viewed as a private sphere. This view persists to this day.

Focussing on the idea of a woman as a wife and that there should be an emphasis on femininity and female consciousness, one is able to place Moffatt's ideas within a particular context. Focussing on femininity, one can understand why Moffatt objected to the idea of women building houses

for their men rather than men doing the work themselves. This represents a single instance of a cultural clash where the Botswana women were proud to display diligence, while on the other hand, the English women would be proud to be feminine and aspire to be a mother to her children. Both the Botswana woman and the English woman had some degree of virtue, each in her own cultural context.

The question should then be posed whether both men and women could be virtuous in the same way. Mary Wollstonecraft, a significant English writer, believed that virtue should mean the same thing for men and women. There has been an idea that women were morally superior to men and this superiority should be used to transform society through the efforts of women. The idea that women were superior to men could be used to enter the public sphere rather than being restricted to the domestic “private sphere.”

Female ethic is concerned with violence and its destructive consequences to human life. These fields of activity have been dominated by men in the form of war, politics, and capitalist economic domination. All destruction and havoc wreaked on human life is often attributed to the unchanging attitudes of men. Uncorrupted female psyche might rise from male dominated cultures and save the world. Among exponents of the peace movement, there is the idea that women are naturally less aggressive, more gentle and nurturing, more co-operative than men. Feminists reject this idea and furthermore, the “nature” of men and women is not monolithic.

The two spheres of activity, namely, the private sphere and the public sphere have been devalued and idealised. Women are seen as homemakers; a fact which men praise but at the same time, it is the male activity that is

regarded as important. Nowadays it does not matter whether it is a male or a female who does whatever he/she wants to do. We have women fighting as soldiers side by side with men. Women have been presidents and prime ministers and have waged or declared war. It is only when men and women are obliged to perform certain duties on the home front that problems would emerge. A man should be able to make a cup of coffee for his wife not because he is obliged to do so but because he loves the woman and vice versa.

What follows is a synopsis of the characteristics of a woman with *seriti*. These characteristics will sometimes correspond with the reaction of the men and women who have been interviewed to get to the most updated version of a woman with *seriti*. In other words do we get a situation where there is a changed perception of a woman by the women themselves, a changed conception of the women by the men and a changed conception of women by educated women with diplomas, degrees and post-graduate qualifications.

The first set of questions deals with ideal women-namely women with *seriti*. What the researcher would like to find out is whether the answers that come his way are going to reinforce the idea that a woman should be mother of the household. The researcher asked the question as to whether a woman should be a mother to all children in the black community.

68% of respondents who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 16% were undecided and 16% disagreed. 77.8% of those who are above 40 years agreed, 13.9% were undecided and 8.3% disagreed. 75.9% of the males agreed, 13.8% were undecided and 10.3% disagreed. 72.7% of females agreed, 15.2% were undecided and 12.1% disagreed. 80% of those who are at secondary schools agreed, 10% were undecided and 10% disagreed.

74.2% of those with diplomas agreed, 12.9% were undecided and 12.9% disagreed. 75% of those with degree and post-graduate qualifications agreed, 15% were undecided and 10% disagreed. This is therefore the indication that a woman with *seriti* should be a mother of all children in the black community.

Keeping the house tidy is one of the traditional roles of women generally among the blacks or the Africans. 48% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 24% were undecided and 28% disagreed. 41.7% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 25% were undecided and 33.3% disagreed. 48.3% of the males agreed, 13.8% were undecided and 37.9% disagreed. 42.4% of the females agreed, 33.3% were undecided and 24.2% disagreed. 60% of those at secondary school agreed, 10% were undecided and 30% disagreed. 46.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 23.3% were undecided and 30% disagreed. 38.1% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 28.6% were undecided and 33.3% disagreed. In the past it was considered to be the task of a woman to keep the house tidy and to see to it that everything is good on the home front. This response by the respondents shows that there is little unanimity where women had to be seen as people who are supposed to keep the house tidy. Nowadays men are able to keep the house tidy if they are given the task to do so. As time goes on, the task of keeping the house tidy would cease to be associated with women.

A good woman has always to be held in high esteem by her friends. She is also trusted as a pillar of support to rely on. 60% of those who are aged between 20-40 agree that she has to be esteemed by her friends. 24% is undecided while 16% of those interviewed disagreed. 54.1% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 27% were undecided and 18.9% disagreed. 69%

of the males agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 13.8% disagreed. 47.1% of the females agreed, 32.4% were undecided and 20.6% disagreed. 80% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 10% disagreed. 58.1% of those with diplomas agreed, 22.6% were undecided and 19.4% disagreed. 47.6% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 33.3% were undecided, and 19% disagreed. There is unanimity in favour of the fact that a woman has to be regarded in high esteem by her friends.

A traditional model of a family also encourages a situation where a good woman works very hard to keep her husband comfortable. 62% of those who are aged between 20-40 agreed, 29.2% were undecided and 8.3% disagreed. 78.4% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 13.5% were undecided and 8.1% disagreed. 82.8% of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 6.9% disagreed. 63.6% of the females agreed, 27.3% were undecided and 9.1% disagreed. 100% of those at secondary schools agreed. 73.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 20% were undecided and 6.7% disagreed. 61.9% of those with degrees and post-graduate qualifications agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 14.3% disagreed. There is general agreement to the statement that a good woman works very hard to keep her husband comfortable.

If one focuses on these responses, one notices that there is a very high response of the males, where a total of 82.8% agrees that a good woman or a woman with *seriti* has to work hard to keep her husband comfortable. On the other hand, 63.6% of the females agree that a good woman should look after the interests of her husband. The response that is a little more baffling is that of those students who are at secondary schools where a 100% agreed that a good woman should look after the interests of her husband.

The reason why the researcher believes that this response is baffling is because at that level, students should be in the position to learn equality between the sexes. Generally there is nothing wrong with helping the relationship to stay alive by letting the women to invest a little bit of their time to make living a beautiful experience.

The next question has to do with the position of the bride. The bride occupies the most unenviable position in the home in the sense that right from the beginning, her in-laws make it very clear that she is going to work very hard. There are numerous wedding songs around the personality of the bride and the subject of these songs is work. The idea that the bride should become a virtual slave is highly detested by some women.

The question that the researcher asked had to do with the idea that the bride takes over the running of the house. 40% of those who are aged between 20-40 agreed, 28% was undecided and 32% disagreed. 32.4% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 21.6% were undecided and 45.9% disagreed. 51.7% of the males agreed, 13.8% were undecided and 34.5% disagreed. 23.5% of the females disagreed, 32.4% were undecided and 44.1% disagreed. 40% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 50% disagreed. 41.9% of those with degrees and post-graduate qualifications agreed, 25.8% were undecided and 32.3% disagreed.

What is interesting once more is to see the responses of the males (51.7%) against the females (23.5%). This response means that males are more inclined to see their wives running the house than to see their mother doing that. The reason is that his mother did the running of the house when she was a bride and now she as an elderly person should teach the young bride how to do these things. One other thing that generated this kind of

response is the fact that most brides now live with their husbands and the question of their running their in-laws house becomes irrelevant.

Secondly, it could also be possible that the bride has a career as a teacher, nurse, engineer, doctor and mechanic and as a result of that she is not able to do any work after her own work. In this case, another woman could step in as a helper in the form of a domestic worker. But what happens if there are no domestic workers and both the husband and the wife are too tired to do any work? The solution to the problem revolves around the question of love. If they love one another, both the husband and the wife will take cooking lessons with the sole purpose of assisting one another and in this particular case, both of them could cook.

The next question was prompted by Krige's remark that there is no limit to the length of time a wife should cook for her mother-in-law. The same question fared in the following manner: 52% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 16% were undecided and 32% disagreed. 48.6% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 32.4% were undecided and 18.9% disagreed. 62.1% males agreed, 24.1% were undecided and 13.8% disagreed. 41.2% females agreed, 26.5% were undecided and 32.4% disagreed. 60% of those at secondary school agreed, 10% were undecided and 30% disagreed. 58.1% of those with diplomas agreed, 22.6% were undecided and 19.4% disagreed. Generally there is some agreement. The number of males who agree that there should be no limit to the number of times a bride should cook for her mother-in-law is very interesting. No bride would disagree to cook for her mother-in-law for a little while. If cooking becomes an everyday type of experience for the bride, then there is trouble.

In a situation where the bride still lives with her mother-in-law, this is a recipe for trouble and a breeding ground for divorce.

Should a woman be so independent that she has no time for housework? 4.2% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that she should be independent, 20.8% were undecided and 75% disagreed. For this group, a woman should have time for housework. 8.1% of those who are over 40 agreed that she should be independent, 10.8% were undecided and 81.1% disagreed. 13.8% of the males agreed, 10.3% were undecided and 75.9% disagreed. 0% of the females agreed, 18.2% were undecided and 81.8% disagreed. 22.2% of those at secondary school agreed, none were undecided and 77.8% disagreed. 0% of those with diplomas agreed, 12.9% were undecided and 87.1% disagreed. 9.5% of graduates and postgraduates agreed, 19% were undecided and 71.4% disagreed. These responses demonstrated that a woman with *seriti* should have time for housework.

The next question had to do with the kind of feelings that are generated by a woman who earns a salary, has a big car and a house. This according to the researcher represents the pinnacle of success and it also represents a woman of *seriti*. 29.2% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 agreed that a woman of *seriti* should earn a salary, have a car and a house. 25% were undecided and 45.8% disagreed. This therefore is a vote of no confidence in such a woman by a group that the researcher considers to be enlightened. 22.2% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 16.7% were undecided and 61.1% disagreed. 21.4% of the males agreed, 21.4% were undecided and 57.1% disagreed. 27.3% of the females agreed, 21.2% were undecided and 51.5% disagreed. 44.4% of those at secondary agreed, 11.1% were undecided and 44.4% disagreed. There is an equal number of

those who agree and disagree. 26.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 23.3% were undecided and 50% disagreed. 14.3% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 19% were undecided and 66.7% disagreed. All the respondents except those who are at secondary school do not want a woman who earned a salary, has a house and a car. Those who represent the youngest of the respondents are those who are at secondary school and as a result of this there will be changes in this particular dimension in future.

The next question had to do with a woman who is kind hearted, earns a salary and loves children. Kindness and generosity represent some of the leading characteristics of *seriti*. 76% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 16% were undecided and 8% disagreed. 64.9% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 21.6% were undecided and 13.5% disagreed. 69% of the males agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 13.8% disagreed. 67.6% of the females agreed, 20.6% were undecided and 11.8% disagreed. 100% of those at secondary agreed. 67.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 19.4% were undecided and 12.9% disagreed. 57.1% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 19% disagreed. There was an overwhelming response in favour of a woman who is kind, earns a salary and loves children.

The following is the kind of a woman who clashes violently with tradition in the sense that she is a single parent, she earns a salary and has a car. There are many of these young women who appear on television, and are in the government and private sectors. They are generally held in high esteem and they symbolise the independent woman with *seriti*. 25% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agree, 33.3% were undecided and 41.7% disagreed. 32.4% of those who are over the age of 40 agreed, 16.2% were

undecided and 51.4% disagreed. 27.6% of the males agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 51.7% disagreed. 33.3% of the females agreed. 24.2% were undecided and 42.4% disagreed. 40% of those at secondary school agreed, 20% were undecided and 40% disagreed. 29% of those with diplomas agreed, 25.8% were undecided and 45.2% disagreed. 30% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 15% were undecided and 55% disagreed. What the results illustrate once more is that among the young people there is an indication that they are moving away from the traditional concepts that the role of a woman should exclude any amount of independence on the part of a single woman. In years to come, this trend will continue so that more and more of the Northern Sotho will see the truth of the equality of all before the law. If a young man who earns a salary and drives a car is accepted by all, there is no need to keep a young woman with the same status from enjoying the same kind of freedom.

In the arena of business, we see many young women who have been successful on their own without the input of any man. These young women are assertive and independent and they run very big corporate concerns both in the private and public spheres. 25% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that a woman should be a shrewd business woman, 50% were undecided and 25% disagreed. 31.4% of those who are above 40 years agreed, 25.7% were undecided and 42.9% disagreed. 38.5% of the males agreed, 26.9% were undecided and 34.6% disagreed. 20% of women agreed, 40% were undecided and 40% disagreed. 25% of those at secondary agreed, 37.5% were undecided and 37.5% disagreed. 28.6% of those with diplomas agreed, 32.1% were undecided and 39.3% disagreed. 31.6% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 31.6% were undecided and 36.8%

disagreed. There is lack of unanimity in this particular case and there were a great number of people who were mostly undecided.

In the arena of commercial farming, there was unanimity that a woman with *seriti* should be a successful farmer. 76% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 12% were undecided and 12% disagreed. 62.2% of those who are over the age of 40 agreed, 18.9% were undecided and 18.9% disagreed. 62.1% of the males agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 17.2% disagreed. 70.6% of the females agreed, 14.7% were undecided and 14.7% disagreed. 90% of those at secondary agreed and 10% disagreed. 64.5% of those with diplomas agreed, 22.6% were undecided and 12.9% disagreed. 61.9% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 14.3% were undecided and 23.8% disagreed.

The idea of initiation as part of an accumulation of *seriti* plays an important role in traditional society. A woman who has been to initiation has *seriti* as Moffatt (*supra*) pointed out. She is regarded as having reached the goal of womanhood and she could be married and have children. Does the modern Northern Sotho place too much premium on a woman who has been to initiation school? 58.3% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 12.5% were undecided and 29.2% disagreed. 43.2% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 18.9% were undecided and 37.8% disagreed. 58.6% of the males agreed, 6.9% were undecided and 34.5% disagreed. 39.4% of the females disagreed, 24.2% were undecided and 36.4% disagreed. 80% of those at secondary schools agreed and 20% disagreed. 43.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 16.7% were undecided and 40% disagreed. The respondents are more ready to accept a woman who has been to initiation school than a man who has been to initiation school.

Many groups agreed that women have to be initiated except the women themselves. Most women do not take initiation of women into womanhood seriously because it is something that men have to take seriously. Although women agreed that they have to get an initiation programme going, there's a great number of women who are undecided about this question. An equally great number of women disagreed.

If a man is able to do labour work, a woman is also capable of doing that. To say that a woman is not capable of doing labour work is tantamount to being sexist. 32% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that women should do labour work at public works. 44% were undecided and 24% disagreed. 21.6% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 32.2% were undecided and 45.9% disagreed. 34.5% of the males agreed, 24.1% were undecided and 41.4% disagreed. 20.6% of the females agreed, 47.1% were undecided and 32.4% disagreed. 40% of those at secondary school agreed, 40% were undecided and 20% disagreed. 25.8% of those with diplomas agreed, 41.9% were undecided and 32.3% disagreed. 23.8% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 52.4% disagreed. There is general disagreement about the question of a woman labourer. The question of a woman labouring to build a house for her family, in the same way that the Batswana women did in the past, is less appealing for women in the Limpopo Province.

Women sell fruit and vegetables to keep their families alive while their husbands are in the big cities trying to earn a living. 40% of those between 20-40 years agreed, 40% were undecided and 20% disagreed. 32.4% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 18.9% were undecided and 45.9% disagreed. 31% of the male agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 51.7%

disagreed. 38.2% of the females agreed, 35.3% were undecided and 26.5% disagreed. 40% of those at secondary school agreed, 40% were undecided and 20% disagreed. 29% of those with diplomas agreed, 35.5% were undecided and 35.5% disagreed. 23.8% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 52.4% disagreed. There is a general tendency by the Northern Sotho to keep their women from the hardships connected with labour work.

### **3.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The focus of the family for the Northern Sotho was and still is more home centred (private sphere) rather than public centred. The responses by the respondents favour a situation where they generally favour the home rather than the public sphere. The question of the division of labour still holds particularly during weddings and funerals. At these occasions it is taboo for a man to be found doing women's work when men's work still has to be carried out.

The position of the mother as a mother of not only of her children but the mother also of those children who do not have their own mothers still holds. In the past, all the children belonged to the village and when a person grew up in Soweto, any parent could send any child if her own children were nowhere to be seen. The only problem though was that certain parents gave the children they sent a sum of money for encouragement. This used to infuriate those parents who do not want their children to expect something after running an errand. In the towns, this practice has died a natural death because parents do not send children to shopping complexes, they go there themselves since they have cars that they use.

In the arena of housekeeping where a woman works tirelessly to keep her house tidy, there was no outright majority even if people generally agreed that housekeeping is one of the most important functions of a woman. It should be borne in mind that people who keep houses tidy are mostly the maids or the helpers.

Northern Sotho women like to live in the midst of good friends. One of the most important questions for a woman who is trying to find a new house in town is whether she will be able to find neighbours with whom she could associate. She wants good neighbours because she has to come to some understanding with them. One of these understandings is to try to form a woman's club that would assist them (women) during funerals, weddings and so on. There was therefore a general tendency to agree with the assertion that a good woman is held in high esteem by her friends.

Could a good woman work hard to keep her husband comfortable? What dictates the movement towards caring for one another is not because if she does not care for him, somebody else will do that. Love conquers everything and people are mostly motivated by love to do the impossible. The husband on the other hand has to reciprocate by doing certain things in the house (for example to wash the dishes, to cook a special dish) to keep his wife happy.

On the questions that were prompted by Krige's two comments about the Lovedu home situation, namely that the bride literally takes over the running of the house and that there is no limit to the length of time that a wife should cook for her mother-in-law, there was generally some agreement. Although there was some agreement, most families prefer to go elsewhere

after the marriage ceremony to avoid conflict situation between the bride and her mother-in-law.

Should a woman be so independent that she has no time for housework? This question was answered in the negative by most of the respondents because the house would become a pigsty if she does not do something. People usually blame the woman when there is something wrong with the surroundings. The Northern Sotho still treasure a woman who could look after her surroundings well.

An independent woman, who earns a salary, has a car and a house does not seem to have *seriti* among the Northern Sotho. What seems to be inconvenient about this question is the fact that the woman is not married. Most of the constituencies that were interviewed did not answer in the affirmative about the position of such a woman. These people probably think that a woman needs a man to be a woman (of *seriti*)

On the other hand, a woman who is kind-hearted, earns a salary and loves children was believed to have *seriti*. There was an overwhelming response in favour. In a situation where the woman is a single parent, earns a salary and has a car, there is general disapproval except in a situation of those who are at secondary who have 40% in agreement and 40% in disagreement. Another thing that is striking about the respondents is that they do not like business women in general. On the question of the initiation of women, there was generally some agreement about that as well.

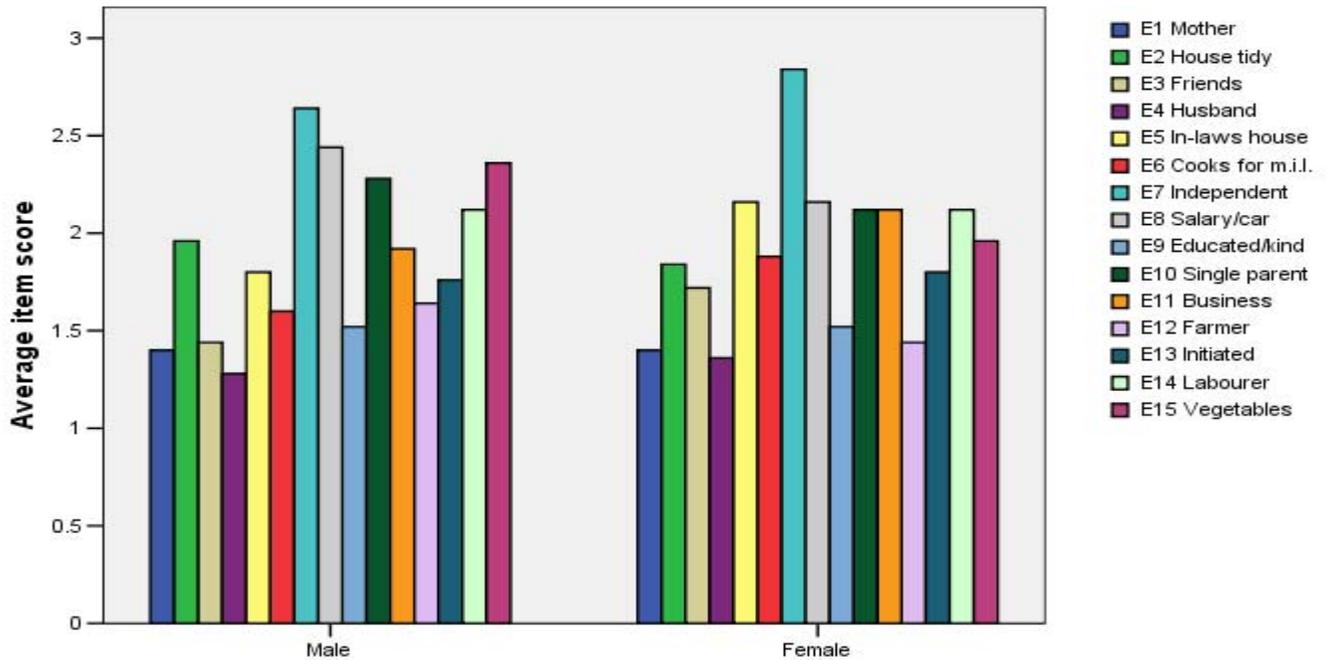
Could a woman work as a labourer with public works? Most of the respondents who are old as compared to secondary school students disagreed. It is only the students who agreed that she should work as a

labourer. Respondents did not approve of women who sell fruits and vegetables as part of an exercise of earning a living and *seriti*.

There isn't much that has changed about the question of the equality between the sexes. It is usually a man who does not have time for housework and this society, the Northern Sotho, could tolerate such an attitude by a man. If a woman is the one who does not show any interest in housework then the whole Limpopo province is on its feet. Women who are single parents, have a house and a car do not stand a snowball's chance in hell where the question of *seriti* is concerned. Nowadays they are the ones who are lampooned as a bad example of a woman at weddings. The church is equally suspicious about such women as they appear at penitentiary classes without the men who made them pregnant. The respondents are equally suspicious about the idea of a woman owning a business. There has to be changes to the image of a woman in the Limpopo Province - drastic changes.

The next chapter shall focus on the image of a man. What is the image of a man with *seriti*?

### Women and Seriti



In this graph, let us take that if the graph indicates less than two (2), that would be the indication that there is some agreement. If the graph goes beyond the number two on the average item score, that is an indication that there is disagreement. If the graph indicates 2.5, that would be an indication that there is very strong disagreement.

Both the males and the females agree that a good woman should be a mother (E.1). About keeping the house tidy (E.2), although there is some unanimity that a woman of *seriti* should keep the house tidy, there is surprisingly less disagreement among the males as compared to the females.

The males believe less that a woman should keep the house tidy while the women believe more that a woman should keep the house tidy. About friendship (E.3), namely that a woman with *seriti* keeps lots of friends, the males are in total agreement while the females also believe but not to the same extent as the males.

That a good woman or a woman with *seriti* should keep her husband comfortable (E.4), was met with approval by the males while the females felt the same. The idea of a new bride who takes over the running of the in-laws house (E.5) was moderately accepted by the males while the females rejected it candidly. There was no objection on both sides on the question of the woman with *seriti* cooking for her mother-in-law (E.6).

An independent woman, who has no time for house work (E.7) was met with disapproval by both the males and the females. The males do not approve of a woman who earns a salary, has a big car and a house (E.8) while the women approve of their fellow woman. There is unanimity of both the males and females on the question of a woman who is well-educated, kind hearted, earn a salary and loves children (E.9). The males disagree totally on the question of a woman who is a single parent, earns a salary and has a car, while the women on the other hand also disagree but not to the same extent as the males.

On the question of a woman with *seriti* having some business acumen (E11), there is some agreement among the males than the females. Should a woman be a farmer at all? (E.12). On this question, the males and the females agree that this should be the case. The males and the females also agreed that she should be fully initiated into womanhood. On the last two

questions, E.14 and E.15, there was general disagreement that a woman should be both a labourer and be a vegetable vendor.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## MEN AND *SERITI*

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher concentrates on men. He will do so by presenting a picture of a traditional man and thereafter present a picture of modern day man. At the end the researcher focuses on the research results to find out what the men and women say about *seriti*. In conclusion, based on the outcome of the research results, the researcher summarizes what people generally think a man of *seriti* ought to look like. The researcher has used proverbs all along with a view to bring to light what the women looked like. Perhaps it would be better first to work with proverbs to come to an understanding of how men were viewed in the past and what the implications of these are in the future.

The dominance of *seriti* comes out forcefully once more in the researcher's assessment of Northern Sotho proverbs. Proverbs encourage category A *seriti* in the sense that the study of proverbs empowers the student while proverbs have the power to pinpoint areas in the life of the Northern Sotho that have to do with *seriti* or that proverbs encourage the virtue of retaining one's *seriti*. Proverbs encourage category A *seriti* because they promote communalism as well as other phenomena that make the Northern Sotho in particular, and other people in general, be what they are.

The researcher therefore offers a glimpse of what life in the community in general looked like through the lenses of proverbial expressions. The focus will be on men as a section on women has already been done.

The following song in Northern Sotho asks a person where he/she comes from if he/she does not know proverbs. If you do not know proverbs, where do you come from?/ *O tšwa kae o sa tsebeng maele?*. The singer of the song takes it for granted that every person knows some proverbs as well as idiomatic expressions.

A knowledge of proverbs and idiomatic expressions is synonymous with a knowledge of codes of behavior and conduct. The absence of such knowledge has the tendency to disenfranchise a Northern Sotho or an African in the arena of *seriti* as *botho*. These idiomatic expressions translate themselves into codes of understanding of what *seriti* is. To understand these proverbial expressions and their codes of *seriti*, one has to penetrate the kernel of metaphorical language.

In the past, knowledge of proverbial expressions and its application elevated the status of a speaker but nowadays, people prefer a more direct way or manner of speaking than one that intersperses their speech with proverbial expressions. However, the use of proverbial expressions is still employed in a limited way in the traditional courts. Concerning the metaphor, the researcher has come across two ways of understanding, namely, to look at the recipient of the metaphor and to compare the recipient with the behavior of some animal.

People become comparable to animals while things that are not animate become comparable to things that are animate. In other words, the physical

appearance of the animal mentioned in the metaphor, whether noble or ignoble, closely resembles the features of the person against whom the metaphor is directed. Before continuing with this analysis, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by a metaphor. Another point that needs to be stated is that when people become comparable to animals, it is not the physical features that are compared but features that are noble and tend to praise a human being.

The following kinds of animals are used in proverbs, pigs, wild boars, wildebeest, cattle, lions, crocodiles, leopards, porcupines and many more. What is conspicuous, however, is the fact that the researcher has never come across hyenas, owls, snakes, and dogs except wild dogs. The animals that the researcher has named sometimes appear in idiomatic expressions. No matter how angry a person may be, if you call him/her by his totem animal, such a person is easily pacified. The researcher has noticed with amusement how people who were angered had changed their facial expressions from one of anger to one of delight once the offended party is referred to through their totem animal. This part will thus focus on metaphorical expressions that appear in the form of proverbs.

#### **4.2 WHAT IS A PROVERB AND A METAPHOR**

According to Taylor (1996: 2), a proverb is a wise saying; it belongs to many people; it is ingenious in form or idea; and was first invented by an individual and applied by him/her to a particular situation. The word “proverb” is used both in a limited and a more general sense. According to Taylor (1996: 1), it may be an old or a new comment on life and morals, like *beggars must not be choosers*, which has a long history, and *poor but proud*, which may not be more than a century

old. Taylor (1996: 6) cites two types of proverbs which he calls proverbial apothegms which he regards as terse and pithy maxims. These contain a moral or ethical truth. The other type that he refers to are metaphorical proverbs, he mentions that metaphors are chosen from household and the simple events of life, for example: *a burnt child dreads the fire or You must learn to creep before you can go*. Proverbs are also meant to influence the hearer to behave in a certain way as Jonathan Charteris-Black (1995: 2) remarks:

The motivation behind the use of proverbs is frequently to exert some sort of influence over the hearer's behaviour; in terms of Speech Act theory, many proverbs would be classified as directives since they are concerned with influencing the behaviour of the hearer.

Metaphorical types of proverbs appear most frequently among the Northern Sotho. The Shangaan of the Limpopo Province, also boast about their use of metaphorical expressions, as Schneider (1986: 131) remarks about the Shangaan:

Proverbs such as those of the Tsonga people are not only signalled by a high degree of figurative expressions, mostly metaphors and similes, or by poetical characteristics of density, sound effects, rhythms and special arrangements, which they share with aphorisms and poetry in general.

When the Northern Sotho use metaphorical proverbs, they bear in mind the background of the very proverbs that they are articulating namely the background presented by the story, or myth. In most cases animals appear most prominently in the presentation of a proverb. According to Schneider (1986: 129), a slothful person is often compared with a lazy animal in a fable. An obstinate person is frequently compared to an obstinate type of animal. When these

animals, whether wild or domestic, feature in a proverb, some kind of meta-pherein or a transportation of meaning from one context to another takes place. For example, in a situation where a person is lazy, he or she is compared to a hare, which does not have a tail. The reason why a hare does not have a tail is given by the fable of how hares lost their tails. It is said that God created all the animals but for some reason decided to create tails separately. Every animal had to go and collect a tail because it was in the interest of an animal to collect its own tail. The hare, because he was too lazy, decided to let another animal bring a tail for him. The animal left to fetch a tail for the hare but he could not find any. He had to go back to inform the hare that there was no tail for him! For children, the moral of the story is that it would be better for a person to do things himself/herself because the hare became tailless because he sent some animal on an errand rather than go there himself.

Dalfovo (1991: 48) captures the connection of animals and proverbs in the following manner:

Sometimes the animal referred to is associated with some human trait, and this needs to be known to appraise the message of the proverb in all its depths.

According to Dalfovo, an elephant refers to a person who is slow to move and act, a buffalo denotes an excitable and impulsive character, and the goat recalls stubbornness. Before discussing metaphorical proverbs, the meaning of the word metaphor will be explained.

A metaphor is derived from the Greek word *metapherein*. The meaning of *metapherein* has to do with a situation where a person transports goods from

one point to another. In metaphors, a kind of transportation takes place in the sense that words are transported from one context to another. Shirley Arora (1995: 1) defines a metaphor as something that produces transference between terms, of other features that are not shared, or that have not been perceived as shared. She gives the example of a woman and a guitar. In such an explanation or example, there is a point of departure level, the intermediate level as well as the arrival point. What she examines are the features that are found both in a guitar and a woman. The process of transference thus starts from the guitar, and then there is the intermediate stage where features that are shared by both the woman and the guitar are shared and thereafter the process moves on to the woman. What Arora says is that the woman and the guitar share the following features: gender, shape (“waist,” “hips”) has a “mouth” and a “neck”, “talks,” “sings,” and can be held in ones arms, or on ones lap.

We find the same nuance in terms of the word metaphor in Schon’s (1979: 254) definition of a metaphor as ...a particular kind of SEEING-AS, the “meta-pherein” or the “carrying over” of frames or perspectives from one domain of experience to another.

When focusing on metaphor in Northern Sotho proverbs it is clear that the metaphor becomes evident in the explanation of the proverb itself. In the following proverb: *Tšie e fofa ka mošwang*, // “A locust/grasshopper flies through the aid of chyme”, (digested vegetation used by the body of an animal as fuel, in actual fact, the word *mošwang* is the stomach contents of the animal). *Mošwang* is stomach contents from a dead animal, as opposed to those of a human being. There is a devolution of meaning when a grasshopper, which uses grass for survival, is compared to a human being

who uses food to survive. To get some strength, both the grasshopper and the human being have to eat so that whatever they eat should assist in sustaining them for the day. This proverb is used when people at a cooperative have to stop working, take a break and eat some food. Most of the proverbs have been used as codes of behavior to a point where one could actually treat them as some codification of the African expression of being human.

It is true that African religion does not have any books on codes of conduct like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and other religions have. The fact that African religion does not have books does, however, not mean that it is a religion that is doomed where the question of practice is concerned. There are volumes and volumes of books on proverbs that have been written in all the African languages. These writings shed not just a little bit of light but they illuminate with a bright beam as it were a light or spectrum of African experience in the form of proverbs.

This type of illumination gives us a clear idea about the value attached to being a human being among the Northern Sotho. What is curious though about these proverbs is that in the case of Northern Sotho proverbs, there is no mention of *Modimo* or even *badimo* // God or ancestors whereas in other Limpopo Province cultures (Khuba 1985: 16) there is a mention at least of the ancestors or the living dead.

There may be an explanation for that kind of omission. Proverbs that had to do with the ancestors had either been deliberately removed, or we are dealing with a situation where the Northern Sotho themselves might not have deemed that including God or the ancestors in proverbs was a sound practice because of an attempt by the Northern Sotho to avoid the use of the

name of God and the ancestors in ordinary conversation. Lastly, we could be dealing with a situation where proverbs themselves, being a mundane phenomenon, compared only things that are to be found in a practical relaxed type of a situation.

### **4.3 MEN IN PROVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS**

It was not a shame in traditional Northern Sotho culture for a man to have many wives or spouses as well as concubines. Such a man was viewed with a great deal of respect particularly if his kraal was filled with cattle. If a man had many cattle he was regarded as a rich man. Not only was this man treated with respect but he also had a great deal of *seriti*. The image given to the researcher by proverbial expressions points in the direction of a desire on the part of a Northern Sotho man to acquire as many women as possible. It should be pointed out that when we write about Northern Sotho man/woman, it is the traditional Northern Sotho man/woman we are referring to rather than modern Northern Sotho.

The modern Northern Sotho, however have since, to a large extent, evolved into Western ways of living without fully adopting the Western ways of doing things. Tutu speaks of a schizophrenia in religious terms precisely because the modern Northern Sotho basically belong to two worlds. When troubled he/she resorts to the ways of his/her forefathers, namely, finding out from sangomas and ngangas what is it that is troubling him /her.

### **4.4 PROVERBS THAT ENTRENCH POLYGYNY**

Proverbial expressions tell us what a real man is when it is stated that a man is a vine he extends, as the Northern Sotho proverb mentions: *Monna ke thaka, o a naba*//A man is the vine (of a pumpkin), he extends. In its present form, the proverb is actually not complete because it continues in another form that is not always quoted. In this proverb, there is a metaphor between a man and a vine. Just as a vine is able to extend, a man is able to move anywhere he wants to go and this includes finding other women besides his wife. Just as a vine has roots, a man should also be rooted at home where he has a wife and children.

Another proverb, similar in meaning to the first one is the following: “*Monna ke selepe, o lala a adimilwe.*” // “A man is an axe, he has to be borrowed”. An axe is sharp. It is an object that could be borrowed and returned. In the abundance of women, a man has to move around and have other women. The action of having more than one wife increased the man’s status or *seriti*. He had to acquire many women or concubines while like a root of a pumpkin, he had to remain rooted at home to provide for his children. This, therefore, means that when a man arrived late at home his wife should not question him. She would know inwardly that he was beginning to show interest in other women without upsetting the applecart at home. Hers was simply to guard her terrain of influence as a home-maker. The space, however, is not to be violated by another woman. The researcher has observed that a man of influence would build two identical houses separated by a partition for his two wives. Consequently, both women, would prepare food for their husband so that in the end he would have two plates of food to eat.

The second and the third reinforced the first one in that the explanations of these metaphorical proverbs remain the same. Like an axe, a man has to be borrowed so that he could go and assist somewhere. The sharpness of the axe is comparable to the virility of the man simply because a sharp axe does work very quickly. Also to be taken into consideration an axe was a very important implement without which a person could not succeed doing work. As an axe that does work easily and quickly, he could assist with work in a cooperative but he could also assist a woman in distress or in a state of anxiety or stressful situation. The third one also reinforced the other two.

According to the researcher, these proverbs do have the context that in the past, because of things such as warfare, men were killed in large numbers. These left many women widowed. To solve the problem of a proliferation of women who were not married, men had to take the responsibility of catering for women who could not have husbands by opting for polygyny. Polygyny is the kind of marriage where a husband has more than one wife. If there are people who are advocating for polygyny in a situation where there is war, perhaps this is justifiable but if there is an absence of war and a presence of diseases such as AIDS, those advocating for polygyny have reached the height of irresponsibility, the presence of Viagra notwithstanding. It is against this background that Kupa's (1980) Master of Arts dissertation has to be revisited. In this dissertation, Kupa argues that in general the Bible did not condemn polygyny. The viewpoint of the researcher is that it is in the same Bible that Kupa quotes that there are instances of slavery although the word slavery meant a different practice than slavery during the colonial era. Just because the Bible does not condemn slavery does not mean that the institution of slavery was right.

The second viewpoint is that when we speak or write on polygyny, we should be careful because both the Bible and traditional society do not tell us anything about democracy and the rights of all human beings. Democracy challenges some or all manifestations of oppression in society. What should really be taken into account is whether both the Bible and traditional Northern Sotho society had mechanisms in place to see to it that democracy takes place. If there were mechanisms to see to it that democracy takes place when certain decisions such as permitting polygyny for example were questioned or interrogated, the researcher is certain that most appearances of oppression against women would have disappeared. In traditional Northern Sotho courts or the *kgoro*, for example, women were not permitted to enter the conclave of such a setting for a discussion or even a debate, but were confined to certain spots where they could not be seen. Decisions that affected them were taken in such courts without their representation!

Women did not have a right to choose whom they wanted to marry. Parents colluded with people or old men who had a lot of cattle in a bid which resulted in the youth of a pretty young woman wasted on an old man. The researcher spent some time in Zululand where on a particular day, he was told that a young Zulu woman who got a child out of wedlock was forced to be married to an old man according to past customs. The idea was to teach others who might copy the example to be vigilant about such an important thing as preserving the status of girls as virgins.

In traditional Northern Sotho culture there was room for love, otherwise there could not have been so many books written on the subject matter itself. If a young woman is forced to marry an old man, against her will, where is the consideration of love? Is it not love that is supposed to come

first and then marriage later? The researcher feels that love should come first and then thereafter, marriage and not the other way round.

Lastly, petty jealousies and accusations of witchcraft frequently occur among wives competing for the attention of one man. In a report written for SANPAD, the researcher observed that in one particular case, the cause of witchcraft accusations was polygyny. In this particular case, a certain Mmasetumo (not her real name) was at home when her co-wife, called *mogadikane* //the one to be fried, (because of the idea that co-wives are always at loggerheads with one another,) whose name was Mmakoma, walked into her house. She called Mmasetumo a dog because the latter had committed an abortion. Her exact words were: “What does this dog want here because it has committed an abortion”? Mmakoma further pointed out that Mmasetumo was a witch and insulted her by referring to her private parts. Mmakoma punched, strangled and chased Mmasetumo away, saying that she should not take any clothes that were bought by their husband. Mmasetumo who was apparently not physically strong enough to challenge Mmakoma decided to take her children who were stripped naked, and left the house. This case was reported to the police.

To a Western mind, when someone says that someone has committed abortion, the meaning of such a statement does not immediately become clear. To a person who once resided at such a place (Duiwelskloof and the vicinity) when a person is accused of having committed an abortion, it means that the person thus accused suffers from gonorrhoea. If she suffers from gonorrhoea, and is also a co-wife, this means that she contracted the disease from a boyfriend and the husband picked up the disease from her. The husband in turn infected the other woman who angrily attacked her co-

wife verbally and physically. The possibility that the husband may have picked up the disease from another woman was not questioned. The accusation of witchcraft and the subsequent assault made the other woman go to the police. It should however be noted that the researcher is not trying to explain away the existence of witchcraft as a phenomenon, but such a discussion falls outside the scope of this study.

Northern Sotho men and women desire the presence of children in a house as pointed out earlier but to acquire children at the expense of a disease such as AIDS is not very clever. It is against this background, therefore, that the researcher feels that all three proverbs should lose their relevance.

Another of those proverbs that must be taken seriously is also metaphorical in nature. The proverb in question is the following: “*Monna ke lepai re a gogelana.*” // “A man is a blanket, we (the women) have to pull it (the blanket.)” This metaphor conjures up a situation where there are people using the same blanket to protect themselves against the elements. If there are many of these people under the blanket, the strong person usually pulls it so that he/she could be warmer because the blanket is too small for two to three people to sleep under. In poor families with scanty resources, one blanket is usually enough to cover two to three people. In the same way, when men were a scarce commodity, it is stupid for a woman to treat a husband badly. Rakoma explains it in the following manner and this is a direct translation:

If a woman does not take care of her husband, thinking that all the women hate him, she should know that this is not so. One day the man will get angry and divorce that wife. She will be surprised to learn that that man is happily married with someone else.

This explanation of the proverb indeed reflects the spirit of the times but it should be taken seriously in a situation where there is mutual respect today. Women far outnumber men but both men and women should have respect for one another. If a man psychologically and physically abuses a woman, he should also know that such a woman is likely to leave him.

The other proverb that has to do with men finds expression in a situation of cooperatives. This proverb compares a man to an axe but the axe has to remain sharp because it has to be borrowed. It says a man is an axe, he has to be sharpened at all times. An explanation of this proverb as stated earlier is that a man who is to be requested to assist with any type of work has to be informed long ahead of the time so that he could do the work in question. Like an axe that has to remain sharp, if his assistance is not solicited in time, there is the likelihood that whoever makes such a request will meet with disappointment because he may have been asked to go and work somewhere else.

#### **4.5 PROVERBS THAT ENCOURAGE COOPERATION**

There are many proverbs that encourage mutual cooperation among people who are pursuing the same goals. These proverbs extol the virtue of working in a group context and condemn the idea of working alone. In other words it is more dignified to work as a group than to do things alone. People who work alone and achieve some degree of success are often accused of practising witchcraft. Work in itself gives the person engaged in the work some degree of dignity, thus people who are engaged in some work have *seriti*. When one looks at these proverbs that encourage working together, one comes across a metaphor of another kind. When one looks at the sentence, at first glance one could conclude that the metaphor is going to

deal with a human being since the starting point of such a metaphor has to do with human beings, because children of a human being are being referred to. As the sentence progresses, one immediately becomes aware that it is not human beings that the proverb is referring to but an animal. The only thing that has happened is that an animal has been addressed as if it was a human being. This then becomes personification. Although it is personification, there has been a transportation of meaning from the human context to an animal context resulting in a situation where an animal is addressed as if it was a human being.

If one could look at the following example: *Bana ba kgwale ba bitšana ka melodi* //Children of a partridge call one another by whistling. Under normal circumstances the young of a partridge are not called children. That they are called children makes the partridge itself to be human or the partridge becomes personified or assumes the status of a human being. According to Rakoma (1986: 156) the proverb means that people who belong to the same organization have to help one another. Just like the chicks of a partridge that are able to identify one another through whistling, people who work for one organization are able to identify one another through uniforms and to help one another.

Another proverb is: *Mpya pedi ga e šitwe ke sebatana* // “two dogs cannot be defeated by a prey”. The same proverb is presented in another way: One fingernail cannot crush a louse // *Lenala le letee ga le rone nta*. Both these proverbs do not feature in Rakoma’s collection of proverbs. One could always guess that the same proverbs have variations that are mentioned by Rakoma. This is another proverb that is used to foster a spirit of cooperation in a work-related situation. This proverb conjures up a situation of hunting

dogs or wild dogs that seek the cooperation of one another to kill a prey. These dogs could either be domesticated or wild. Either way, the dogs help one another to hunt a prey and kill it successfully if they cooperate. Human beings are able to come together in terms of cooperation to accomplish something which they otherwise could not have accomplished had they decided not to cooperate.

#### **4.6 THE DIGNITY // *SERITI* OF SOLIDARITY**

Solidarity in a situation where people work together is something that gives the group *seriti* and it is also an expression of *botho* as the following proverb mentions: “*Ditau tša hloka seboka di šitwa ke nare e hlotša.*” // “Lions without solidarity fail to catch a limping buffalo”. The proverb is metaphorical. Lions as animals that always work in a group are substituted for people, particularly men or women who work in a group or a *letšema*. A limping buffalo is much weaker than a buffalo that does not limp. A limping buffalo would, therefore, represent work that is not too demanding. The meaning of the proverb is that people who work in a group but who do not agree with one another are not even able to accomplish a task that is not even demanding. Disagreement among people who are working together often leads to a situation where such disagreement is reflected in the things that they do. People are therefore comparable to lions who lack solidarity and who because of their lack of solidarity are not even able to accomplish a small task such as killing a limping buffalo.

#### 4.7 INITIATION

The focus has to be on the question of men and their attitude to initiation to measure how keen the constituencies are that initiation should be compulsory. Should the Northern Sotho man be fully initiated into manhood? 44% of those who are aged between 20-40 agreed, 16% were undecided and 40% disagreed. 21.6% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 16.2% were undecided and 62.2% disagreed. It is interesting that from the group that is over 40 years there is a response that discourages initiation when the group that is aged between 20-40 is in favour of initiation. There is still a more perplexing response from the males when 41.4% of the males are in favour of initiation, 10.3% were undecided and 48.3% are against initiation. 20.6% of the females agreed, 20.6% were undecided and 58.8% disagreed. 50% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 40% disagreed. 25.8% of those with diplomas agreed, 16.1% were undecided and 58.1% disagreed. 28.6% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 14.3% were undecided and 57.1% disagreed. It is only the group that is aged between 20-40 years and those at secondary schools who agree while the rest of the respondents disagreed about the idea of a Northern Sotho man being fully initiated into manhood. What is deeply perplexing is that 48.3% of the males are disagreeing while 41.4% of the males are agreeing. The females and those with diplomas are the most fervent supporters of the idea that men do not have to be initiated into manhood.

A man with *seriti* should have many cattle. This therefore means that he should be rich by traditional Northern Sotho standards. A man without cattle is very poor by Northern Sotho standards. It is worse if a person does not even have a goat. The Northern Sotho describe a person who is poor in

terms of the availability of a goat. If they say: *ga a na le pudi ya leleme le letala* / He has no green tongued goat, it means that a person is very poor.

28% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 years agreed that a man with *seriti* should have cattle, 28% were undecided and 44% disagreed. 18.9% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 24.3% were undecided and 56.8% were not in favour. It is increasingly becoming clear that wealth is no longer measured in terms of the availability of cattle. 27.6% of the males agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 55.2% disagreed. 20.6% of the females agreed, 32.4% were undecided and 47.1% disagreed. 20% of those at secondary schools agreed, 10% were undecided and 70% disagreed. 25.8% of those with diplomas agreed, 29% were undecided and 45.2% disagreed. 23.8% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 52.4% disagreed. Wealth is no longer measured in terms of availability of cattle because even if they are many, there is no land to contain them. In Botswana, a man with a herd of 5000 cattle is considered poor. To be rich, a person has to possess 50 000 cattle. Botswana is the only country where wealth is measured in cattle terms.

Should a man be in possession of many wives? 16% of those who are aged between 20 and 40 years agreed, 16% were undecided and 68% disagreed. 13.9% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 8.3% were undecided and 77.8% disagreed. 21.4% of the males agreed, 10.7% were undecided and 67.9% disagreed. 8.8% of the females agreed, 11.8% were undecided and 79.4% disagreed. 20% of those at secondary schools agreed and 80% disagreed. 9.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 16.1% were undecided and 74.2% disagreed.

20% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 5% were undecided and 75% disagreed. This whole group is violently opposed to polygamy- the idea that a man should have more than one wife. To have more than one wife is no longer to be connected with having *seriti*. In the past, it used to be the case but nowadays it is no longer the case that a man should have more than one wife.

If there was such a violent reaction against polygamy, what of concubines and harbouring them? 8.7% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 39.1% were undecided and 52.2% disagreed. 13.5% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 1.8% were undecided and 75.7% disagreed. 21.4% of the males agreed, 10.7% were undecided and 67.9% disagreed. 9.4% of the females agreed, 25% were undecided and 65.6% disagreed. 20% of those at secondary school agreed, 30% were undecided and 50% disagreed. 6.9% of those with diplomas agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 72.4% disagreed. 14.3% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 14.3% were undecided and 71.4% disagreed. There was an overwhelming response against a man keeping concubines.

If a Tswana king is a person from whom good things come, then a Northern Sotho man should at least be in the position to support his family. There are a great many people who call themselves men but they are not able to support their children. Most of these people have to be forced by the law to support their children. 83.3% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agree that a good man supports his family, 12.5% were undecided and 4.2% disagreed. 89.2% of those who are over 40 years agree, 8.1% were undecided and 2.7% disagreed. 89.7% of the males agreed, 6.9% were undecided and 3.4% disagreed. 84.8% of the females agreed, 12.1% were

undecided and 3% disagreed. 100% of those that are at secondary schools agreed. 83.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 13.3% were undecided and 3.3% disagreed. 95% of graduates and post-graduates agreed, 5% were undecided and there was no one who disagreed. This response is a clear statement in favour of the idea that a good man supports his family.

88% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that a man with *seriti* should be loved and respected by all; 8% were undecided and 4% disagreed. 94.4% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 5.6% were undecided and none disagreed. 96.4% of the males agreed and 3.6% were undecided. 88.2% of the females agreed, 8.8% were undecided and 2.9% disagreed. 100% of those at secondary schools agreed that a man with *seriti* is loved and respected. 90.3% of those with diplomas agreed, 6.5% were undecided and 3.2% disagreed. 95% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed and 5% were undecided.

A monogamous man should be in the position to love his wife. 84% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed and 16% were undecided. 83.8% of those who are over 40 years agreed that a man must love his wife, 13.5% were undecided and 2.7% disagreed. 93.1% of the males agreed and 6.9% were undecided. 76.5% of the females agreed, 20.6% were undecided and 2.9% disagreed. 90% of those at secondary schools agreed and 10% were undecided. 83.9% of those with diplomas agreed and 16.1% disagreed. 85.7% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 9.5% were undecided and 4.8% disagreed.

A man with *seriti* is a believer in the equality of all before the law. 76% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed and 24% were undecided. 83.8% of those who are over 40 years agreed and 16.2% were undecided.

86.2% of the males agreed and 13.8% were undecided. 76.5% of the females agreed and 23.5% were undecided. 70% of those at secondary schools agreed and 30% were undecided. 80.6% of those with diplomas agreed and 19.4% were undecided. 90.5% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed and 9.5% were undecided.

Should a man derive his *seriti* from owning businesses? 28% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed, 32% were undecided and 40% disagreed. 29.7% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 24.3% were undecided and 45.9% disagreed. 37.9% of the males agreed, 17.2% were undecided and 44.8% disagreed. 23.9% of the females agreed, 35.3% were undecided and 41.4% disagreed. 10% of those at secondary agreed, 10% were undecided and 80% disagreed. 35.5% of those with diplomas agreed, 29% were undecided and 35.5% disagreed. 33.3% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 28.6% were undecided and 38.1% disagreed. The majority of the respondents do not like a man who owns businesses.

A person who accumulates property is a person who has *seriti* in the eyes of the people. Some people have been able to accumulate property at the expense of other people while some robbed other people of their property to be where they are today. In the mentality of some people, it is possible for them to view people with property with some degree of suspicion. 28% of those who are aged between 20-40 agreed that a man with *seriti* owns a big house and drives several cars. 20% were undecided and 52% disagreed. 27.6% of the males agreed, 20.7% were undecided and 51.7% disagreed. 21.2% of the females agreed, 27.3% were undecided and 51.1% disagreed. 20% of those at secondary school agreed and 80% disagreed. 26.7% of those with diplomas agreed, 30% were undecided and 43.3% disagreed.

23.8% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed, 23.8% were undecided and 52.4% disagreed. A man who owns a big house and drives several cars is not welcomed among the Northern Sotho.

One of the most important characteristics of *seriti* is integrity. A man of integrity should be rated very highly among the Northern Sotho. 84% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed that a man of *seriti* has integrity and hates lies and 16% were undecided. 89.2% of those who are over 40 years agreed, 5.4% were undecided and 5.4% disagreed. 89.7% of the males agreed, 6.9% were undecided and 3.4% disagreed. 85.3% of the females agreed, 5.9% were undecided and 8.8% disagreed. 80% of those at secondary agreed and 20% disagreed. 87.1% of those with diplomas agreed, 6.5% were undecided and 6.5% disagreed. 95.2% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed and 4.8% were undecided. There was general unanimity that a man of integrity has *seriti*.

A man with *seriti* hates abuse of women and children in all its manifestations. 84% of those who are aged between 20-40 years agreed and 16% were undecided. 83.8% of those who are aged above 40 years agreed, 13.5% were undecided and 2.7% disagreed. 86.2% of the males agreed and 13.8% were undecided. 82.4% of the females agreed, 14.7% were undecided and 2.9% disagreed. 90% of those at secondary school agreed and 10% were undecided. 77.4% of those with diploma agreed, 19.4% were undecided and 3.2% disagreed. 95.2% of the graduates and post-graduates agreed and 4.8% were undecided.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

Proverbs gives us the picture of the ideal man in the traditional society. In the past it was acceptable for a person to possess as many cattle as possible. These things made a man to stand out or to be prominent. Nowadays, cattle are the most unreliable source of wealth because they could be easily disposed of through theft and diseases.

We find the kind of man that the proverbs present to us and not only are we able to do that, we also find the same man in a work situation as he struggles with other men to complete a task in a group context. We also find a man in a family situation and it is this kind of situation that the researcher would like to turn to. It has already been stated that polygamy should be understood against the background of a warfare kind of situation where many men lost their lives and the women had to be looked after by a pool of very few men. Disease nowadays is also one of those things that is decimating our people, particularly women. Is it going to be the case that just because women are going to be a scarce species because of HIV/AIDS, they must therefore allow more than one man to marry them? If the assertion that HIV/AIDS is killing more women than men, it is getting to the situation where women are going to be smaller in number and men would be competing for them. Some people have actually stated that the discovery of HIV/AIDS among women is detectable through the tests that are conducted on women now and then when they are pregnant. The idea that HIV/AIDS kills more women is a fallacy since it is easier to discover HIV/AIDS from pregnant mothers.

Patients at hospitals are forced to take an HIV/AIDS test because of the fear of certain complications that may lead to the death of the pregnant woman.

The point the researcher is trying to make is, if, for some reason, the number of women on the planet gets drastically reduced, will a number of men be allowed to marry one woman? This may not be likely because of observation of the animal world where the stronger male subjugates the weaker males and then mates with the female.

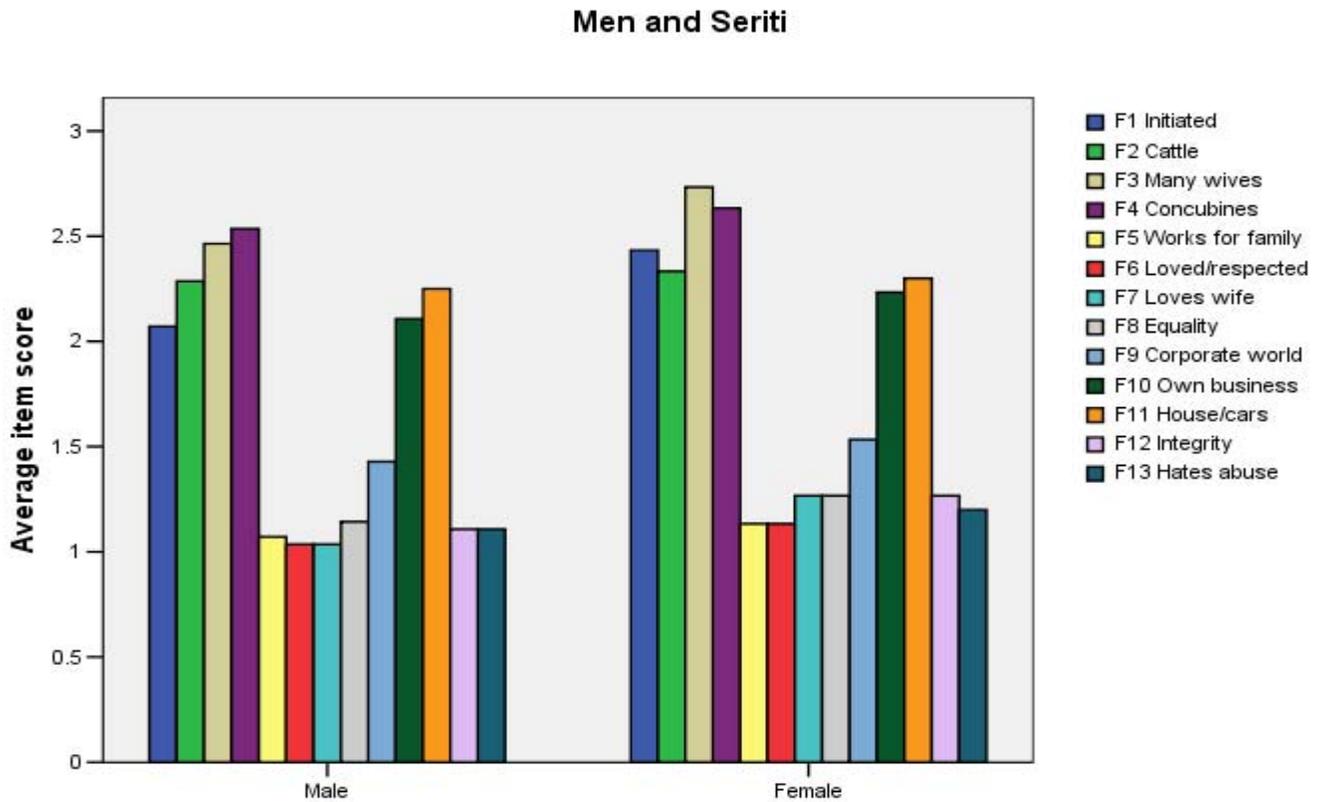
Initiation is one of the most important rites of passage from boyhood to manhood. It does not have to result in an end of the life of a young person. If initiates were not dying at these lodges, there wouldn't be any complaints. Nowadays initiates are dye and this leads to government intervention. This intervention has got to be backed by the people who support this important rite of passage. Suggestions as to the improvement of this rite of passage have to be collected and be worked upon to come out with the strategy of saving the lives of initiates. The researcher believes that the reluctance of the respondents to approve traditional rites of passage particularly where men are concerned is because of the uncertainty around the issue of sustaining life on the part of the initiates.

Traditional structures are also crumbling around the question of ownership of cattle. New magnates have emerged to replace cattle owners. There are those who are in the mining profession, some are in business while some who are unscrupulous are drug lords. Respondents see these people and because they do not know how they became rich, they tend to club them together or label them as bad people who should not be having any money at all. This lack of commitment on the part of the respondents to see anything positive about the new rich people makes them equally suspicious about people who have big cars, houses and who own business.

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Respondents are generally suspicious of those who own businesses and those who are materialistic. In the eyes of the respondents, it is the unselfish types like those who have integrity, and who hate lies, who support their children, and who work very hard for their families, who are praised. There are equally those who are loved and respected by all, who believe in the equality of all before the law and those who hate children and women abusers. These are the people who have earned the admiration of the respondents. The next chapter is the final chapter where the researcher would be summarising the entire thesis.

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In men and *seriti* both the males and females disagreed strongly on the idea that a man should be initiated (F.1), have many cattle (F.2), many wives (F.3) and concubines (F.4). The women were intensely opposed to the idea that a man should have many wives and concubines. On the question of the man of the house working for his family, who is loved and respected by all, who loves and respects his wife and who believes in equality of all before the law, both the males and the females agreed very strongly. On the question of the man of *seriti* belonging to the corporate world and owning a business, both the males and the females disagreed with the same intensity.

Lastly, that he should be a man of integrity and hates lies as well as hate those who abuse women and children, the males and the females agreed with the same kind of extremity.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF *SERITI*.**

At this stage, the researcher would like to recapitulate the definition of *seriti* in Chapter Two. *Seriti* is the ethico-religious and mystical or metaphysical qualities that emerge from modern and traditional society to promote the dignity of groups of people or an individual.

In its ethical aspects, a person has *seriti* if he/she has intelligence, oratory skills, dignity, treats people with respect and in return is respected by people. This person is feared and respected because he/she is kind and generous (*botho*). In its religious manifestation, the concept of *seriti* covers aspects such as living in harmony with other people and the ancestors. Because such a person has ethical qualities, he/she is the ancestor's favourite. It is people who have these ethical and religious qualities who are usually looked upon as ancestors when they are dead. Both a modern and a traditional Northern Sotho would not be a human being without these characteristics.

A traditional Northern Sotho in his/her moments of reflection has always pondered on the question why some people are more intelligent than others and why there are people who are richer and more stable than others. These

questions emerge because in a traditional setting, particularly in a traditional court, there are people who are able to argue much better than others despite the fact that they had been in the same process of initiation into adulthood. Some people have prodigious memories about how a particular case was settled in the past and how it could be handled in the present time. Such people were found to be very clever as compared to others and it is this cleverness and ability to argue at a traditional court that convinces other human beings that the person in possession of such knowledge has *seriti* that is unlike that of ordinary people. In other words, a person in possession of such knowledge and ability has a greater amount of *seriti* than other people. In other words, when a person is believed to have *seriti*, it is this person's knowledge and abilities that are being referred to and such knowledge and abilities put such a person in a superior position as compared to other people. In philosophical circles, such a person is called a sage and the philosophy that such a person possesses is sage philosophy. Oruka (2000: 100) captures the definition of a sage in the following manner:

There is a general attitude harboured even in learned circles that a sage is one wise person in an illiterate or technologically undeveloped community whose residents depend much on the oracular sayings of seers to keep up with the mysteries and surprises of life.

Oruka (2000: 101) continues to emphasise the importance of keeping such people in the society by stating the following:

A society without its sages would easily get swallowed up as an undignified appendage of another. All societies use their sages or, at least, the ideas of their sages to defend and maintain their existence in the rough world of inter-societal conflict and exploitation.

The knowledge of the sages is very important both for traditional and modern Northern Sotho. In the negotiation of the bride-price/*magadi*, which the researcher calls an extension of *seriti* to the woman about to be married,

both traditional and modern Northern Sotho know that it would be foolish to exclude one of the sages. They have the knowledge that is of value to both traditional and modern Northern Sotho. They are the first people to be consulted and when consulted, they are easily able to draft the proceedings and to state how the other party is supposed to be approached.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the other chapters that have been written and to come up with a conclusion. Chapter two focuses on *seriti* in the past and the present situations and questions whether *seriti* in its tripartite manifestation is still intact. If there are some changes, how far do the changes go to address the present situation.

In category A *seriti* the researcher stated that the ability to speak in a traditional court and the memory to be able to relate historical facts and the highest forms of intelligence are counted as among the first characteristics. Such a person is a traditional philosopher as well as a traditional medicine man who is highly respected by everyone and who is wise. He is also a gentleman who respects other people and the ancestors. He is kind, generous and hospitable. He welcomes strangers in his house and he respects his family and his family loves him.

A woman on the other hand is the source of comfort for her children and other people's children. She gives them food to eat and she cares for them and broods over them as a hen broods over the chickens. She is loyal to her husband and a very important person in the village. Her neighbours look up to her as a mother in her old age. They go to her for advice and so on.

A youth on the other hand is not the drunken type who does not listen to advice. He has respect for the elderly and is always ready to do what the elders want him to do. He is a protector of the nation as well as a provider

in times of need. When there is war, he is the first person to come to the defence of his own people.

A child on the other hand has to run errands and to know what position he/she has in terms of respecting those who are elderly. This child is the sturdy type who does not rush to do things but who waits until he/she is told what to do.

In category B, we have the type of *seriti* that is mainly ritualistic and the rituals that are conducted are aimed at ancestral appeasement. There are also rituals that are solely meant for the strengthening of the body against diseases and malevolent forces. The human body must function optimally. To this end, traditional doctors and diviners are employed to help the body to function properly or optimally. There are other ways that the body could be helped to function properly and that is exercising.

In category C *seriti* the researcher sees the unfairness of specialising in court cases on behalf of the clients. Medicines are used to help people to win the lotto. Generally people use other people to gain something. Some use human flesh to gain unfair advantage over others. Ritual murders become the order of the day.

How is *seriti* understood in other cultures that are of African origin?

Through the Bwami cult, the incumbents learn the value of proverbs and their application in various situations. The Zulu on the other hand value cleverness in arguing and being gifted at handling medicines as part of *seriti*. They also love competition and measuring themselves against others in stick fights, in dress and love-making. Other people like the Northern Sotho, Sotho and Xhosa pride themselves in initiation and keeping the secret of initiation.

Tswana kings had to be armed with knowledge that is of strategic value to their own people. Khama and Bathong were good examples of good kings while other kings who accepted the gospel half-heartedly had to suffer the consequences. The concept of *motswadintle*: the one from whom good things come, is very important for us today. Governments that are able to cater for their people are praiseworthy while governments that fail to cater for their people are despised. African governments should learn to concentrate on how their people develop rather than to hang on to power for the sake of power.

In the modern times being morally good is part of having *seriti* as the research results demonstrate. *Seriti* also has to do with good speech and having a good memory in a tribal court. There are people whose work depends on good speech and prodigious memory. These areas of expertise are law, religion, being a president of a country, being a politician and a speaker in parliament.

There was also unanimity about the idea of *seriti* being kindness and generosity, being merciful and honest. On the other hand being loved by ancestors, namely being a traditional healer, was not regarded as having *seriti*. Diviners and traditional healers are believed to be those who are loved by ancestors. There was more disagreement on the question of being a traditional healer than agreement. People who protect themselves with strong medicine were also not considered as having *seriti*. The idea of using medicine to solicit for good luck was also not regarded as generating *seriti*.

Using body parts of human beings as part of medicine to generate *seriti* was also not considered in a favourable light. Being feared because a person is a rascal was also not considered in the light of procuring *seriti*.

What about the question of ancestors and *seriti*? Ancestors have been the most misunderstood spiritual beings in the world. First the spiritual world is so vast and there are many spiritual beings that are favourably disposed towards human beings. The Northern Sotho believe that the ancestors are some of these spiritual beings that are favourably disposed towards them. To be on the safe side, the Christians declare that spiritual beings are devils in disguise and this includes ancestral spirits. On the other hand, those who are in favour of ancestral spirits and those who know their behaviour are very little in number. To compound the situation, they do not want to divulge more information about ancestors. Those who know ancestors and work with them say that for them, an evil spirit is the one that violates patrilineal descent. When a spirit could be identified as not belonging either to the people of the father and the mother of the person possessed, then it has to be regarded as evil.

This notion is different from the Christian idea of an evil spirit. When an evil spirit is cast out, it leaves the patient and when an ancestral spirit is cast out, it leaves the patient. Therefore both of them must be evil.

On the sub-heading of *seriti* and children, the Northern Sotho demand that a child has to be available to run errands. An orphaned child has to be raised by other people and this child has to use other people as role models. Health is a very important thing for a child among the Northern Sotho. The majority believe that children who are healthy have *seriti*. On the question of children who have to use traditional medicine to heal certain sicknesses, many of the respondents declined to use traditional medicine. Western trends of making children healthy involve treatment of polio, tuberculosis, measles and other diseases that trouble children. There was a great deal of unanimity around the question of children being treated the western way. There was also unanimity about mixing western and traditional medicines.

On the question of the youth, it is very important to invest in their schooling, and they should increase their status by being educated. On the question of initiation into manhood or adulthood, there is a move away from the recognition of the initiation school as a site that should be invested with dignity. In other words, initiation as a rite of passage does not elevate the status of the youth. There was general agreement on the idea that initiation and education elevate the status of the youth. There was also agreement that initiation and church membership elevate the status of the youth. Drunkenness, drugs and intoxicants were also seen as very bad for the youth. On the other hand volunteer work for the youth was seen as something good.

On the question of women, there is still resistance to change. This resistance to change comes from the side of women themselves and other respondents. One could talk of women acquiescing in their own oppression and marginalisation. This emanates from the traditional stereotypes of the role of a woman being that of child rearing and raising. The story of the Secret Son helps to package everyone according to their traditional roles and functions.

In this story – The Secret Son, women are the source of jealousy among one another, they fight for the attention of one man. They also fight to get him an heir. Witchcraft also features prominently as one woman is made to feel very ugly as other women go on suppressing her. Another stereotype is that there has to be a male heir to the throne. Lastly, a man who cannot produce a male child is regarded as not man enough.

All this traditional baggage must be lifted off in favour of a scenario where everybody is important and everybody is indispensable. Nowadays it does not matter whether a man has male children or female children. All the children are of equal status before the law. In the past the focal point of

the activity of the woman was the home. Nowadays women are found repairing aircraft engines and test-driving the aircraft.

In the past women were made to work very hard on the home front. In the Limpopo Province, women are still doing what women used to do in the past. When there is a funeral, women do the cooking while men dig graves and slaughter cattle. They still work in the house and cook for their mother-in-laws. Some older women are still able to carry huge pots full of hot food with their bare hands. The Limpopo province is largely rural in nature and this accounts for the type of responses the researcher was able to gather from respondents.

In proverbs, women are portrayed as people who have to be dressed in a particular way. A woman has to make sure that she does not show much flesh. In the proverbs she is described as a person who depends on the availability of offspring in order that she could be called woman. She is believed to have an illness which is immediately brought to an end by the availability of a child.

Although she handles a very hot piece of iron without flinching, the proverbs portray her as a person who cannot absorb pain. She is also compared to a goat which cries out in pain when slaughtered while a man is compared to a sheep which does not make a sound.

Many of the respondents agreed that she is a mother to her children and to other people's children, she keeps the house tidy and is a good friend to other women. She works very hard to keep her husband comfortable. There is no length of time a wife should cook for her mother-in-law.

The respondents do not agree that she should take over the running of her mother-in-law's house mainly because most of them do not live with their

mother-in-laws. They do not agree that a woman should be independent and have no time for housework. They do not like a woman who earns a huge salary, has a house and drives a big car. Only young respondents would like to have such a situation where a woman is independent.

For the Northern Sotho, a woman has to be kind, earn a salary and love children. They do not want the kind of woman who displays some freedom. Women who are single parents, earn a salary and have cars are not women according to the Northern Sotho. Women who belong to the corporate world are not fully appreciated in the Limpopo Province, which is largely rural in nature.

She has to be a commercial farmer, she also has to be fully initiated into womanhood. She does not have to do the work of a labourer and sell fruits and vegetables to stay alive. She has to have a modicum of respect.

The ideas of feminism are gradually filtering through the church, schools and other areas of work. In the church, women are in positions of leadership although many of them still shy away from this responsibility. In politics there are many women who are politicians and who are running families at the same time. At work, women are in positions of leadership.

It is only in areas that are traditionally the homes of the Northern Sotho that one usually comes across areas of discrimination of women. They still do their traditional work of cooking and catering for the people at weddings and funerals. They are still discriminated against at graveyards when they are not allowed to get into the graveyard without anything on their heads.

Lastly, the researcher focused on men and *seriti*. Men are portrayed as polygamists in the proverbs. A man is compared to the vine of a pumpkin that extends. In the Northern Sotho proverb, a vine extends everywhere,

leaving the stem behind. This means that a man could go anywhere he likes but he must always remember that he, like the vine is rooted to his home. Another proverb that encourages man's behaviour is the one that says a man is an axe, he has to be borrowed. These proverbs encourage the polygamous nature of a Northern Sotho man. Polygamy and the practice of wife inheritance is very dangerous today against the background of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The idea that there is prevalence of deadly diseases is a good enough argument to discourage polygamy. The researcher does not think that a person in this day and age, could say that a man who has many wives has a very great *seriti*.

The argument that is equally misleading is found in a proverb that is metaphorical in nature. This proverb says that a man is a blanket, we (the women) have to pull it (the blanket). A blanket becomes very small to cover more than three people and if the people underneath the blanket do not feel comfortable, they have to pull it in such a way that it covers them. This statement is against the background that a man in the past was the source of comfort. He was the sole provider of the material needs required at home and at the same time, he was somewhat a scarce commodity in the sense that women were in the majority and as a result of that, they had to compete for one man.

Today, women are still in the majority but they are also able to provide the material needs. They do not need a man to support them but they need a man to keep them comfortable. Gone are the days when a man was indispensable. Today, women have come of age and they are the ones who make the choices, not the men.

Men in the past were not very different from men these days particularly in the arena of work. Men assist one another to accomplish a task. They are still able to dig graves and to slaughter cattle together. One fingernail

cannot crush a louse. This is a proverb that is used to foster a spirit of cooperation in a work-related situation. In a work situation there has to be a spirit of consensus. Everything is done via consensus. Solidarity gives the group *seriti*. Without solidarity there is always a situation where men are compared to lions that do not have any agreement. Once lions do not have a plan of attack, they shall always be defeated in their effort to catch prey. So a man is a man who works and a man who loves.

What is the attitude of men and women towards the traditionally accepted rite of initiation? There is a greater percentage of men who dislike initiation while the females as well as those people who have diplomas agree that initiation is not good for men. This reaction shows that initiation as a practice is waning and is being replaced by other methods of displaying manhood like military training.

In the past, and even today, a man with many cattle was considered to be very rich. But today, there are many ways of getting rich and wealth is no longer measured in terms of availability of cattle. A man with cattle would still have *seriti* despite the availability of cattle. It is not the cattle that makes him to have *seriti* but it is the man himself who has *seriti*. Cattle add on what the man already has. The researcher is discerning a move away from a consideration of people in terms of what they have. People do not care very much for material things. Although people do not reckon the status of a person in terms of the availability of material things, a man who cannot support his family loses his *seriti*.

Many Northern Sotho are accustomed to a situation where a man does not look for a spouse to marry but his parents look for such a spouse for him. The parents do not worry about what the woman looks like, while their son does. If eventually, they give him the report that they found a wife for him, he would not worry about certain qualities because he knows that his

parents would have those qualities checked already. The young man would be worried about what the woman looks like. Upon dilly-dallying on the part of his parents on this question, the young man would inwardly know that the woman was really not beautiful. The marriage would be a productive one albeit a loveless one. A monogamous man, therefore, an invention of the missionaries, should love his wife. Many respondents agreed that a man should love his wife.

What is the attitude of the Northern Sotho towards property? Should a man own businesses? The vast majority of the Northern Sotho do not like a man who owns businesses. For them, such a man does not qualify to have *seriti*. This does not mean that a man with businesses does not have *seriti*. The Northern Sotho are suspicious of business people. It is believed that before a business could take off, a human head has got to be buried somewhere in the premises. Some headless corpses have been found before and these corpses had to be buried without their heads. In some instances, a white man's hand is all they need to see to it that a business thrives. A white man's hand could be used to attract customers in the same way that a man uses his hand to beckon another man.

In the same way, a man who owns a big house and drives several cars does not have *seriti* among the Northern Sotho. Kings, queens and some important people do have *seriti* but this *seriti* is something that has nothing to do with their property. A man could be very poor but still have *seriti*. If it could be concluded that a man with property is the only one with *seriti*, very few people would have *seriti*.

Lastly, a man with *seriti* hates the abuse of women and children. A great number of the respondents agreed that this is the case. In the past, it was rare to learn of the abuse of a woman by a man. The king's court was there to see to it that such things never happened. People fear the prospect of

being stripped naked and beaten than to be jailed. Many people do not want to be ridiculed and the only way to stop that is to see to it that a person does not end up at the king's court to be beaten.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

THE REALITY AND RELEVANCE OF *SERITI* IN THE PAST AND PRESENT: ITS  
ESSENCE AND MANIFESTATION IN AN AFRICAN RELIGION PERSPECTIVE  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NORTHERN SOTHO.

## SECTION A: Bibliographical Data

Mark your answer with a cross (x)

1. Gender

Male		Female	
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2. Age

20-30		30-40		40-50		over 50	
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3. Department/Discipline

--

4. Position

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5. Highest Qualification

No Schooling		Primary		Secondary	
Diploma		Graduate		Post Graduate	

6. Years of Experience

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7. Race:

African		White		Coloured		Indian	
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## SECTION B: *Seriti* – The Characteristics

8. What are the characteristics of *seriti*? State whether you agree, are undecided or disagree. Mark with a cross (x).

8.1 To be feared because one is morally good 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.2 To have good memory and to speak well in a tribal court

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.3 To be kind and generous

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.4 To have mercy (*botho*)

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.5 To be true to oneself and to be honest

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.6 To be loved and chosen by ancestors

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.7 To be a diviner

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.8 Diviner homes have *seriti*

8.9 To protect yourself with strong medicine

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.10 To use medicine to solicit for good luck 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.11 To kill people and to use their body parts as *muti*

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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8.12 To be feared because a person is a rascal/thug/killer 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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**SECTION C: Children and *Seriti***

9. What are the characteristics of *seriti* among children. State whether you agree, undecided or disagree.

9.1 Children have *seriti* when they are healthy 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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9.2 Children must be treated for children's diseases the traditional way 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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9.3 Children must be protected from children's diseases the Western way 

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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9.4 A mixture of traditional or western medicine is good for children.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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9.5 Children who do not eat well are attacked by diseases and they die early.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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9.6 Diseases diminish the *seriti* of a child.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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**SECTION D: The Youth and *Seriti***

10. What are the characteristics of *seriti* among the youth. State whether you agree, are undecided or disagree.

10.1 Education elevate the status of the youth.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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10.2 The initiation rite elevates the status of the youth.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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10.3 Both education and initiation rites elevates the status of the youth.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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10.4 Only the church and education elevate the status of the youth

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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10.5 To be drunk is a sign that the youth is fully grown up.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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10.6 Taking drugs and intoxicants does not help the status of the youth.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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10.7 To do volunteer work helps/elevates the status of the youth.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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10.8 Westernisation has under-developed our youth.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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### **SECTION E: Women and *Seriti***

11. What is an ideal woman – a woman with *seriti*? State whether you agree, are undecided or disagree

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.1 A woman who is mother to all children in the black community.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.2 She works tirelessly all day to keep her house tidy.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.3 She is always held in high esteem by her friends.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.4 A woman who works hard to keep her husband comfortable.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.5 A new bride who takes over the running of her in-laws' house.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.6 A bride who does not count the number of times she cooks for her mother-in-law.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.7 An independent woman who has no time for house work.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.8 An independent woman who earns a salary, has a big car and a house.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.9 A well-educated woman who is kind hearted,  
earns a salary and loves children.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.10 She is a single parent and she earns a salary and has a car.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.11 She is a shrewd business woman

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.12 She is a successful farmer who knows where she is going.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.13 She has been initiated fully into womanhood.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.14 She is a labourer with public works.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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11.15 She sells vegetables in the urban and rural  
areas.

Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
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**SECTION F: Men and *Seriti***

12. What is an ideal man – a man with *seriti*? State whether you agree, are undecided or disagree.

12.1 He should be fully initiated traditionally.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.2 He should possess many cattle.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.3 He should have many wives.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.4 He should have concubines.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.5 He works very hard for his family.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.6 He is loved and respected by all.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.7 He loves and respects his wife(s).

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.8 He is a strong believer in equality of all before the law.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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12.9 He belongs to the corporate world.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
-------	-----------	----------	--

12.10 He owns businesses.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
-------	-----------	----------	--

12.11 He owns a big house and drives several cars.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
-------	-----------	----------	--

12.12 He is a man of integrity and hates lies.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
-------	-----------	----------	--

12.13 He hates those who abuse women and children.

Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
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