

CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN SOTHO DRAMAS

by

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(i)

DECLARATION

I declare that CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN SOTHO DRAMAS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

R. P. Madiga
.....

Signed

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10/01/2001
.....

Date

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(iii)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late paternal grandmother, Motshewa Madiga, who instilled the love of African culture in me by, among others, telling me folktales and other narratives as well as taking me along to festivities where traditional dances were performed.

Motswetla!

SUMMARY

The aim of this research is to investigate cultural conflicts in Northern Sotho dramas. At the beginning of the work, reasons for the choice of the topic are given, and thereafter, the methodology to be adopted in analysing the plays is outlined. Various factors considered to be contributory to the acculturation of traditional Africans are discussed.

Throughout this study, traditionalists oppose westernised Africans because of strange norms and practices they have adopted. The two parties disagree on issues like arranged marriage, remarriage and leadership. Christianity features prominently as the basic cause of conflict. Modernists oppose traditional practices on the ground that they are not in conformity with Christian principles.

The plays are compared to determine how each playwright has attempted to resolve conflicts in his respective play. The study ends with a comment on findings where traditionalism, being a common enemy in the three plays, is overridden by modernity.

KEY CONCEPTS

Acculturation, Arranged Marriage, Conflict, Culture, Drama, Leadership, Levirate Custom, Modernity, Remarriage and Traditionalism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1	
PAVING THE WAY	
1.0 Aims	1
1.1 Choice of Topic	2
1.2 Acculturation	4
1.3 Agents of Change	6
1.3.1 Migrant Labour	6
1.3.2 Missionaries	9
1.3.3 Urbanisation	13
1.4 Method of Approach	15
1.5 Explanation of Key Concepts	20
1.5.1 Culture	20
1.5.2 Conflict	26
1.5.3 Drama	29
1.6 Scope of Work	32
CHAPTER 2	
PARENTAL CONTROL VERSUS INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCE	
2.0 Introduction	35
2.1 Background to the Text	38

2.2	Causes of Conflicts	39
2.2.1	Plough-Field	40
2.2.2	Searching for Love	43
2.2.3	Parental Choice	49
2.3	Resolution	64
2.4	Résumé	69

CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY

3.0	Introduction	71
3.1	Background to the Text	72
3.2	Causes of Conflict	74
3.2.1	Who is the Head in a Family?	74
3.2.2	Children and their Obligations	80
3.2.3	Despotism	84
3.2.4	Violation of Traditional Laws	90
3.3	Resolution	97
3.4	Résumé	101

CHAPTER 4

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS AFRICAN TRADITION

4.0	Introduction	103
4.1	Background to the Text	105

4.2	Causes of Conflict	106
4.2.1	A Christian Burial	107
4.2.2	Mourning Observances	113
4.2.3	The Cleansing Ceremony	115
4.2.4	The Levirate Custom	120
4.2.5	Remarriage	130
4.3	Resolution	132
4.4	Résumé	137

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.0	Introduction	139
5.1	Comparison of the Plays	139
5.2	Findings and Recommendations	142

CHAPTER 1

PAVING THE WAY

1.0 AIMS

The primary aim of this research is to highlight cultural conflicts in Northern Sotho dramas. The dramas in question reflect the infiltration of Western culture into traditional African culture, as well as the way in which this infiltration has in turn resulted in a notable shake-up of the original lifestyle of the African. From their original state of interacting closely with nature in their environment, Africans eventually came into contact with the new culture, which they experienced as strange and foreign. The strangeness of the new lifestyle initially rendered it unacceptable to Africans, but with time some of its practices were gradually accepted as new norms in a changing world.

In this study traditional African culture will be treated as a base while any deviation from or violation of its norms and values will be viewed as an act likely to cause conflict. When examined from a traditional point of view, these conflicts tend to have a great impact on the original social, economic, religious, and even political setups of Africans. The study will be centred around three selected Northern Sotho plays, namely *Mahlodi* (1968) by J S Mminele, *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (1990) by S M Serudu and *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (1968) by H P Maredi.

This study focuses mainly on the above-mentioned plays because they are collectively viewed as a repository of ideological clashes of the two social concepts - modernity and traditionalism. A thorough survey of these plays reveals that Western ideas and practices were initially difficult to be accepted and

accommodated in traditional African culture, mainly because they are not in conformity with traditional African lifestyle. The proponents of this foreign ideology in the selected plays are thus bound to be at loggerheads with conservative African traditionalists since they disagree on matters relating to marriage and its procedures, leadership within the family, as well as death and its accompanying rituals and mourning observances. Conflicts in these instances arise when each of the two groupings decides to do things its own way, a way which is usually unacceptable to the other. For instance, in *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, Mmakoma's traditional parents insist that she should marry a person of their choice. In *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo*, Namane wants traditional African culture to be maintained at all cost within his family, while in *Mahlodi*, marriage after death, according to Mahlodi's in-laws, has to be perpetuated through the levirate custom. These dramas thus reveal that conflict arises when one group strongly resents acts of the other, often as a result of the urge not to be surpassed. This study, therefore aims at revealing various forms in which these conflicts manifest themselves, and the way in which they in turn contribute to the ultimate delineation of the themes of these plays.

1.1 CHOICE OF TOPIC

According to Ngugi (1986: 65), the pre-colonial African world exhibiting different stages of socio-cultural development among the varied peoples, was on the whole characterised by a low level of development. The world was generally dominated by an incomprehensible and unpredictable nature, which was only understood through ritual, magic and divination. This African world could only be reflected in the literature it produced; a literature containing a mixture of animal characters and human beings, who intermingled and interacted in a coexistence of mutual suspicion and hostility but also had occasional moments of co-operation. This is the way in which pre-colonial Africans were grappling with nature and using it for social development. The internal and external struggles of the societies with nature

and hence the development of their productive forces and progressive mastery over nature were, according to Ngugi (1986: 65), “drastically hindered and distorted by imperialism”. It is, nevertheless, also true that Western culture, through its heritage of a highly developing science and technology, has brought to Africa new possible means of knowing and mastering the incomprehensible world of nature.

With the dawn of Western culture in Africa, African culture had to undergo new drastic pro-Western changes. New ideas and practices of Western origin gradually infiltrated African traditions. The gradual imbibition of these values resulted in the creation of a ‘new’ African, a figure who tends to be strange to his or her traditional counterpart. The implementation of these Western ideas and practices in formerly cohesive and co-operative cultural groups, undoubtedly resulted into a schism among Africans. Since the values that used to hold them together fell apart, ideological and physical clashes became the order of the day. The new economic (market economy) and religious (Christianity) systems eventually assigned Western people exalted and revered socio-political standings, especially among converted Africans. This enabled the Western culture to appear precious, thereby permeating its African counterpart with ease. In addition, the dominance that is assigned to higher social status, made white people more influential and highly esteemed than their African counterparts. The ‘preciousness’ of his or her culture was increasingly magnified in the eyes of the African. The cultural metamorphosis that the culturally over-powered African had to undergo, eventually led to a notable shift in his or her original social and political setups as well.

Resultantly, Westernised Africans developed different and negative attitudes towards the traditional way of handling issues like marriage, leadership and death. An acceptable traditional African marriage is expected to follow certain procedures, the most prominent of these being parents’ right to choose marriage partners for their children. Children’s objection to this practice is viewed as disobedience, an

attitude strongly resisted by parents in their effort to maintain authority over their children. In this research the discussions on various conflicts pertaining to marriage are based on *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (Serudu 1990). Generally, after marriage has been formalised the two partners are expected to go out and establish their own homestead, where the husband is expected to be the head of the family. Any transgression of family laws by either the wife or the children is a punishable offence to the head who is eager to maintain order and keep the loyalty in his household. Issues of leadership in a family are reflected in *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (Maredi 1968). The death of a Christian convert in a family of traditionalists as purported in *Mahlodi* (Mminele 1968), is another striking issue to be examined in this study. This issue reveals that traditionalists frown upon the Western way of burying a deceased person. On the other hand, the play also reveals that the tendency of resorting to secondary unions like sororate and levirate, in an attempt to perpetuate marriage even after death, is abhorred and resented by the Africans who have accepted Christianity. They regard such practices as heathenism, hence their resentment.

1.2 ACCULTURATION

The acquisition of some cultural traits from the west by an African, first started with contact, then interaction and eventually interdependence between Africans and Whites. This inevitably paved the way towards the complete acculturation of the African at last. From the outset, the African was on the dominated side and the Whites, on the dominant side. The flow of cultural traits therefore became predominant from the Whites to the Africans.

In this context, acculturation is understood to be a process of change in artifacts, customs and beliefs that results from the contact of societies with different cultural traditions. "When a group or society is in contact with a more powerful society, the

weaker group is often obliged to acquire cultural elements from the dominant group." Ember *et al.* (1973: 293). The weakness here is measured or judged in terms of politics or economy. In contrast with diffusion, acculturation is caused by a kind of external pressure. The external pressure referred to here can take various forms. The first form, which is an extreme one, occurs under conditions of conquest. Here, the dominant group uses direct force to effect cultural change among the vanquished, forcing them to give up many aspects of their traditional ways of life. In order to survive, the conquered group has no choice but to adopt many of the conquerors' traits.

However, a subordinate society may acculturate to a dominant society even in the absence of direct force since the dominated people may elect to adopt cultural elements from the dominant society in order to survive in a changing world. Perceiving that members of the dominant society enjoy more secure living conditions, the dominated may choose to identify with the dominant culture in the hope that in so doing, they will be able to share some of its benefits. Since no mention has been made of the usage of force in this form, it can be regarded as a voluntary form of acculturation. As this form is relevant to and in line with this study, the research is going to revolve around it.

Similar to diffusion, acculturation is a selective process. The dominated group may not adopt everything in the dominant culture. According to Ember *et al.* (1973: 294):

.... the recipient group may be very receptive to technological innovations but more resistant to changes in religion or social organisation.

Not all members in the dominated group will resist social or religious culture change. A few members will obviously succumb to the dominant group and this will undoubtedly result in conflict between the conservatives and the acculturated,

resulting in one party eventually becoming victorious over the other.

1.3 AGENTS OF CHANGE

The contact between the Africans and the Whites came into being in various ways; *inter alia*, by way of migrancy (Africans), missionary undertakings (Whites) and urbanisation (Africans). The dynamism of African culture is greatly attributed to these agents.

1.3.1 Migrant Labour

This refers to casual and unskilled workers moving from one region to another, offering their services on a temporary, and usually seasonal basis. The supply of this kind of labour is usually influenced and necessitated by unfavourable economic and social conditions existing in the region of origin of such labourers. The labourers are usually mostly young and male, and resort to this type of life mainly because they yearn for wages and technological commodities present in the affluent, socio-economically advanced societies.

Boyce (1974: 252) refers to migrants as "men of two worlds". Migration was initially on a voluntary basis, but eventually turned into a tradition among Africans. In pursuance of this tradition, men departed from their homes to seek employment, with no thought of taking their families along and no intention of taking up permanent residence at their various places of employment, but on the contrary, with a desire to retain their homes and their tribal connections - hence the term 'men of two worlds'.

The reasons for migrancy among Africans are vast and varied. Migrants were either 'pushed' or 'pulled' into their new worlds. The landing of white people in this

country inevitably resulted in the creation of new needs and demands among Africans. The need to survive in a changing world mounted to become an urge that needed to be satisfied. The early years of the nineteenth century was the period during which Africans seemed to be more receptive to technological innovations than religion or social organisation. According to Delius (1983: 63), the Bapedi (in the vicinity of Lydenburg), as well as the Balobedu and Bavenda in the Zoutpansberg area, flocked to the south in greater numbers to seek employment in Natal and the Cape. They were employed by either the British or Afrikaners as farm labourers, domestic workers or workers in towns like Port Elizabeth. Some of these workers returned to their homes with guns. Resultantly, the Africans adopted these Western weapons as new weapons to be used in times of war, either in the place of or in addition to assegais. These guns, which were accumulated in abundance, enabled Sekhukhune to resist the might of the Boers in north-eastern Transvaal. The success of this encounter marked the beginning of the gradual move of the Africans from using traditional weapons to using the sophisticated weaponry of the Whites.

Besides the fortune-hunters, others who engaged in migrancy were those impoverished and/or displaced by the ravages of the *difaqane* and its aftermath. Natural phenomena, like drought and cattle diseases, also contributed significantly to migrancy among Africans. Their deprivation of livestock often left them with no other means but to go out and seek employment from the Whites. As a result, their contacts with white people had an immense impact on their traditional way of living. They, for instance, obtained money from their employers to buy and accumulate cattle again for *magadi* and to use it also for different emerging socio-economic needs like clothes and tools. Besides money, their payments were also in the form of livestock.

The journey to the Cape and Natal lasted for many arduous and hazardous days.

According to Delius (1983: 63), the migrants would often arrive and rest at Moshweshwe's kingdom, where they acquired additional provisions for the journey further south. In some instances they were only expected to proceed after labouring and paying tribute to Moshweshwe and the French missionaries in the area.

Initially, many workers who became migrants did so as it was a way of earning money without severing ties with their families and tribes. They were expected to work for varying periods of between two and three years. However, after the discovery of diamonds in 1870 and later, gold in 1886, a slight change in the working period was discernible. They were expected to labour for a contract period of three to twelve months; earning wages which reduced and subjected them to cheap labour. Africans in the Northern Transvaal were still expected to undertake long journeys to the south; initially to Kimberley; being commonly referred to as '*go ya Taamaneng*' (to the place of diamonds) and from 1886 to *Gauteng* or the Witwatersrand. At their various places of work, they were confined to compounds where they were privileged to meet missionaries and other Christian agents who introduced and initiated them into the Christian religion. Back home, most of the workers showed profound cultural changes.

In order to keep Africans as wage workers at the mines, taxation was introduced. Since taxes had to be paid in cash, most Africans had to work in order to get the required cash. To survive, the poor African had no alternative but to dance to the tune of a white man. The situation became worse early in the twentieth century when the Land Act of 1913 was implemented. The act made share-cropping illegal and prohibited Africans from renting land on white-owned farms. As a result, thousands of African tenants and share-croppers became landless and were forced to become wage labourers for white farmers. As money became an important and valuable commodity in the life of an African, for him to survive the emerged new

living conditions, he had to become a labourer. Because the new needs affected his subsistence way of living, he steadily moved into the market economy.

Migrancy should thus be viewed as one of the substantial ways of establishing contact between an African and a person from the West. As the dominant figure in the whole setup, the white man's culture naturally surpassed that of the African. The flow of cultural traits became one-sided and the poor African had no alternative but to assimilate, affording ample opportunity to the Western culture to diffuse into the African. This cultural diffusion marked the beginning of the establishment of a new syncretic culture among Africans while simultaneously initialling the process of cultural imperialism by Whites onto Africans.

1.3.2 Missionaries

The first missionaries to arrive and settle among the Africans in the then Transvaal, according to Mminele (1989: 21), were of German origin, and they belonged to the Berlin Missionary Society. They settled within the Bapedi domain, in the vicinity of Lydenburg. These religious agents had both religious and educational missions to accomplish among the Africans. Their primary aim was to convert the 'backward' and 'uncivilised' Africans to the Christian religion. The achievement of this aim had an enormous impact on traditional African culture because religion (Christianity), as an integral part of culture, presupposes substantial norms and practices which have to be in accordance with it. Traditional African culture was torn apart when Western culture filtered into it.

Mminele (1989: 21) states that missionary work has always implied educational enterprise as well. The education of Africans in the whole of Southern Africa was initially in the hands of missionaries. In an attempt to further their religious aims, they established schools and teacher training institutions which were directly under

their control, such as Kilnerton, Botšhabelo, which was erected near Middleburg by the Berlin Lutheran Mission in 1879, and Bethesda, near Pietersburg, which was founded by the Dutch Reformed Mission in 1933.

In order to fully achieve their religious aims, all the teachers at these institutions had to be dedicated Christians. Mminele (1989: 22) puts it succinctly when he says:

Each society strove to produce teachers for its denomination in order to increase its membership as much as possible. The foundation had to be laid in schools. Students who came to these teacher education institutions unbaptised, were converted, baptised and confirmed.

The African students (at the institutions) were from a completely different cultural background and were thus initiated into a new culture. The cultural traits that these people eventually assimilated obviously made them appear 'strange' once back in their various places of origin. The newly acquired world view was thus brought head-on with traditional African culture. Since no harmony prevailed between Western culture and traditional African culture, conflicts started ensuing. Traditional Africans viewed Westernised Africans as disobedient people who were trampling on their much treasured culture. The aspects of African culture that were considered incoherent with Christian principles were, according to Delius (1983: 165), initiation, bride-price, divination and polygamy.

At mission stations, the missionaries used church discipline as an instrument of social control even outside the school situation. According to Delius (1983: 163), this fusion of spiritual and temporal powers made the missionary landlord a figure of formidable authority. Africans were obliged to wear Western clothing and this, of course, had a significant effect in the sense that people were compelled to work for the Whites in order to be in a position to earn a living and to buy clothes.

Africans were thus drawn much closer to the Europeans, thereby rendering their own culture extremely vulnerable. On being baptised, Africans were given so-called Christian names. Whether it was difficult for Whites to pronounce African names, or whether it was meant to undermine the African culture, it remains uncertain. A reference can here be made to Dinkwanyane (Delius 1983: 164), who, after being baptised, was given the name Johannes as his Christian name.

The acquisition of these new and foreign names made most of the Christian converts to do away with or look down upon their original or African names because they started associating them with heathenism. This became a recurring tendency among Africans, until lately, when they started realising that it is proper and relative for one to retain and be referred to in an African name. A significant point to note concerning naming among Africans today is that a reverse of what was occurring in the past is now taking place. Currently, most Blacks prefer African names to Western ones.

The missionaries were not alone in their quest for the conversion of Africans along Western lines. In this respect, the coloniser also played an important part; his role undoubtedly facilitated the work of the missionaries. Regarding this form of cultural imperialism, Lindfors (1994: 19) expatiates further thus:

Wherever the English went, in their quest for empire in Africa, they inevitably carried their own culture with them. When they settled as farmers, missionaries, traders and government officials in a newly annexed territory, they seemed to believe that they had an obligation to pass this culture on the local natives, who were thought to have no real civilization of their own.

During the rule of the British colonisers, as Onoge (1985: 50) puts it, "the process of cultural imperialism often entailed a ban on traditional production and

performances of sculpture, dances and songs". These cultural practices were regarded as pagan practices polluting Christianity. This cultural vandalism had as its goal the creation of a personality-type, who essentially would lack self-affirmation. Throughout human history, colonialism and cultural imperialism have gone hand in hand.

This violent psychological conversion was generally successful. The new personality with its negative consciousness affected the educated African's relationship or attitude towards the traditional arts. This new personality often developed a negative response towards his/her traditional arts. Until fairly recently, these people reacted strongly against the performance of traditional arts like songs and traditional dances, on the grounds that they were heathen in content and nature. Western culture was thus condoned at the expense of traditional African culture. The disadvantaged African's lifestyle resultantly suffered a major blow.

Onoge (1985: 51) furthermore states that in a colonial setup, there is not merely a hierarchy of master and servant. There is also a hierarchy of creator and consumer. The creator, of cultural values in this instance, is the coloniser, and the consumer is the colonised. In this situation, everything goes well as long as nothing happens to disturb the hierarchy.

After 1903, the missionaries no longer monopolised the control of education for Africans. According to Mminele (1989: 26), the state started to interfere in educational matters by emphasising secular education in the place of the earlier religiously orientated type of education. This caused conflict between the missionaries and the British colonial rulers. The British colonisers first advocated the teaching of English at institutions of learning and later English had to be the medium of instruction. In some areas and in a number of other British colonies in Southern and Central Africa, English ultimately became the only language taught

and spoken at schools. The language of normal education was no more the language of African culture, while the culture of the colonised as a whole became the target of imperialism. Literature became synonymous with English literature, and civilization with Western culture. According to Ndebele (1995: 75), Africans were accepted as people on condition that they threw away their purported backwardness and accepted 'civilization'.

Africans were thus more exposed to English than to their own Languages. This exposed African culture to corrosion by Westerners. However, as time passed by, Northern Sotho secular literary works by both the missionaries and their products from missionary institutions gradually started appearing. In the genre of drama, the first drama appeared in 1940, when G H Franz's book, *Maaberone*, was published. Many of these earlier publications of Northern Sotho plays reflect the 'superiority' of Western culture, with Christian ethics at the centre. Because of such themes, African culture is still relegated to a lower status in the sense that it is still associated with barbarism and backwardness. The promotion of these themes was facilitated by the fact that the printing press and publishing houses were controlled by the missionaries and the colonial administrations. The writings obviously had to be in line with biblical teachings and Christian morality. The selection of literary works for schools and their libraries was "carefully done, so as not to expose the young minds to dangerous, undesirable and unacceptable moral and political influences" (Ngugi 1986: 69). The works were usually based on stories of characters who move from the darkness of a pre-colonial past to the light of the Christian present. Any publication or any note of dissatisfaction with colonialism or Christian morality was not allowed. Regarding this deplorable state of affairs, Jafta has this to say:

Such literature was basically propagating Christian morality which to say the least was at variance with the traditional ways

of the African (1984: 95).

1.3.3 Urbanisation

The 'pushing' and 'pulling' factors did not originate and end with migrancy among Africans; but they even had an impact on urbanisation. Urbanisation, especially among Africans in the north of this country, started rearing its head after the discovery of gold and diamonds. The need for more labour arose and this resulted in the influx of black male labourers to the diamond and gold fields. Unlike in the times before the discovery of minerals, migrant workers were at this stage expected to labour for relatively shorter periods.

For accommodation, the workers were initially confined to compounds during their period of labour or contract. They were exposed to a strange life in a 'new world'. This had a detrimental effect on the traditional way of life of the African. As time went on, tens of thousands of Africans flocked to the gold fields, never to return permanently to their homes again. They became part of the permanent industrial population living in sprawling townships near the towns. The town became defined as a 'white territory' and Africans were regarded as 'temporary sojourners' who had to be domiciled in segregated areas referred to as 'locations', on the outskirts of the towns where provision was made for schools, churches, businesses and recreational facilities and centres. Local authorities in various townships were charged with the responsibility of controlling these inhabitants.

The move into the towns had a shattering effect on the social life of the African. He drifted away from his traditional tribal ties too, becoming an urbanised individual who tried to emulate the Western way of life in all respects, often becoming detribalised, and in the process, losing touch with many of his tribal customs which

used to have a stabilising influence on his life. Kupa (1980: 40) views detribalisation as:

.... a state of divorcing all traditional norms and values which govern a tribe as a social entity.

The Africans, particularly the youth, who were born and bred in the cities where they had known no other way of life, gradually developed into a kind of èlite middle class, predominantly Westernised. Many of them still take irreversibly to Western cultural patterns. They easily adopt attitudes and modes of behaviour that are different from those fashioned in the age-old moulds of tradition. Kupa (1980: 42) maintains that this adaptation to a Western mode of life affects the traditional relationship between a parent and a child. Tension always simmers between such Westernised youth and their conservative parents or relatives, manifesting itself when the conservatives insist on certain norms which the more liberal younger generation rejects. Such norms include, among others, the choice of a marriage partner which traditionally has to be made by the parents. The marriage of a child to another, in terms of traditional African principles, has to be approved by the parents, particularly by the father. Westernised youth no longer abide by this traditional law; they resort to their own choices which in turn put them at loggerheads with their traditional parents. Disagreements between such groups, if a compromise is not reached, at times lead to confrontation. These modern tendencies and practices tend to weaken the authority of parents over their children. As a result, African culture no more fulfils its duty as a means of social control.

In conclusion, the researcher is tempted to state that a variety of factors have contributed to the distortion of African culture. An African eventually found himself in contact with his white counterpart as a result of migrancy. While on migrant duty,

many an African was confronted by missionaries with their Christian ideology to initiate him into a new religion. The interdependence between Africans and Whites eventually resulted in the settlement of the African in '*makgoweng*' (white area), thereby becoming urbanised and detribalised. The Westernised African was thus placed in a conflict situation with his conservative traditional counterpart.

1.4 METHOD OF APPROACH

The research topic in this study, is based on a study of literary works. For these works to be thoroughly understood and explored, certain literary approaches need to be adopted. One needs to have these approaches in mind in order to arrive at a satisfactory critical analysis of the plays.

Literature is conceived to be a society-oriented discourse. This is so because it has something important to say about people, socially and culturally; both as individuals and collectively. It either censures or encourages the perpetuation of certain forms of behaviour and practices in life. It is also based on a particular setting, with characters interacting with one another for an explicit exposition of the writer's social objective.

The interpretation of a text implies getting out of it things that are within it but are not obvious to a casual reader. No meaningful criticism is possible without the existence of a set of values shared by both the writer and the critic. The problem with literary criticism is that there is never a commonality on it. One's viewpoint can never be the same as another's; the truth of what has been put forth or suggested lies in the supportive reasons that accompany it. This, in a way, presupposes that there is no consensus on literary critics with regard to the interpretation of literary texts. Ndebele's viewpoint regarding this problem is as follows:

In criticism, as in many other disciplines, there is no ultimate truth. You can only suggest solutions and address problems as you understand them (1991: 42).

The researcher tends to agree with the above assertion mainly because our understanding of literature is to a certain extent determined by our unique experiences in social life. It is furthermore associated with feelings and emotions. Since experience is subjective, relative, individually and historically viable, people ought to differ in their interpretations. Each one is thus entitled to his or her own viewpoint.

For this field of study, Marxist Sociological Approach seems to be appropriate. The approach, as Lindfors (1973: 19) puts it, "examines various interplays between thematic and structural elements in literature". These interplays emerge from and reflect the social and cultural realities which produced the literature. The researcher deems it fit to employ this social theory because the selected plays are based on social and cultural realities. They reflect people, either as groups or as individuals interacting with each other. The people come together to discuss their common problems, laugh with each other and also quarrel in the same way as normal animate beings. Because of misunderstandings as a result of ideological differences, characters tend to clash and end up in conflict situations. Marxist Sociological Approach will, however, not be the sole torch-bearer in this study, but will at times interact with other related subordinate social theories like the Interpretative Approach. The latter is the approach that seeks to know why characters in the play talk and behave in a particular manner. Their actions and utterances need to be interpreted in order to arrive at a better understanding of their inner feelings. As such, this approach probes the human mind.

Marxist critics always cherish the view that literature is primarily social rather than individual in nature. It is part of society and can offer a social content that will

provide information about society. Marxists, furthermore, maintain the view that when characters are examined, this is usually done as a way of exploring the wider social and historical forces of which they are seen as products. Characterisation, therefore, goes beyond a mere descriptive reproduction of the surface material. The imagined characters who populate the writer's literary work are not conceived simply as free-floating individuals, but as adherents to particular social classes. The sociality of literature requires that criticism go beyond the literary text to include the very structures of its manufacture. This being the case, literature should always be associated with the society to avoid being "accused of ignoring the relationship between literature and the 'real world', treating the literary text in isolation and through a rather technical terminology which divorces it from links with people, both as individuals and collectively, and the historical events which compose and surround them" (Webster 1990: 55). As man is inherently social, his or her identity is shaped in his or her vigorous struggle with the real world and multi-faceted encounters with others. It is furthermore acknowledged that an individual's membership of any social group has an effect on his or her thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

In the selected plays the interaction of characters gives rise to the grouping of characters with similar interests. Conspicuous groupings in the plays have been constituted by the elders (traditional) on the one hand and the youth (modern) on the other. *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (Serudu 1990) is one such a play wherein such groupings are apparent. The act of grouping aims at pursuing the interests of a group for its own advantage. In class societies of this nature, culture takes on a class character while the dominant group imposes its ideology on the one dominated. In such circumstances literature is fully implicated in the class struggle. According to Mazrui (1969: 109), Marxists believe that society moves towards closer integration by the mechanism of struggle and contradiction. The Marxists are furthermore convinced that conflict is a decisive factor in socialising man since the

oppressed class will constantly struggle to change the existing social status quo. These class formations result in economic and social inequalities where the division is in accordance with alignment to a prescribed social hierarchy. In this study, groupings, which end up in conflict situations, will be traced and analysed in the selected plays.

In addition, the critic is a product of a class society. Each child, by virtue of birth, family, schooling or his or her parents' occupation, is brought up in a given class. Through education, children are brought up in a culture and world outlook of the dominant class which may or may not be the same as the class of their birth and family. According to Ngugi (1986: 104), their interpretation of culture and history will thus be influenced by their philosophical standpoint or intellectual base, and their conscious or unconscious class sympathies. Since literature, like religion and other areas of culture, is a reflection of both the world of nature and the human community, the outlook of a critic in real life will profoundly affect the interpretation of the reflected reality.

Moreover, there are also some instances where the focus will mainly be on individuals, with the spot-light falling on their utterances, behavioural patterns and attitudes towards other individuals. Attitude of males (traditional) towards the females, in terms of African tradition, as well as attitudes of females (modern) towards their (traditional) male counterparts will thus be scrutinised. Their utterances which aim at venting their anger or expressing their jovial moods, will not be overlooked as well, and this will be the spot where the Interpretative Approach as postulated by Lindfors (1973: 12), will be employed.

The Interpretative Approach ignores class grouping but lays particular emphasis on the individual(s), focusing on the behaviour of characters as individuals. As such, the approach concerns itself with an exploration of the human mind in which the

critic seeks to go beyond the obvious into the less accessible regions of the human mind. According to Lindfors (1973: 13), such a critic is the most adventurous of all critics in literary criticism. The critic's tools for probing the human mind enable him or her to make responsible literary interpretations which are grounded on careful study of the author's world view.

Because of Western influence, women characters in the selected plays, for instance, *Mahlodi* (Mminele 1968) and *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (Maredi 1968), tend to be at loggerheads with their male counterparts, the basic cause of the conflicts being religious differences. Traditional men are unwilling to yield to the demands and practices of these modern women because in terms of traditional African culture, women are subordinates of men who are, therefore, not supposed to pose any threat of challenge to men. Traditional African culture has no room for socio-political equity between men and women and this is the reason why conservative male characters in the plays resort to violence against Westernised women. Men oppose them in their quest to maintain authority over them. As literary critics, we need to pursue and expose the driving forces behind these conflicting behaviour patterns of men and women. One way of doing that would be through the employment of the Interpretative Approach in our analysis of the plays. What the characters do and say need to be critically evaluated.

1.5 EXPLANATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For a proper and broader understanding of the topic and the research as a whole, key words need to be defined. They are crucial in the sense that they facilitate the understanding of the research. Identified key words in this study are: **culture**, **conflict** and **drama**. The three need to be defined in relation to each other. For an acceptable definition to be arrived at, one needs to approach them in a social context, that is, they have to be defined in line with social and cultural incidences

depicted in the plays. According to Kupa:

Definitions of terms are mostly influenced by the scope of a discipline and they cannot mention all there is to say about the concept concerned (1980: 5).

1.5.1 Culture

Culture refers to the total range of socially acquired activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of that group. It usually implies a whole way of life. It arises out of the need of people to communicate the meaning of things and regulate social life. Culture as a social process is viewed by Ndebele (1991: 120) "as an entire, internally structured system in which we usually distinguish between two aspects: material and spiritual cultures". Material culture implies the material results of human work like buildings and clothing while the spiritual aspect, on the other hand, refers to that part of the cultural process which is oriented to the human soul. It creates and forms a human intellect, ideas, feelings, attitudes and behaviour. Cultural values influence among others human psychology and mode of living. Culture is, therefore, a complex whole encompassing also language, taboos, rituals, works of art and ideas embodying religious and moral values. All these elements combine in a form recognisably different from that of other cultures even though there might be some elements in common with them. We are born in complex cultures that influence the way in which we live and behave for the remainder of our lives. Culture is a social heritage which people receive and transmit. Its survival and development depends upon our capacity to learn and to transmit knowledge to succeeding generations. In non-literate societies culture is handed down from generation to generation through practice and oral transmission. Kupa (1980: 9) registers his point on culture by saying:

It [culture] influences the individual through customs and comes to expression in definite patterns of life which portray certain ideals.

For something to be considered cultural, it must be generally shared by members of a particular society or population group. Because they share a common culture, people can predict each other's actions in a given situation and react accordingly. Culture does not have geographical limits or confinements, but can be shared with people beyond our national borders who have similar interests with us, for example, ancestral worship is a shared religious practice amongst Africans not only in South Africa but in other African countries like Lesotho and Swaziland as well.

Not all things shared generally by a population are cultural. Something is cultural if it is a set of learned beliefs, values or behaviour patterns that is generally shared by the members of a population group or society. To eat, for instance, is a must, but what, when and how we eat is learned and varies from culture to culture. Human beings are unique in the number and complexity of the learned behaviour patterns they transmit to their young ones. Besides acquiring some learned behaviour by imitation, they also acquire it with the aid of language. According to Ember *et al* (1973: 76), language is "the primary vehicle through which human culture is learned, shared and transmitted". One learns one's culture by growing up in it. Any language has a dual character; it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. It embodies the history of those people to whom it is a mother-tongue.

Communication and interaction between human beings is the basis and process of evolving culture. "In doing similar kinds of things and actions over and over again under similar circumstances, certain patterns, moves, habits, attitudes, rhythms, experiences and knowledge emerge" (Ngugi 1986: 14). Those experiences become habitual and are handed down to the next generation, thereby becoming

the inherited basis of their further actions on nature and on themselves. This constitutes a gradual accumulation of values which in time become almost self-evident truths governing their conception of what is right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly in their external and internal relations. Over time, this becomes a way of life distinguishable from other ways of life. They thus develop a distinctive culture and history. Culture embodies moral values which form the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. Language as a carrier of culture is, therefore, the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is a product of history which it in turn reflects.

Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries. As such, literature is a powerful instrument in evolving the cultural ethos of a people. It is regarded as part of the whole ideological mechanism for integrating people into the values of a dominant class, race or nation. It is essentially a subversive act and has the powerful capability to invade the personal world of the reader in a very intimate manner. "Whenever you read", as Ndebele (1991: 139) puts it, "you risk being affected in a manner that can change the course of your life". This power of subversion lies in the seemingly infallible testimony of the written word.

Imperialism, particularly during colonialism, provides the best example of how literature as an element of culture was used in the domination of Africa. The biggest weapon wielded and actually unleashed by imperialism was, according to Ngugi (1986: 3), "the cultural bomb". The objective of the bomb was to annihilate a people's belief in their names, language, unity, heritage, and ultimately in themselves. It made them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement, while furthermore making them distance themselves from that wasteland. It made them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves, for

instance with other people's language rather than their own. In a situation of this nature, possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote and ridiculous while imperialism always presents itself as the saviour.

The colonialists realised that for their mission to be accomplished, they had to conquer the most important area of domination of the colonised, which is their mental universe since economic and political control could never be complete or effective without mental control. "To control a people's culture is", according to Ngugi (1986: 16), "to control their tools of self-definition in relation to others". This was achieved through the deliberate undervaluing of African culture as well as the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser.

As language is the embodiment of culture, the imposing of a foreign language and the suppressing of the native languages, tore apart the harmony which previously existed between the African child and his or her world. This resulted in the dissociation of the sensibility of the child from his or her natural and social environment. In addition, the alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography and music from an angle where Europe was always seen as the centre of the universe. In this way, "the child was made to stand outside himself to look at himself" (Ngugi 1986: 17). The African child was conditioned to view the world as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition. In other words, the world was viewed as reflected in the literature of his or her language of adoption, while his or her own language was associated with a low status, humiliation and non-intelligence.

"Africa was taught to look on Europe as her teacher and the centre of man's civilization, and herself as the pupil" (Ngugi 1986: 100). Ngugi here refers to the fact that in this event, Western culture became the centre of Africa's process of learning, while Africa was relegated to the background. Africans uncritically imbibed

values that were alien and had no immediate relevance to them. The richness of their cultural heritage was degraded and her people labelled as primitive and savage since the coloniser's values were placed in the limelight. In this process, a new African evolved who denied his or her original image and exhibited a considerable lack of confidence in his or her creative potential.

There can be no doubt that the influence of the west in Africa, and in South Africa in particular, has always been vast, and that it is destined to continue being so well into the foreseeable future. The above outlined picture of the present and previous socio-cultural set-up of South Africa in particular, should serve to indicate the enormous task of reconstruction ahead, which should be undertaken in an attempt to enable the culturally poor Africans to rediscover themselves.

A society with a well-defined culture is capable of developing a series of ideal cultural patterns which tend to be reinforced through cultural constraints. The ideal cultural patterns are the behaviours that most members of the society consider to be correct and proper in particular situations. One who violates or deviates from cultural norms may either be ridiculed or be subjected to a certain amount of social isolation. In this way, culture can serve as a means of social control in the sense that members will fear to be subjected to social isolation or being ridiculed.

The various aspects of culture function as an interrelated whole. One reason for culture to be interrelated is that it is generally adaptive. It changes in line with changing environmental circumstances or situations. This being the case, the various aspects of a culture must operate in perfect harmony at all times.

Culture is not static, but instead is ever changing. With the passage of time and depending on their level of development and specific circumstances, people acquire new ways of understanding their culture. In other words, they acquire a new form

of consciousness; a new ideological orientation.

Cultural adaptation is cultural change in response to environmental changes. This means that culture is determined by both environment and historical conditions. A community's system of values, its implements of work, its diet *et cetera*, will to some extent depend on historical and ecological factors, on climatic conditions and on what is available in the locality. As time passes, conditions also change; new things are acquired and old things relinquished, so the community starts interacting with other communities, assimilating new values, learning new ways of living and often imparting its own values, its own ways of living and doing things to other communities.

If a cultural norm changes in response to change in the environment, other aspects of culture will probably change accordingly. Individual deviation from cultural norms may provide a fertile ground for culture change. Something that starts out as unusual or peculiar behaviour, may be picked up by others as an appropriate response in the face of changing circumstances. When initiated to Africans, Christianity, for instance, was viewed as abhorrent and as a result of that, created resentment and resistance of various kinds among them. The deviation of the first group(s) of traditional Africans to adopt it as an appropriate response to the changing world eventually resulted in its acceptance by many others later on. Today, because of the multitudes of Africans being Christians, it is no more viewed negatively, but instead, has been accepted as a norm. Culture is, therefore, not static, but dynamic, and its dynamism aptly correlates with Chung and Ngara's line of thinking when saying:

.... unless a community is completely cut off from the rest of the world, its needs must be exposed to external influence (1985: 72).

Nevertheless, for a cultural trait to stand a chance of acceptance, it must offer some advantage, some utility or pleasure sought and accepted by the people.

1.5.2 Conflict

Viewed in a social context, conflict will mean a state of opposition or clash between ideas or interests. It is a process of interaction between individuals or groups or between individuals and groups. Conflict is usually, but not always, accompanied by strong feelings of hostility.

Conflicts can either take place between cultures or within a particular culture. This can be conflict within the individual, between individuals or between a human being, circumstances, fate and environment. Conflict within the individual (internal) manifests itself through soliloquy. Soliloquy is the act of talking to oneself, silently or aloud. "In drama, it denotes the convention by which a character, alone on the stage, utters his thoughts aloud" (Abrams 1981: 175). Playwrights use this device as a convenient way to convey to the audience information about a character's thoughts, motives and state of mind. Conflict between individuals (external) occurs in the form of clashes and misunderstandings. Such clashes usually take place because of differences in world view, thus letting each party or individual strive to override the other.

Where two cultures meet, the more 'developed' or 'advanced' one tends to influence and alter the less 'developed' one. This is the case with Western and African cultures - the Western appears to be more powerful, thereby becoming influential over its African counterpart. The situation is partly ascribed to the economic power of the Whites - money means power. The communal nature of African people resultantly is gradually losing grip in favour of the individualism of the West. This influence is, undoubtedly, accompanied by conflicts in their various forms; with the

to-be-influenced being reluctant to relinquish some of their cultural norms.

Society, in terms of Marxism, is divided into interest groups known as classes. People belonging to a particular class stick together and fight for the same things, even if they belong to different races or linguistic groups. Their class interests unite them against rival classes. They confront the rival class as a common or a single front. Whatever achievement is attained, benefits the entire class.

These classes are logged together in dialectical struggle. In other words, one class represents a particular set of interests and a particular world view which may be opposed by those of another class. This leads to a struggle between the two classes and during the course of the struggle, better world views generally emerge. Class conflict serves not only as an inevitable part of human experience, but also as an essential process for working out ways of improving society. Constant struggle leads to constant improvement.

To avoid hostilities or clashes that may surface as a result of conflicts in a society, means are devised to keep members in a harmonious relationships. Every society develops its ideal cultural patterns which tend to be reinforced through cultural constraints. Cultural constraints vary from society to society. In some societies, constraints can take the form of ridicule or social isolation of the victim. Whatever form a constraint can take, that will be a means of bringing the intended individual into conformity with the society's cultural norms. In doing this, culture is being portrayed as a means of social control. This is a peaceful way of encouraging and perpetuating acceptable behavioural patterns within a society. However, we do not always feel the constraints of our culture because we generally conform to the types of conduct and thought which it requires. Cultural constraints are usually exercised most forcefully around the limits of acceptable behaviour.

Nevertheless, conflicts do take place and have to be resolved. Minor disputes at times may erupt into violent conflicts. Most modern societies have formal institutions and offices such as the police, attorneys and courts to deal with minor disputes and more serious conflicts that may arise in a society. These institutions generally operate according to codified laws. Transgression of the law by individuals gives the institutions the right to take actions against them.

Societies lacking such specialised institutions for dealing with conflicts, have their own system of social control. A stratified traditional society will resort to traditional means of settling a conflict or dispute. In the case of a conflict in a family, the father will preside and give judgement over the case. A child who is reluctant to willingly heed the father's instructions, will be forced to do so. The accused will receive the relevant and appropriate punishment, which will vary from tongue lashing to corporal punishment. In the case where force does not bring about the desired effect, disownment is resorted to. In a village, the services of a headman will be sought and where the entire tribe is affected, the chief will feature. Here the transgressor can either be banished from the tribe, gruesomely killed or be made to pay a heavy fine in the form of beasts.

The conflict(s) reflected in the plays under study, all reveal modernity in opposition to traditionalism among Africans. In *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (Serudu 1990), parental control is in variance with individual preference. A Westernised character rejects a marriage partner that has been chosen by her traditional parents. In *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (Maredi 1968), African tradition is at loggerheads with modernity. The husband is hostile to the wife because she insisted on buying the son Western clothes in the place of loin-skins. In *Mahlodi* (Mminele 1968), Christianity is at war with African religion and culture. A Christian character resists the levirate custom that is being imposed on her by her traditional in-laws.

1.5.3 Drama

Drama has its origin in human struggle with nature and other human beings. To a traditional man, human life itself was a mystery. There were rituals and ceremonies to celebrate and mark birth, circumcision or initiation into the different stages of growth and responsibility, as well as marriage and the burial of the dead. In this way, as Ngugi (1986: 36) puts it, "nature, through works and ceremonies, could be turned into a friend".

The struggle among human beings during the pre-colonial era sometimes took an adverse form; enemies came to take away a community's wealth by robbing them of their goats and cattle. Battles had to be fought to claim back the wealth. Before a battle could be fought, the spears and the warriors had to be blessed and strengthened. Triumphant warriors came back home to celebrate their victories. In songs and dances, they acted out the battle scenes for those who were not there so that the warriors could relive the glory of the struggle and drink in communal admiration and gratitude.

Besides enemies from outside, there were also enemies within tribal organisations; evildoers and thieves. Stories were told to point or highlight the fate of those threatening the communal good. These stories, usually having animals as the main characters, were told in various indigenous African languages. Most of the stories were action-packed, and as such the listeners marvelled at what was being imitated by the elderly narrators. Greater parts of the stories were being dramatised. Besides stories of censure, stories about the encouragement of certain acceptable behavioural patterns were narrated. People often identified themselves with animal heroes in such stories. The victories of these animals were regarded as the humans' victories. "The animals were followed in their struggle against hostile

nature also; drought, rain, sun and wind, the confrontation of which often forced them to search for forms of cooperation" (Ngugi 1986: 10). The struggles of animals amongst themselves, particularly between beasts of prey and their victims, aroused great interest amongst the human beings as well. These twin struggles; against nature and other animals reflected real life struggles in the human world.

Central to all these varieties of dramatic expression were songs, dance and occasionally mime. At this stage drama was not an isolated event but part and parcel of the rhythm of the daily and seasonal life of the community. It was also entertainment in the sense of involved enjoyment. Moral instruction formed an integral part of it. However, it was not performed in special buildings set aside for the purpose, but could take place anywhere, wherever there was an empty space.

There were good and bad story tellers. A good one could tell the story over and over again, and it would always be fresh to the audience. He or she could tell a story told by someone else and infuse it with life and drama. The differences between story tellers were in the use of words and images as well as in the inflexion of voices to effect different tones. Africans, therefore, learnt to value words for the sake of their meaning and nuances. Language was not just a mere stringing together of words but had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning.

Sadly, however, the missionaries regarded many of these African traditions as works of the devil. They had to be eradicated before the Bible could hold sway in the hearts of Africans. "Both the missionaries and the colonial administrators used the school system and the church to destroy the concept of the 'empty space' among the people by trying to capture and confine drama in government supervised urban community halls, schools halls and church buildings" (Ngugi 1986: 37).

By contrast, modern drama is a literary form or genre designed for performance by

actors on stage. It is usually thought of as a cultural activity; as something that others do to entertain us. In it actors assume the roles of characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. Besides providing us with entertainment, the best drama fosters awareness of the complexities of life.

As part of literature, drama is an attempt by a writer to understand and interpret life. The interpretation of life will be based on the writer's own age and environment, his or her nature as an individual and on himself or herself within the framework of society. It should have something to say about the society; either censuring or encouraging certain practices in life. It is true that:

.... everytime drama spreads to a new audience it provides new possibilities and changes in the structure of the society, or in manners and customs (Boulton 1960: 66).

Moreover, drama is a form of art which is perceived to be communal in nature. There is supposed to be a group of actors to interpret it as well as an audience to respond to it. Drama is capable of showing how history can be brought to the fore so that the audience, particularly children, may know what their past was like so that they may help in the building of a healthy society. The audience submits itself to a new experience, accepting a sample of life and testing it. They share in the lives and experiences of imaginary people, leading them to deeper insight and extended sympathy. In drama, the writer creates characters and places them in situations that are interesting and in some way relevant to general human experience. According to Heese *et al* (1986: 89).

.... characters are vehicles by means of which the dramatist conveys his or her central theme.

It is thus of vital importance to study the characters in a drama in order to determine the significance of their actions and relations to other characters, in terms of a play as a whole.

According to Ngugi (1986: 54) in drama there is a movement from apparent harmony, a kind of rest, through conflict to a comic or tragic resolution of that conflict. We end with the attainment of harmony at a different level, a kind of temporary rest, which of course is the beginning of another movement. The balance of opposing ideas and social forces, of all the contending forces, is important in shaping the form of drama.

1.6 THE SCOPE OF THE WORK

Chapter One is an introduction of the research work, highlighting the nature of the study. It outlines the reasons that prompted the researcher to choose the topic under discussion. Key words have been identified and an attempt has been made to explain them. The methodology to guide the researcher in analysing the plays in subsequent chapters has also been outlined. The chapter includes a focus on the historical background of the ideological clashes as well as factors considered to be contributory to the convergence of the two cultures. Migratory labour, urbanisation and the work of the missionaries among the Africans, are some of the factors that played a role in changing the lifestyle of the African, thereby causing clashes between modernity and traditionalism.

Chapter Two focuses on the question of marriage, where parental control is at variance with individual preference. Traditionally, the choice of a marriage partner among Africans is not an individual decision. Parents decide on behalf of their children. Parental authority has a prominent part to play in the sense that one has to abide by their decision. Avoidance of future conflicts which may result in the breakdown of the marriage, is one of the factors to be considered when marriage is to be arranged and negotiated. That being the case, traditional parents feel culturally obliged to choose specific marriage partners for their children. However, this characteristic nature of traditional marriage is no longer acceptable among modern Africans, especially the youth. On the contrary, they generally insist on

partners of their own choice and liking. Their attempts to resist the conservatism of their traditional parents, therefore, often lead to conflict. In this chapter, individualism is poised as a challenge to communalism.

Chapter Three addresses the conflict between African tradition and modernity. Here, attention is given to leadership in the family where the role of a man in relation to his wife and children is outlined. The traditional husband strongly resents the indulgence of his family members in modernity. As the head of the family, he feels he has been undermined and this infuriates him to the extent of becoming despotic. *Kgadi* is not pleased with his authoritative rule, as such, she interferes to bring peace in her brother's family. Outside his nuclear family, the husband clashes with his younger brothers's wife for failing to honour her cultural obligations. *Moruti* steps in to quell the volatile situation.

Conflict between Christianity and African tradition is addressed in Chapter Four. The death of a Christian convert has resulted in misunderstandings between the surviving spouse and her traditional in-laws. In terms of African tradition, death does not terminate marriage. Secondary unions like levirate are resorted to in order to perpetuate marriage. To Christians, this is unacceptable because Christianity has no room for levirate custom. Remarriage is permitted among them. This fundamental difference in world view causes conflicts of various kinds as each party wants its view to be adhered to.

Chapter Five reflects the findings in the selected plays. Here the researcher pauses to reflect on the conflicts encountered in the plays. The main issue here is how conflicts are handled in the plays, highlighting the way in which resolutions are reached. Plays with related themes, for instance *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (Serudu 1990) and *Mahlodi* (Mminele 1968) are compared to determine how each playwright eventually resolves the thorny issue of marriage.

CHAPTER 2

PARENTAL CONTROL VERSUS INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Marriage, in accordance with traditional African principles, differs vastly from its modern counterpart. A Westernised person from a traditional African family usually encounters mind-boggling problems when he or she is to marry a person of his or her own choice. Parental control impedes him or her from exercising his or her individual rights. The conservative parents, who always want their authority to be felt, hinder him or her from exercising his or her rights by way of insisting on their own choice. They view this as an obligation in terms of African culture. Therefore, for the union to be finally sanctioned, the choice should be parental and not individual. This difference in perspective of marriage often breeds conflicts as reflected in *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale* (Serudu 1990).

Until modern times, marriage among Africans was rarely a matter of free choice. Among traditional Africans, most marriages are still arranged by parents who decide whom their children should marry. Initially, it was obligatory that parents should find a marriage partner for their son among their close relatives. The marriage most preferred was with the cross-cousin (*motswala*), that is, the daughter of a maternal uncle. It was eminently desirable for a man to marry his cousin because there was a strong conviction that such a union would succeed. The girl thus selected would be intimately known to the boy's people and, as relatives, both she and her husband would tend to be more tolerant of each other's conduct. "The marriage, would bind the two families together even more closely than before, and ensure increased harmony and cooperation" (Schapera 1940: 41).

Cross-cousin marriages are presumed to be prevailing among the majority of African tribes. When such a marriage does take place among the Bapedi, "the general satisfaction is always expressed by the phrase: '*Ngwana o ya gabo*', meaning the child is going to her home" (Mönnig 1967: 199). This clearly expresses the Bapedi conception of the value of cousin marriages. The value and importance of a marriage of this nature is often expressed in a Northern Sotho saying:

Ngwana wa malome nnyale, dikgomo di boele 'šakeng.

(Child of my maternal uncle, marry me, so that the cattle should return to our kraal).

Cross-cousins are said to be 'born for' each other, and as a result, refusal to marry the chosen person is said to have occurred very seldomly. The main reason Africans provide for their satisfaction with a man marrying within his 'home' is that the mother of the groom is ensured of being taken care of in her old age. Kupa (1980: 27) goes further to say:

Parents [of the groom] preferably choose a daughter of some close relatives or acquaintances because in the event of some domestic disputes, one could expect some tolerance.

If the daughter-in-law is also related to her mother-in-law, she will be less inclined to quarrel with her and more willing to look after her very well. It is probably for this reason that marriage with my mother's brother's daughter is preferred above all others.

However, with the passage of time, a shift from the original state of affairs was noted. An interest developed to seek for a wife among the more remote relatives and fellow villagers as well. The majority of the marriages, therefore,

took place between people not actually related, but well-known to each other. Even here, there was nevertheless, a measure of preferential selection, for it was considered desirable that a man should marry a woman of his own ward or at least of his own village. In such a case, his parents would be well acquainted with all the girls eligible for marriage, and the two families concerned would always be at hand to help each other. Marriage into a completely unknown family seldomly occurred, while at the same time it was most unusual for a wife to be taken from some other tribe.

Traditionally, a bride is not randomly chosen, but certain factors are carefully considered before a conclusion is arrived at. The merits of a possible bride are carefully debated and only when unanimous approval has been reached, can negotiations with the girl's parents formally commence. More emphasis is usually laid upon her capacity for work than upon her good looks; hence the Northern Sotho proverb: '*mosadi ke tšhwene o lewa mabogo*'. Schapera extends this idea by saying:

In choosing a bride people look for the qualities likely to ensure a stable marriage; the girl herself should be industrious, modest, chaste, obedient and amiable. Her parents should be of respectable ancestry and good character, free from any suspicion of practising sorcery (Cited by Kupa 1980: 27).

With the dawn of Western culture among Africans, marriage has assumed new trends. Currently, love precedes any negotiations leading or related to marriage. Everyone makes his or her own decision about whom and when to marry. Among the modernists, successful dating may result in courtship, which then usually leads to marriage. Traditionally, it is assumed that love between partners comes after marriage, and much thought is given to the socio-economic advantages that may result from the match or union.

This study will reveal that the opposing perspectives of marriage alluded to

above serve as a constant source of conflict between modernity and traditional African culture. The issues of whom, how and when should one marry, as will be explained in this chapter, pose serious problems which cause conflict between modernists and traditionalists. The conflicts become pronounced when either of the two parties involved becomes adamant not to surrender its ideology or standpoint. This chapter clearly illuminates parental control often at war with individual preference.

2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE TEXT

The playwright has presented us with the traditional African family of Matuba, which insists on the arranged marriage of their young and westernised daughter, Mmakoma, to Thapudi, a qualified teacher at Makweng. The Matuba family agrees to the proposal of the Mabele family that their son should marry Mmakoma. The agreement is, however, reached without Mmakoma's knowledge and consent. The richness of the Mabele family is an additional inducement for the Matuba's to favour the union.

Upon hearing the news, Mmakoma shows her resentment. She rejects her parental choice irrespective of the socio-economic standing of the family into which she is to be married. As she wants a spouse of her own choice, conflict ensues between her and her traditional parents who envisage some financial and material gains from the affluent Mabele family.

Mmakoma, who is traditionally expected to bow down to the pressure of the parents, meets Matsobane from the Koribana family and falls in love with him. The affair is a blow to the Matuba family members who realise that it will deprive them of the benefits they are longing for. The matter is compounded by the existence of a long-standing enmity between Matuba and Koribana. Matuba accuses Koribana of depriving him of his plough-field. Although the hostility between the two families intensifies the conflict between Mmakoma and her

parents, Mmakoma refuses to give in to the pressure of her parents. Efforts by the two families to encourage the young lovers to separate are futile. Even the murder of Maesela (by Matsobane) does not deter Mmakoma. She still loves Matsobane irrespective of this ghastly deed which eventually led to Matsobane's banishment from the village. The sentimental attachment between the two is still so strong that separation is not in sight. This is confirmed by Mmakoma when she says:

Gape ka ntle ga gagwe [Matsobane] bophelo bja ka bo tla fetoga lefeela (Serudu 1990: 101).

(Without him my life will be useless).

Negotiations for marriage proceed despite Mmakoma's disapproval thereof. When the great day for the delivery of *magadi* eventually dawns, Mmakoma does not attend the occasion, but instead, chooses to leave with the intention of spending the day out in the forest with Matsobane. She wants to relieve herself of the obsessive situation at home which has already resulted in the dwindling of her physique. Matsobane's failure to arrive in time at the rendezvous complicates her plight to such an extent that she in desperation plunges herself into the local river. Her death causes Matuba to realise his mistake of having endeavoured to force Mmakoma into a marriage she disapproved of and he feels sincere remorse for his deeds.

2.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

Various conflicts that have been depicted in this play are attributed to various factors, of both modern and traditional nature. Because of traditionalism that prevails in the play, the reader tends not to be surprised to come across characters fighting over a plough-field. These traditional characters furthermore deem it necessary to arrange marriages for their children, who oppose this traditional tendency on the ground that as modernists, they have the right to

search for and marry partners they love.

2.2.1 Plough-field

Matuba accuses Koribana of having cheated him of his plough-field, an act that, to Matuba, does not deserve any forgiveness. Koribana, on the other hand, is aware of Matuba's discontentment about this issue, so his unwillingness to cede the field to its rightful owner, causes tension between the two. They do not see eye to eye any more. Traditionally, a field is viewed as a source of wealth, as a properly tended field yields enough crops for the benefit of the owner's family. It is thus valued almost much as, for instance, a homestead in the sense that a hedge, usually of branches of thorny trees, has to encircle it. In addition, the services of the family doctor have to be sought to strengthen it against evil actions of evildoers.

Trespassing into such a field is a great offence which may have unpleasant consequences. One is therefore not surprised to find harsh utterances in the play, such as MmaKoribana's outburst:

Ba ga Matuba ka tšhemong ya ka? Ruri re fedile! Mabele ona re ka se tsoge re a bunne tšhemong ye, mma a ka tsoga bahung (Serudu 1990: 8).

(The Matuba people in my field? Surely we are dead! We will never ever reap any corn from this field, my mother can rise from the dead).

MmaKoribana is astonished to see members of the Matuba family in 'their' field. Although Lesetša and Maesela are merely in pursuit of their dogs which are chasing a hare, the confrontation that results from the intrusion eventually compels them to go and report the matter to their uncle, Matuba, who, upon hearing the news, reacts as follows:

(O befetšwe) Ke kgale ke go botša mosadi gore Koribana o nnyaka diganong. Lehono gona o nkhweditše. Ke tla mmolaela gona ka mola tshemong yešo a e tšerego ka maano (Serudu 1990: 10).

(He is cross) It's long that I have been telling you, my wife, that Koribana is teasing me. Today I am ready for him. I will kill him in that field of ours which he has cheated us of).

Seen in its cultural context, Matuba's reaction is not exaggerated; the disputed field has been a thorny issue haunting him time and again. This incident convinces him that the time has come for him to vent his anger - Koribana has to be attacked, and if possible, killed for the mistake he has done.

Koribana's family, on the other hand, is not silent about the issue as well. They are prepared for whatever action from the Matuba family. Their preparedness for action is epitomised by the derogatory utterances levelled at the Matuba family. MmaKoribana labels them as witches, mainly because they have trespassed into 'their' field. She is convinced that they won't reap any corn from the field. This reinforces the importance and value of a field to a traditional African person. Denying somebody such a heritage (field), is well nigh suicidal. This attitude towards a field explains the intensity of the conflict between Koribana and Matuba and why Koribana and his wife repeatedly refer to Matuba as '*ngakana ya mošemane*' (a young doctor). This utterance is derogatory in itself and clearly reveals that even if Matuba was a medicine-man, his services won't be sought by the proud Koribana family. The unlawful intrusion into the field, backed by the long-standing enmity between the two families, at last leads to fierce fighting where Matuba is severely beaten (*go rothothwa*) by the hefty, muscular (*serolorolo*) Koribana. He suffers some bruises for which he has to be nursed for some days. The assault is a great disappointment to Matuba's wife, who reacts to it thus:

O re amogile bohwa [tšhemo] bja borena ebile o rata go go fihla hlogo (Serudu 1990: 13).

(He has deprived us of our heritage and he still wants to kill you).

The rift between the two families is becoming wider now, while the reasons for their estrangement are becoming compounded. The severe assault of Matuba has added to the disputed field and the unlawful intrusion into the field.

As though they had some premonitions about the future relations of their daughter with somebody from Koribana's family, Matuba's family, immediately after the quarrel, starts besmirching Koribana's family. As enemies, they are constantly alleged to be witches. This is evident in MmaMatuba's statement to Mmakoma when saying:

Batho bale ga se ba loka. O se ke wa be wa itlwaetša bona, Mologadi, ba a tsoga (Serudu 1990: 16).

(Those people are not good. Do not get acquainted with them, Mologadi, they are witches).

Witchcraft (*go tsoga*) is a deadly weapon that has been employed to win the battle. It is scary; people do not always freely associate with those believed to be witches. In this play, the main aim in uttering such allegations is thus to deter Mmakoma from associating with any of Koribana's family members.

The clash between these two families clearly reflects conflict within traditional African culture. On the one hand Koribana is violating it by denying Matuba his traditional heritage; a field. Matuba, on the other hand, is not pleased by the state of affairs since it is his right to acquire and utilise the field to his own advantage; hence the conflict. The clash over the field furthermore serves as the basis for subsequent conflicts in the play. Enmity has been born out of this clash. Mmakoma's parents, therefore, have sufficient grounds to reject Matsobane as Mmakoma's marriage partner. They have now firmly decided on Thapudi as their choice. It is thus obvious that the playwright has made use of

this traditional setting to entrench traditionalism in the play. The characters, especially Koribana and Matuba, have been sufficiently fortified to resist any challenge that appears in a modern guise.

2.2.2 Searching for love

The assault of Matuba by Koribana is something of the past, but what surprises and haunts Koribana and his wife this time is the unusual attitude of Matsobane. Since their confrontation with the Matuba family, Matsobane has become a changed person to them. Because of their strained relationship, MmaKoribana suspects that her son must have been bewitched by the Matuba family. She is, therefore, of the opinion that steps be taken to remedy the situation: '*Re tla swanela ke go mo emaemela*'.

Koribana, on the other hand, suspects that a love relationship between Matsobane and Mmakoma may be the cause of Matsobane's changed nature especially since he has often seen Matsobane going in the direction of the Matubas. The suspicion is still to be proved and as such he is not ready to disclose it to his wife. Koribana appears to be haunted by this thought as is evident in his soliloquy:

E sego gore ge ke hlwa ke mmona a tšwela thokong ye ya ga Matuba, o kganyogile ngwanenyana yola wa bona ba rego ke Mmakoma? O a mpelaetša. Le rena re sentše ka go se mmošše gore ga re nwešane meetse le bona (Serudu 1990: 25).

(Should it be that when I see him time and again going in the direction of the Matubas, he has been enticed by that girl of theirs called Mmakoma? He is making me suspicious. We have also made a mistake by not telling him that we are not on good terms with them).

Koribana is worried about Matsobane's present attitude. Should it be proved

that Matsobane associates with Mmakoma, he (Koribana) is going to be greatly disturbed. This problem is depriving Koribana of peace of mind.

Modernists have their own criterion for selecting their loved ones. Currently youths regard physical charm as among the qualities most desirable in the kind of girls they would like to marry. Individual preferences will always vary, but, as Schapera (1940: 46) puts it, "the generally admired type is a light-skinned girl of somehow moderate built, with prominent and firm breasts and buttocks". Facial beauty is also added to bodily proportions in choosing a mate. In this regard, well-shaped ears, wild eyes and slender noses are some of the desired features. Matsobane is thus no exception in employing these criteria to judge the beauty of Mmakoma, as his words of admiration for Mmakoma's bodily proportions and facial beauty express:

*Ke fišwa ke mollo wa lerato, Thibe. Mahlwana a gagwe a
mphahla bjalo ka mahlasedi a letšatši.
A bolela le go phala leleme.
Nkwana ya gagwe ya ntlhana, o ka re ke thabana ya
badimo!
Ako o bone manakana a gagwe!
A rokame mafahleng bjalo ka mosadi a rwele moeta wa
meetse (Serudu 1990: 37).*

(I am burning with love, Thibe. Her eyes strike into mine like the rays of the sun.
They speak more than the tongue can do.
Her pointed nose, looks like the little mountain of the ancestors!
Just have a look at her pointed breasts!
They stand erect on her chest like a woman with a claypot of water on her head).

Matsobane gets a chance to meet and propose love to Mmakoma at Matuba's place where a traditional dance is being performed. The above song of praise undeniably establishes that should Matsobane succeed in wooing Mmakoma, it would be difficult to separate them. The young man has been so greatly

enticed by the woman that he cannot afford to wait any longer - her physical features alone are sufficient to incite a burning desire in him to approach and propose love to her. This criterion is an explicit modern way of selecting a future marriage partner. The playwright in this instance, has adopted a poetic or verse style to bring this message home. The inner feelings of Matsobane about Mmakoma have been exposed in a poetic manner.

However, the first person to approach Mmakoma at the festive occasion is Thapudi, the suitor preferred by her parents. He approaches her with confidence, being fully aware that negotiations for the arranged marriage have commenced. His hopes for success are dashed when Mmakoma turns down his proposal. He is left in the lurch because he has not expected any rebuff. Thapudi has no place in Mmakoma's heart. She is being forced upon him by her conservative parents although she is yearning for a person of her own choice. This is the reason why she is not ashamed to say to him:

Ao, o reng o rata go ntlaba? Gape nna ga se be ka go holofetša selo (Serudu 1990: 38).

(Oh no, why do you want to embarrass me? I have never promised you anything).

An arranged marriage to a westernised youth is totally unthinkable and unacceptable. They take it upon themselves to resist and oppose their parents' decisions. In addition, it has now become more usual for a son to take an active part in the preliminary family discussions regarding whom he should marry, and his own preference is mostly seriously considered. He often selects the girl of his dreams, and only when he has successfully wooed the girl, does he ask his parents to conduct the formal negotiations with her family. In terms of Western culture, love precedes marriage and any failure to take this into cognisance when marriage is negotiated, leads to conflict between the youth and his or her parents.

When Matsobane finally approaches Mmakoma to ask for her love, few problems are encountered. Mmakoma accepts him as the lover of her own choice. The sentimental attachment between the two increases while their feeling to each other is strengthened when Mmakoma's parents force her to marry Thapudi, the suitor of their choice, as evinced by following extract:

Matsobane, ke kgoba la pelo ya gago. Mo o yago, ke tla ya nago. Madimo le disasedi tša lefase le, re tla di šwahla gotee (Serudu 1990: 47).

(Matsobane, I am the slave of your heart. Wherever you go, I will go with you. Together we will brave the storms and whirlwinds of this earth).

Mmakoma's love has finally found a place in Matsobane's heart, as the above words prove beyond doubt that she is deeply in love with Matsobane. From her utterances one can conclude that only death will separate them. As Mmakoma's love for Matsobane is boundless and destined for great heights, Thapudi's love will definitely have no room in her heart and this will certainly render the efforts of her parents futile.

In the meantime Mmakoma's parents have become aware of the love relationship between their daughter and Matsobane. From the outset, they waste no time to express their resentment of the relationship, being fully aware of the fact that should the affair be left to continue, their espoused suitor's chances of being successful will be thwarted. Here is the astonished MmaMatuba's reaction to Mmakoma's unwarranted behaviour:

Mmakoma! Morwa Koribana ka lapeng la ka? O a hlola ngwanenyana tena! Ke yo botša tatago (Serudu 1990: 43).

(Mmakoma! Koribana's son in my household? You must be mad you young girl! I am going to tell your father).

Mmakoma's parents have clearly never expected that she would defy their decision by falling in love with a different person, let alone Koribana's son. The drama thus exposes the hardships Mmakoma has to endure mainly because of being determined to exercise her individual rights. It clearly shows how parental control has reared its head as an impediment to individual freedom since Mmakoma's parents would never accept Matsobane as her preferred lover. For Matsobane, on the other hand, life is also not as smooth as he thought it would be, because his relationship with Mmakoma has estranged him from his parents. The situation now arises where the hostility between his family and that of Mmakoma does not warrant any association with a member from Matuba's family, let alone setting a foot in the household. After spending the night with Mmakoma, he becomes greatly worried; what will the parents say or do, should they discover that he slept at Matuba's place. His soliloquy reveals more of his mental anguish:

Lehono ke lenaba la mma le tate. Ge tate a ka tseba gore ke gata ka lapeng leo le letšatši la mohlolo a ka se tsogego a le gatile, a ka mpolaya ka diatla (Serudu 1990: 47-48).

(Today I am the enemy of my mother and father. Should my father know that I visit the family that he will never-never visit, he would literally kill me).

Although the two young partners' search for love is over, a worrying factor for both of them is their traditional parents' disapproval of their relationship. The relationship has emerged as a source of both internal and external conflicts to the young lovers and their parents and in between them. This tormenting issue, prevents the lovers from enjoying their relationship. The two, nevertheless, constitute a modern front challenging the traditional one consisting of their traditional parents. In terms of African tradition, Matsobane has to give way for Thapudi to marry Mmakoma. This appears to be impossible because the young lovers are determined to live their lives in accordance with Western principles. Their wish is for parental control to give way for individual preference.

Mmakoma's total rejection of traditionalism becomes pronounced when she swears at Thapudi. When responding to Raisibe urging her to marry Thapudi, Mmakoma bluntly retorts:

Ke tla dirang ka seebela seo sa borokgo bja maswi (Serudu 1990: 49).

(What shall I do with that vagabond in a white pair of trousers?)

Here Thapudi is portrayed as a person who lacks direction (*seebela*). He is being mocked at for wearing a white pair of trousers - a colour which (according to her) cannot be worn by 'wise' people. This defamation of character surfaces as a result of her hatred and lack of love for Thapudi. Mmakoma needs a person of her own choice. She has dissociated herself from African tradition to associate with Western culture. As a modernist, she feels she has the right to decide on her future herself. She feels that whatever is destined to happen to her, she is bound to know and take a decisive action pertaining to that although she is aware that such moves will definitely harm her relationship with her parents. The two parties will, as a result of the strained relationship, be brought into conflict where each will fight tooth and nail to eventually emerge as the victor. Each one of the parties will push its ideology forward to avoid embarrassment and to ensure its peaceful survival in future.

The development of strong emotional attachments in love-making increasingly plays a part among the modern youth. A young person will be fully intent on loving another with his or her whole heart, and any intrusion from outside will rarely have a chance of succeeding. The stand that has been taken by Mmakoma against Thapudi, amply proves this assertion:

... gore ke nyalwe ke seebela sela, bokaone ke ge nka dula ke le lefetwa bophelong bja ka ka moka. Ka mo [o šupa ka pelong], ga a gona le gatee (Serudu 1990: 51).

(I will rather remain a spinster for the rest of my life, than to be married to that vagabond. In here [pointing at the heart] he is totally not there).

There is no hope whatsoever that Mmakoma will change her attitude towards Thapudi. She opts rather to remain unmarried than to surrender to her parents' choice. Utterances like this, coupled with many more others by Mmakoma, such as those reflected on pages 39, 45 and 47 of this study, have been purposely employed by the playwright to heighten the role of cultural conflict in the play. The actions of characters like Mmakoma, clearly illuminate modernity and its effects in the play. Modernists resist conservatism prevalent among traditionalists.

2.2.3 Parental Choice

Among traditional Africans, mate selection in its ideal form is socially regulated and the ideal form is determined by kinship obligations. The social organisation determines who one shall marry, "and the parents, not the individual concerned, set the machinery of the organisation into operation" (Krige *et al.* 1980: 142). In terms of African culture, it is expected of the parents of a young man to choose a bride for their son. He himself is not consulted at all, and only after the customary negotiations have been successfully completed would he be informed of what has been decided. A negative response is usually not expected or envisaged. This procedure, however, is followed for a man's first wife only; any others he might decide to marry later are chosen by himself.

The designated girl's parents will be approached and negotiations with them will resume. After reaching an agreement the decision will then be communicated to the respective parties; the prospective bride and groom. In most cases, the mother will convey the decision to the girl and the father to the boy. Communicators, however, are expected to be cautious and strategic in their approach.

The cautious approach alluded to above has been explicitly displayed when Matuba's wife approaches her daughter, Mmakoma, with a marriage package. After having talked jokingly at large about Mmapeu, MmaMatuba eventually says:

Maloba ke be ke na le MmaMabele. O re ba ka thakgala kudu ge o ka nyalwa ke morwa'gwe, Thapudi. A ke re o a mo tseba o ruta mola Makweng (Serudu 1990: 29).

(I was with MmaMabele the day before yesterday. She says they can be extremely pleased, should you be married to their son, Thapudi. You must be knowing him, he is a teacher at Makweng).

Implicit in the utterance above is the fact that there was a meeting before where the Matuba and the Mabele families reached an agreement about a marriage between Mmakoma and Thapudi. As MmaMatuba is not expecting any objection from Mmakoma to what has been agreed upon by the parents, she regards informing her daughter as a mere formality. It should be noted here that the two prospective partners are not in any way obliged by kinship to marry each other. The two are not relatives, and apparently, the Mabele family, being from another village, were enticed by certain qualities in Mmakoma to commence these marriage negotiations.

Among modernists, the social status of the potential marriage partners plays a part in obtaining the agreement to a marriage proposal by the partners themselves. Males sometimes show reluctance to finally tie the knot with women who are on par with or superior in social positions to them. This fear stems from the belief that such women will resist their authority within the family, while also being unconcerned about the break-down of such a union for they know that they can fend for themselves. Most modern African males, therefore, willingly go for females whose professions and employments yield a lower income than theirs, for the sake of perpetuating their relationship. Similarly,

females, especially the less literate ones, feel threatened to be married to males of a higher social standing, since they are of the opinion that they would be denied the necessary rights deserved by modern women, and be relegated to mere objects. The validity of this assertion is supported by Mmakoma's following statement to her mother who is trying to persuade her to marry Thapudi. Mmakoma refuses to comply with her mother's request on the grounds that she is still young and less educated than he is. She, therefore, replies:

Mma, nna taba ya go nyalwa nka se e kgone gonabjale. Le gona rena boMmakoma, ga se la re iša sekolong go ya kae. Morutiši ke tla kgonana le yena bjang? (Serudu 1990: 30).

(Mother, I can't afford to get married now. And you did not let us go far as far as education is concerned. How will I cope with a teacher?)

It is thus clear that the young and fairly educated Mmakoma feels too insecure to be married to the qualified teacher, Thapudi. Her inferiority complex compels her to take an individual decision not to marry the teacher. To her traditional parents, the difference in social status matters little as far as marriage is concerned. On the contrary, they view a person of higher standing as a blessing to the family in the sense that they will be sure of abundant 'magadi' and economic backing in times of difficulty. To reject such a person is really a blow to them. The association with such a person, especially if he is from a wealthy family, will ensure them of improved social status within the community. With all these privileges in mind, Mmakoma's parents insist on the marriage. Their westernised daughter, who is mindless of her parents' envisaged benefits, nevertheless rejects the offer. This difference in perspectives clearly reveal the conflict between traditionalists and modern youths. Traditionalists view any rejection of parental decisions by the youths as disobedience irrespective of whether the reasons advanced by them are genuine or not. Theirs is neither to question nor to reason why, but to accept parental rulings.

In the case where the potential bride is the one who is professional, her parents will not hesitate to ask for a higher amount of *magadi*. For such *magadi* to be gained, the girl's partner should be a person of high social standing as well. According to Kupa (1980: 44) the commercial nature of the Western type of marriage goods is motivated by economic factors such as:

- Forfeiture of the daughter's income.
- Forfeiture of her children and their potential *magadi*.
- The daughter's educational expenses.

Qualities to ensure a stable marriage and family are not only considered in females, but in males as well. Just like in the case of a woman, a man himself and the family from which he originates, are critically considered. In terms of African tradition, the prospective groom is expected to be industrious, in order to be in a position to provide for his family. It is always a powerful inducement if his father is wealthy or a man of good social standing. The prospective groom's wealthy family background will be capable of supplementing and fending for his own family and that of the in-laws in times of need. The Matuba family appears to be fortunate in this instance because the Mabele family in this play has been cited to be opulent.

MmaMatuba's response to Mmakoma's refusal to accept the decision of her parents, supports the above view:

Ke šetše ke boledišane le tatago ka taba ye gomme re kwane. Go be go dio šala wena, Mologadi. Ba ga Mabele ke dikhorane. Le tla fela le re imolla mo re imelwago (Serudu 1990: 30).

(I have already talked to your father about this issue, and we have reached an agreement. It is only you, Mologadi, who is not informed. The Mabele family is rich. You will come to our rescue in times of need).

To emphasise the seriousness of the issue, MmaMatuba puts it to Mmakoma that the decision was not unilaterally hers, but the husband was party to it as well. As a traditionalist, MmaMatuba is on the other hand also instilling fear of the father in Mmakoma. Hopes are usually high among traditionalists that the fear of a person in authority helps to bring divergent behaviour under control. People who tend to be non-cooperative, especially the young ones, eventually become submissive, mainly because of the fear of what is likely to befall them; tongue lashing or corporal punishment. Mmakoma is, therefore, expected to concur with parental choice, and her parents hope to achieve success in this regard by way of showing her the advantages of complying with their request. In this case, advantages will, *inter alia*, include the facts that Thapudi is an industrious young man (*seroto*) from a wealthy family (*dikhorane*) and their match will assist the Matuba family financially (*imolla*) in times of need.

Mmakoma's unexpected refusal to marry Thapudi infuriates MmaMatuba. The socio-economic standing of the Mabele family, coupled with the need to maintain African tradition by deciding for her, is a strong motivational factor behind the Matuba family to go ahead with the arranged marriage. Here the playwright has presented us with two families from different financial backgrounds, the aim being to intensify the conflict between the westernised Mmakoma and her poor traditional parents. The wealth of the Mabeles is the envy of the economically disadvantaged Matubas, and Mmakoma cares not about the disparity.

The tendency of modern children to decide for themselves, puts MmaMatuba in a predicament. This results in a conflict situation where the mother who is in dire need of maintaining authority in the family, intends enforcing the decision. MmaMatuba's intention of forcing the decision is based on the fact that the failure of the union will deprive her and the family of notable social and economic privileges and benefits. That is why she says:

Bana ba lehono! Motho wa bona o dio rata go dira

boithatelo. Ka mo ga ka gona o wetše masobelong a motšoko, o tla dira boithatelo ke ile sannodi! O reng a nyaka go re ntšha dijo ka ganong, ngwanenyana yo! (Serudu 1990: 31).

(Children of today! They are fond of doing as they wish. Here in my family she has no chance, she will do as she wishes when I am dead! Why does this girl want to deprive us of good things!).

Mmakoma does not want to move an inch from her stand against the decision of her parents. She remains obstinate, so the mother who is frustrated by her stand, resorts to other means of luring her into submission. She attempts to equate the situation to that which she went through when she got married to Matuba. She brings into picture the importance of an arranged marriage, which she claims results in a stable marriage and tolerance. Acceptance thereof, implies respect towards the parents, which in itself entails good luck and prosperity in life:

Nna batswadi ba ka ba ile ge ba re morwa Matuba o rata go nnyala, ka opa magoswi, ka leboga (Serudu 1990: 34).

(When my parents told me that Matuba's son wanted to marry me, I just said thank you).

These utterances represent the views of a typical traditional African woman who abides by society's cultural norms and values. Her zeal to perpetuate traditional African culture makes her refuse to surrender easily - she wants Mmakoma to be like her. She is convinced that the way to a prosperous and peaceful life is through traditionalism and that a young person has to honour the elderly by way of heeding their advice. Failing to do so, one is destined to a doomed future.

Although traditionally there is no room for children to express their disapproval of their parents' marriage arrangements, "in certain extreme cases", as Kupa (1980: 27) puts it, "such as a threatened suicide, the ruling is at times relaxed".

However, this is never the case with Mmakoma. Rather than relaxing the rule, Mmakoma's parents thus deem it necessary to go ahead with the application of force. One tends not to be surprised when Matuba says this to his wife:

Ke a bona o a hlola. Nna ke bona bokaone e le go mo gapeletša (Serudu 1990: 33).

(She must be mad. I think the best thing to do is to force her).

Matuba regards his daughter's behaviour as unacceptable simply because she opposes their decision. In terms of African culture, such behaviour is outrageous and potent of invoking undesired repercussions in life. It is on the basis of this kind of behaviour that Northern Sotho speakers have formulated the proverb: '*Nyatšamolala e hwela molaleng*' (He who disregards advices, lends into trouble). As parents regard themselves as '*badimo ba go ja bogobe*' (living ancestors) of their children, they ought to be appeased at all times whilst still alive. One way of appeasing them is to do as they wish to avoid the creation of indignant feelings. In another attempt to enforce his decision, after Mmakoma's ultimate refusal, Matuba thinks of taking severe action:

Nna ke bona gore ge a sa rate go re theetša, re swanetše go mo laetša sefero, a yo dira boithatelo bjoo bja gagwe kua šopoding (Serudu 1990: 34).

(I think if she does not want to listen to us, we must show her the exit to go and do as she wishes out there).

The conflict is heading for its end now, where the father sounds determined to part ways with the 'disobedient' daughter, expecting her to go where she will be free to do as she wishes.

It is indeed a shocking experience for Mmakoma's parents to learn of her refusal to marry Thapudi, especially that their attempts to persuade her into submission

bear no fruit. This forces them to think of exercising their parental authority by forcing her (*go mo gapeletša*) and finally, should the need arise, to part ways with her (*go mo laetša sefero*). The negotiations, however, continue as planned, since her parents keep on hoping that she will eventually concur. Formal negotiations leading to the delivery of *magadi* have commenced. Mediators from the Mabele family are locked in discussion with their counterparts at Matuba's place. Finally, the final date is set on which *magadi* will be delivered, thereby formally terminating marriage negotiations. This is agreed upon by both parties.

Immediately after the departure of the Mabele mediators, what was left of Mmakoma's parents was to inform her of their deliberations and the outcome thereof. As pointed out before, the mother is the one expected to carry out the job; hence Matuba's utterance:

Nape o mo tšhele ka tšona mmagwe (Serudu 1990: 56).

(You may now divulge the news, my wife).

Upon hearing the news, Mmakoma's response indicates her opposition to traditional rules. As a modern person, she wants a person of her own choice (Matsobane) and not her parents' choice (Thapudi). She is expected to be quiet, submissive and composed when receiving the news as a mark of respect towards her elderly parents, but to her parents' amazement, she reacts differently. That the visitors were negotiating for her marriage into Mabele's family, upsets her. She thereafter becomes restless and immediately starts cross-questioning her mother about the issue; behaviour which is abominable in terms of African culture. Her behaviour thus brings her into direct conflict with the mother who, in an attempt to assert authority over her, is forced to eventually show her disapproval of the girl's behaviour in this fashion:

Mmakoma, ngwanaka, anke o ithute go homola ge re bolela nago, o se ke wa re tsenatsena ka ganong bjalo ka ge nke o bolela le bagwera ba gago (Serudu 1990: 56).

(Mmakoma, my child, please learn to be quiet whenever we speak to you, do not interrupt us as though you are speaking to your friends).

These words convey the mother's dissatisfaction. Her feelings are natural because as a mother, she is expected to command respect from her child. It is highly abominable and embarrassing for a child to enter into an unexpected argument with an elderly person, let alone a parent. But Mmakoma is causing this humiliation simply because her freedom in life has been curtailed, feeling enraged because she is being denied the right to choose for herself.

Nevertheless, her parents are neither scared nor deterred by her reaction. Instead, they sound determined to go ahead with their plan as traditionally she is not supposed to reject a partner that her parents have already accepted. This constitutes a taboo, and in order to avoid the unbearable consequences thereof, the parents have to see to it that she complies, if need be, through force. A child should abide by the decisions and instructions of the parents, that is why MmaMatuba says:

Tšeo o di bolelago ngwanaka, di ka se šome. Nna le tatago re šetše re tshepišane le ba ga Mabele gomme le matšatši re šetše re beelane (Serudu 1990: 56).

(What you are saying won't materialise, my child. Your father and I have already reached an agreement with the Mabeles and a final date has been set).

From the above statement, it is evident that a girl's opinion in matters of this nature, is not heeded. In this drama, the marriage issue has reached an advanced stage without her consent and blessing. The parents think on her behalf and are entitled to reach whatever decision they deem fit. Negotiations

are at a final stage where Makoma's parents are about to benefit by way of gaining *magadi*. Any move to deprive them of something so imminent - 'go tšwa ke dijo ka ganong', cannot be tolerated. This reinforces their decision, thereby heightening the conflict between themselves and their daughter. The pressure that is in turn exerted on her to submit to their desires resultantly becomes almost insurmountable - she is eventually forced into an inescapable corner, where she is obliged to 'lull them to sleep' by accepting their decision, but in a sulky way:

(Ka go ngaletša). Gona go lokile mma le papa, ke tla phetha thato ya lena (Serudu 1990: 57).

(In a disgruntled way). It is alright mother and father, I will do as you wish).

The parents are really lulled to sleep because they express their complete satisfaction with this promise. The father immediately expresses his contentment by remarking:

Lehono o nkgahlile ngwanaka, ge o re sekegetše tsebe (Serudu 1990: 57).

(Today I am delighted, my child, because you have accepted our plea).

The reader may, however, not wonder why the parents are elated because the response that their daughter has given is what has been expected from her all along. Mmakoma's stubbornness has been a source of headache to them all along, so the fact that she has now 'concurred', is a great relief to them. As such they are justified to be delighted and are henceforth expected to proceed with the preparations for the final ceremony, feeling relieved and elated. Matuba thus expresses his satisfaction with their accomplishment:

Pelo ya ka bjale e wele, Mosebjadi (Serudu 1990: 57).

(I am satisfied now, Mosebjadi).

Matuba deserves to be happy and relieved. The issue of marriage has been thorny and tormenting to him all along. Now that things appear to be heading towards the envisaged direction, he is justified to be joyful and will enjoy peace of mind. As a traditionalist, he believes marriage is an essential step for every normal person to take. It is through it that Africans are believed to acquire enhanced social status.

The researcher conceives the conflict between Mmakoma and her parents, as presented in this play, as a conflict between individual preference and parental control. Mmakoma is the proponent of individualism whereas her parents maintain the *status quo* (traditionalism). Mmakoma, in her pursuance of a Western lifestyle, becomes a burden to her parents. She wants to be independent in decision-making while the parents, on the other hand, want to think and decide on her behalf, thereby causing parental control to be at variance with individualism. The author undeniably wants to reveal that traditionalists view the move by modernists to choose their marriage partners independently, as an outcome of the weakening of parental authority. The traditionalists thus become more determined to maintain firm control over their offsprings.

Individual preference is not a haunting issue in Matuba's family only, but in Koribana's family as well. The information that Matsobane frequents Matuba's place is not well received by Koribana and his wife who are greatly disturbed by the obstinacy of Matsobane to keep on associating with Mmakoma. Because of the hostility between them and Matuba, they are always suspicious of malice on his part. Their mental uneasiness is revealed when Koribana is chatting to his wife:

Ke kwa gore mohlang wola wa dinaka boMatsobane ba

bonwe gona kua ga Matuba (Serudu 1990: 63).

(I understand that on that day of traditional dance Matsobane and his cousins were seen at Matuba's place).

Matsobane's parents are furthermore dismayed to learn that the three young men were also provided with food at Matuba's place. This is a blow to Matsobane's parents because, being aware of their strained relationship with Matuba, they suspect that mishap can befall the three, especially Matsobane. Eating at Matuba's place is a mistake that they ought to have avoided at all cost. Koribana's words are sufficient for the reader to understand the prevailing tension:

Baisana ba ke meleko! E ka re mola re elwa le motho bona ba ikghlometša ka gare ga motse wa gagwe? Ba a hlola ke a bona! (Serudu 1990: 66).

(These young men are troublesome. How can they enter the family of a person with whom we are not on good terms? They must be mad!)

The suspicion of witchcraft concerning Matsobane thus gradually increases as his parents get increasingly haunted by this issue. They eventually agree to take Matsobane for divination. They, however, return disillusioned because the divining bones do not reveal Matuba as a witch:

Baisa ba ke mejela. O hloka le go bolela gore Matsobane o loilwe ke ba ga Matuba? (Serudu 1990: 80).

(These people are cheats. Can't he even detect that Matsobane has been bewitched by the Matubas?)

This incident causes Koribana to lose faith in diviners because his pre-conceived ideas are not proved to be true. He, therefore, deems it fit to label them as cheats. Had Matuba been revealed as being responsible for the 'insanity' of

Matsobane, Koribana would have felt on top of the world, and to request the diviner to chastise the offender. What makes matters worse is the fact that many days pass by without Matsobane showing any sign of change his parents have hoped for. On the contrary, it comes to the parents' attention that he is still sneaking to Matuba's place. Koribana is now left in bewilderment. All his efforts to curb his son's undesired behaviour have proved futile.

The hostility between the Matuba and Koribana families as well as the traditional background on which it is based, promotes and illuminates African traditionalism in the play. Through these traditional characters and their practices, modernity as a variant of traditionalism becomes apparent. The plotting of members of the two families against each other, especially that of Matuba's family, eventually exposes modernity as an immoral practice, as Matuba's soliloquy reveals:

Mošemane yola ke a mmelaela, o ka re ke morwa' Koribana. Ba reng ba no re ge ke fihla ba tloga? Ge e le gore ke yena yo a bego a bolela le Mmakoma, o tla ntseba gabotse Nxa, ke lenyatšo mang lona le! O rata go senyetša ngwanaka nyalo (Serudu 1990: 42).

(I suspect that that boy is Koribana's son. Why do they depart upon my arrival? If he is the one who was talking with Mmakoma, he will know me better Oh, what insolence! He wants to spoil the marriage of my child).

Matuba utters these words on the day of traditional dancing at his place, where Matsobane was seen proposing love to Mmakoma. Matuba views it as sheer contempt for a member of Koribana's family to set a foot in his household, let alone talk to a member of his family. The association of the two is disapproved by Matuba who has already accepted Thapudi as the ideal suitor for Mmakoma. This incident reinforces the father's fear that the relationship between Mmakoma and Matsobane will definitely spoil Thapudi's chances of marrying Mmakoma; hence his decision to act against Matsobane.

The two conflicting families have already influenced their members, especially the male ones, to hate one another because the field issue has significantly contributed to the pronouncement of hatred. The 'stunning' news of the relationship between Mmakoma and Matsobane therefore creates a wider rift between the family members. Their increased awareness of the relationship thus leaves Maesela and Lesetša with no alternative but to plot for Matsobane's assault, especially since Koribana's brutal assault of their uncle (Matuba) is still fresh in their minds:

(Maesela) Gape tatagwe o ile a gobatša malome kua mašemong. A re mo lalele bošego ge a etla mo, re mo sware re mo papatle (Serudu 1990: 89).

(His father once assaulted my uncle in the fields. Let us waylay him at night when he comes here, get hold of him and assault him thoroughly).

This plot shows that youths have been drawn into the conflict of the elderly people. Lesetša and Maesela act as front runners on the side of Mmakoma's conservative parents. They have decided that Matsobane has to be punished so that Koribana too may feel the pain. Young as they are, the two have been thoroughly influenced to have traditional and negative attitudes towards the westernised Mmakoma and Matsobane and share the parents' negative view about modernity. They thus see Mmakoma's behaviour as socially deviant and regard her insistence to reject Thapudi, as disobedience. The plot to ambush Matsobane is hoped to bring about the termination of the relationship between her and Matsobane. Unfortunately, the plan does not work as planned; Maesela becomes the victim because he is stoned to death by Matsobane.

Maesela's death is expected to serve as an indication to Mmakoma to part ways with Matsobane. Having lost a cousin because of Matsobane, Mmakoma is expected to change her mind and regard Matsobane as an enemy. To the amazement of her conservative parents and other relatives, Mmakoma's love

for Matsobane only increases. Koribana, on the other hand, is surprised to see his son still clinging to Mmakoma. He becomes dejected when realising that his efforts are futile and he forsakes Matsobane for his disobedience:

(O a ngaletša). Nna le Matsobane re tla bonana legodimong. O ganne dikeletšo tša ka (Serudu 1990: 109).

(He disgruntles). Matsobane and I will meet in heaven. He has rejected my advice).

Modern children are largely responsible for the final decision as to whether a contemplated marriage will succeed or not. The inability of conservative African parents to recognise and accept individualism, results in emotional reactions such as disgruntlement and abandonment. In certain instances, however, the children do compromise, especially if the relationship between them and their parents is harmonious. However, this is never the case with Mmakoma.

The field in dispute, the brutal assault of Matuba together with the untimely death of Maesela, are reasons valid enough to be put forth by the Matubas to discourage Mmakoma from associating with Matsobane. The incidents have undoubtedly driven the two families apart, leaving no possibility in sight for their reconciliation.

To an African traditionalist, the strangeness of modern marriage customs is situated in the fact that, among others, it entails courtship, which consists largely of having fun like paying each other visits. The boy may start off by visiting the girl at her home. The initial visits are generally paid in the afternoon, but as they grow more friendly, he starts coming at night, after the evening meals, chatting to her in her hut or in some other suitable place where the two are alone, as has happened between Matsobane and Mmakoma. Matsobane would brave the dark cold nights to go and sneak in Mmakoma's hut. The visits were regular until the time when Matsobane is banished from the village, following Maesela's

tragic death. All these nocturnal visits were made possible by the fact that Mmakoma, as a grown up modern lady, was entitled to a separate hut where she was free from parental interference and control. In the hut, she is free to exercise independence, especially during the night. Courtship is the way in which modern lovers tend to familiarise themselves with each other, so that their union may eventually lead to marriage.

2.3 RESOLUTION

In this drama, the hope of getting things right is short-lived as Mmakoma continues to meet Matsobane secretly. That she would comply with her parents' request, is just lip service, allowing the parents to be still hopeful that everything is on track. Their contact with the Mabeles is still intact, while in their conversations with her, the parents frequently indicate their desire to see her being married to Thapudi. However, Mmakoma has taken a final stand now. She does not want to hear a thing about Thapudi. She has declared herself the lover of Matsobane, as she tells her father:

Tate, lesogana leo le bolelago ka lona ga ke le rate. Le gona ke le latotše (Serudu 1990: 122).

(Father, I do not love the gentleman you are talking about. Furthermore, I have rejected him).

The idea of free choice where love takes precedence over marriage places modern Africans at loggerheads with their traditional counterparts. The qualities of the suitors which are considered suitable for a congenial marriage among African traditionalists, matter little. Westernised Africans are not lured by their (traditionalists) material possession or wealth. It is on the basis of this that youths such as Mmakoma vehemently reject their parents' proposed marriages. Their determination to go ahead with their own choices makes them adamant and disrespectful towards their traditional parents, thereby placing themselves

in conflict with them.

Matuba sounds frustrated by his daughter's decision because he has made concerted efforts to secure Mmakoma a good and industrious marriage partner, one from a wealthy family background. All the benefits that he has envisaged to get out of this union, appear to be eluding him now. He utterly fails to understand why Mmakoma cannot abide by the rules of her parents. He cannot understand how she can be acting out of her own volition, and thus views this practice as disobedience. The father utters his frustration as follows:

O gana seo nna le mmago re go direlago sona? O itirile mosatšana ka mo lapeng la ka. O rata go itirela boithatelo Ke go nyaketše monna wa mmakgonthe, lesogana la sekhorane. Lesogana la seroto la go itlhompha. Wena o mpotša ka motho yoo a tlišitšego masetlapelo ka lapeng la ka! Afa o re o a ikwa gore o reng? (Serudu 1999: 122).

(Are you rejecting what your mother and I are doing for you? You regard yourself as a small woman in this family. You want to do things your own way. I have found you a real man, a wealthy gentleman. An industrious gentleman with self-respect. You tell me of a person who has brought grief into my family! Do you really understand what you are saying?)

The playwright succeeds in illuminating Mmakoma's predicament. The relationship between her and her parents is turning sour every day, thus making life tough for her. When pondering over the conflict with her parents, the name of her aunt, Kgare, quickly comes to her mind. She approaches her in the hope of getting support on her stand: '*Ke tlile go go llela Mmane*'.

Kgare's response to Mmakoma's plea for her parents to be persuaded to accept Matsobane, astonishes Mmakoma. The aunt fails to understand why Mmakoma is forcing herself into Koribana's family, the members of which have caused such great pain, grief and deprivation in her family. She, too, does not bless the

relationship and her disapproval is entailed in the following words:

Se re hlolele hle, ngwana' mogolle! Motho a ka re go bolaya motswalago wena wa fela o mo gomaretše? O hloma bjang? Le gona o tloga o tseba gabotse botse gore ba ga Koribana le beno ke mpša le phiri ga ba nwešane meetse (Serudu 1990: 125).

(Please do not invoke ill-luck for us, the child of my elder sister! How can you stick to the murderer of your cousin? What is wrong with you? And you know very well that the members of your family and those of Koribana do not see eye to eye).

Kgare thus proves to be traditional because she discourages Mmakoma, on cultural grounds, to continue with her practices. She cites the long standing enmity between the girl's parents and the Koribana family as a valid reason why she should forget about Matsobane. Mmakoma returns home demoralised and dispirited. Without Matsobane, for Mmakoma life is not worth living:

Mmane, ke tšile fa ke gopola gore o tla nthuša, fela go padile (O a emelela). Šala gabotse, Mmane, mohlomongwe ke gona ge o mpone. Ke ya gae, gae moo go sa boego motho (Serudu 1990: 126).

(Aunt, I came here hoping that you would help me, but all was in vain (She stands up). Bye-bye my aunt, maybe you have seen me for the last time. I am going home where nobody returns).

Mmakoma's ardent belief in individualism should be seen as responsible for the hardships in her life. What she believes in has turned herself into a fierce enemy of her biological parents and relatives who are opposed to modernity and its individual nature. Modern Africans either choose their own partners or they do not marry at all. They become so committed to each other that to deprive one of another, renders life meaningless; at times death is even resorted to, to terminate the resultant frustrations following such a loss.

After being disappointed by her aunt, Mmakoma has nowhere to go and nobody to appeal to. Her aunt, Kgare, was her last beam of hope. Frustration starts to mount in her, and life becomes meaningless to her. The stumbling block here is hostilities between the two families, the root cause of which is the disputed field. Concerning differences of this nature as a possible hindrance to successful marriage negotiations, Mönnig (1967: 131) has this to say:

If the young man makes suggestions, his father is traditionally very reluctant to give his consent, but will usually agree in the end, unless there are specific reasons against the marriage, such as suspicion of witchcraft or long-standing enmity between the families.

While Mmakoma is struggling to cope with her difficult life, her parents on the other hand are proceeding with the finalisation of the arranged marriage. The Mabele people are about to deliver '*magadi*' for Mmakoma. Such a great day is preceded by hectic days of preparations by the bride's people. Women of the village usually converge to prepare traditional beer which, on the day of the ceremony, forms an integral part of the occasion. In *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, the playwright has presented us with a group of women who are preparing for Mmakoma's marriage ceremony. Conspicuous in the group are Napšadi and Maladi. While the two are chatting to each other, Napšadi notices something unusual and amazing in Mmakoma:

Ijo, Meladi! Gape o (Mmakoma) a tšhoša. Mosetsana yola yo bjabana, wa dithama tša go tlala, wa lebalana le lebotsana, o onetše. Ke motekatekane. Le ge a re ke a sepela, o ka re o imelwa ke hlogo (Serudu 1990: 136).

(Alas, Meladi! Mmakoma is scary. That beautiful girl, with a round face, and a good complexion, is worn out. She is skinny. Even when she walks, the head appears big for the body).

Mmakoma is haunted by her parents' continued efforts to arrange her marriage.

Her previous efforts to convince them to rescind the arrangement, have borne no fruit. On the contrary, they have become increasingly reluctant to be outwitted by a child. Mmakoma's failure to succeed in this regard has merely resulted in causing a raging conflict within her which gives her sleepless nights. Its toll has resulted in her losing weight tremendously while her original beauty has vanished as well. This is a heavy burden for her which becomes increasingly difficult to bear as the great day draws nearer. The seriousness of this problem is entailed in the following utterance by Mmakoma:

Ba nthwešitše joko ye boima. E nkimela bjalo ka boroko dintšhing tša leseana. Le nna ke motho ke gotše. Ke tla phetha thato ya ka. Ba tla itshola ka morago (Serudu 1990: 138).

(They have put a heavy load on me. It is as heavy as a sleep on the eye-brows of a young child. I am also a person, a grown-up one. I will do as I wish. They will regret later).

In this passage reference is made to Mmakoma's parents. Besides them, Mmakoma is also frustrated by her aunt, Kgare, who instead of paying serious attention to her predicament and sympathising with her, also encourages her to do away with Matsobane. Like MmaMatuba, Kgare also persuades her to follow her example of accepting parental choice. This advice is also unacceptable to Mmakoma and because she has nowhere to go and no shoulder to cry on, frustration starts to reign high in her. She eventually takes a decision to vanish on the day of the ceremony and be with Matsobane out at the river as part of a defiance campaign against her rigid parents. By doing this, she will be proving to them that she is matured enough to think for herself, independent of them.

However, out at the river things do not work out as envisaged because Matsobane never turns up. The solitude that she resultantly find herself in compounds her problems so much that her statement to her aunt, Kgare, that she might be seeing her for the last time, starts taking shape. She thus

untimely terminates her life because of the insurmountable pressure that she has been subjected to. Her determination that she will never ever marry Thapudi, gives her the necessary courage to plunge herself into the river, Nkumpi, making it too late for her father to correct the mistake he has been making in forcing her to marry Thapudi. Her parents are therefore left with their burden of guilt and remorse. Matuba now greatly regrets having forced her to marry a person of his choice; a person she has never been prepared to live with and love:

Ngwanaka o ile ruri. Ke be ke reng ke mo gapeletša go nyala lesogana a sa le rate (Serudu 1990: 143).

(My child is gone, really. Why did I force her to marry a gentleman whom she did not love?)

Implicit in the above excerpt is the fact that had Matuba had a foresight of what was likely to befall his child because of their ideological differences, surely he would have relaxed the traditional custom and allow her to go her own way. Here, the playwright has succeeded in creating a strong character in Mmakoma. Her determination to forge ahead with what she believes to be right, is great and plausible, and should serve as a source of inspiration to the present young generation to abide by the proverb:

'Mmapelo o ja serati, senyakelwa ga a se nyake'.

(The heart eats what it desires, but rejects what is sought for it).

2.4 RÉSUMÉ

Cultural conflicts in this play end up claiming the life of a prominent character, Mmakoma. As a proponent of modernism in the play she has fought a bitter battle to challenge the might of her conservative opponents. Her tireless efforts have left an indelible mark and lesson to traditionalists to refrain from interfering

unnecessarily in the affairs of modern youths. Though her life has been terminated untimeously, she has, however, emerged as a heroine in this social struggle. Her greatness arises from the fact that she was never deterred from her stand or determination of clinging to her individual choice, irrespective of the enormity of the harassments and threats that descended on her. Instead of rejoicing at the death of her 'stubborn' child, Matuba greatly regrets the grievous mistake he has committed. According to Mazrui (1975: 171), "high conflict which is resolved on a note of high price in terms of human casualties, provides the playwright with the raw material for a tragic drama". Serudu's play in this case deserves to be termed a tragedy as its main character, Mmakoma, has died tragically because of the issue of parental choice being in conflict with individual choice. The conflict has resulted in the horrific act of committing suicide.

Where two parties find themselves in a conflict situation, one should eventually be the victor. The play has been properly concluded in the sense that the victor is clearly detectable in that modernity has triumphed over traditionalism. The determination of the parents not to give individualism a chance of success, has thus been abortive.

Although their social opponent has vanished from the scene (through death), the message she has left behind is clear: '*Lesang bana ba phethagatše dikgopolo tša bona*' (Leave the children alone to realise their dreams). Parents should guide their children in their chosen path of life, but not stand in their way. They should be left to think and decide independently because unnecessary interference in their affairs, especially with traditional attitudes, may merely result in remorse at the end of the day.

CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that a successful marriage leads to the establishment of a family. In terms of African culture, a newly-wed couple stays with the bridegroom's parents until the groom's younger brother also gets married. The reason for this practice is that the bride must first be taught by her mother-in-law how to run a home of her own. They will eventually give way for the younger brother, and go and establish their homestead next to or in the vicinity of that of the groom's father.

Through marriage, the groom becomes fully initiated into manhood and attains the title '*monna*' (man), who is characterised by having a wife and a family. Without the two, a male person is contemptuously referred to as a boy even late in life. As a leader in his family, '*monna*' (man) is expected to rule in accordance with culturally prescribed laws and regulations. His dependents, that is, his wife and children, are expected to abide by those laws or else conflict will ensue within the household. Marriage is thus a sign of manhood. The bride, on the other hand, changes her status from '*kgarebe*' (lady) to '*mosadi*' (woman).

For a better and culturally stable society to be achieved, there has to be proper leadership. Inculcation of relevant norms and values of the society has to take place from the basis of the social hierarchy, which is the family, under the good tutelage of the parents. The father has to be recognised as the head of his family in this set-up. Any effort to challenge his authority will cause conflict within the unit. In this section of the study, a traditional husband's (Namane) role as the head is challenged by his westernised wife (Malegelele). Tension

between the two reaches a point where the sister to the husband (Babuni), has to come in and quell the volatile situation. Beyond the limits of the nuclear family there is also a westernised female relative (Reratilwe) who is apathetic towards traditional norms and practices. Traditionalists like Namane, on traditional grounds, wage a fierce cultural battle against this woman. African tradition is at war with modernity in this section.

3.1 BACKGROUND TO THE TEXT

Namane, who has been portrayed as an ardent traditionalist in *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (1968), is opposed by his westernised wife, Malegelegele, on family matters. The wife sends the children to school and church, the institutions which are greatly abhorred by Namane for their modern nature. To crown it all, the children wear modern clothes. They are able to read, pray and sing hymns; practices which are regarded by Namane as indulgence in another man's culture. His fervent desire is to retain and perpetuate traditional African culture.

Among his family members, Namane is particularly worried about Sefako's defection to modernity. Being the only son in the family, Namane is always proud of him. Namane wants Sefako to be like him by, among others, wearing loin-skins. Malegelegele's insistence on buying Sefako modern clothes (trousers) is a great disappointment to Namane, hence the conflict. The mother is time and again reminded about and rebuked for the mistake she has made. Namane feels that his authority as head of the family has been undermined.

A chance to really show his opposition to modernity presents itself when Sefako's pair of trousers gets devoured by a cow. He blatantly refuses to buy him another pair, stating that he should resort to the usage of loin-skins like his father. He, moreover, blames the mother for having wasted his money, and this time he swears by his dead father that he won't buy his son another pair. Sefako has resorted to the use of a blanket to cover his naked body. As may be

expected, tension is high in this family, a family characterised by the lack of cultural unity.

Babuni's (*kgadi*) visit to the family comes as a blessing to Malegelegele, who reports the matter to her immediately. Babuni is against Namane's treatment of his family members, particularly his wife. After being reprimanded for the ill-treatment, Namane eventually concurs and acknowledges his mistakes. He promises never to repeat them and consequently, he buys Sefako two new pairs of trousers.

Beyond the family unit, Namane is also challenged by his brother's Christian wife, Reratilwe. Namane is angry about Reratilwe's refusal to honour her cultural obligations. Babuni has to be given a cow and a sheep as replacement for the ones she gave to Reratilwe's husband (Moshabane) the time when one of her daughters was getting married. As one good turn deserves another, Namane claims the beasts on behalf of *kgadi* (Babuni). Reratilwe refuses to part with the beasts on the ground that it is heathenism to do that. Namane, on the other hand, is determined to get what is due to his sister. This conflict reaches a climax when Namane chases Reratilwe with an axe and a stick in his hands. *Moruti* steps in and difuses the situation by way of instructing Reratilwe and her husband to give Babuni what she deserves. Namane goes back home delighted. The conception that he has held before, that Christians are not good, no more holds water. *Moruti* has succeeded in convincing the adamant Reratilwe that she has to honour her cultural obligations. Namane views this as a great achievement by *moruti*, and as such, he thinks of becoming a Christian also.

3.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT

In this play, African tradition as a variant of modernity manifests itself in various ways. A traditional husband feels undermined when his position and authority as head of the family is challenged by his family members and relatives who have adopted norms and practices of the west. He thus deems it necessary, in terms of his culture, to act against them. Christianity features prominently for these members to violate African culture.

3.2.1 Who is the Head in a Family?

African culture clearly states that the husband is the head of the family. He is viewed as the founder and creator of his social unit - the family. His position requires of him to fulfil certain socio-political obligations. His dependents are in turn expected to observe certain behavioural patterns towards him. As the head of the family, the father must keep order and maintain discipline over his children. He is entitled to the obedience, service and respect of both his wife and children. In this regard the father exercises considerable authority and has the right to punish the children or their mother for any offence they commit. Offences that usually infuriate the father to the extent that he thinks of punishment are often related to a lack of respect.

Family laws according to which his family has to be shaped, originate from him. The wife as the second-in-command in the family must ascertain that the laws are adhered to especially those pertaining to children. Strict adherence to these laws ensures that his family members together with other members of the community will show respect to the family. Any attempt to disturb this procedure results in conflict.

In addition, it is the duty of the husband to provide his family with the necessities of life, including food, clothing, household goods and utensils. Traditionally he

was also expected to procure cattle for milking, slaughtering and ploughing purposes. According to Schapera (1938: 153):

.... in these days, when the range of goods regarded as essential to every decent household has increased so considerably as a result of contact with the Europeans, he must, if necessary, also go out to work so as to obtain money with which to purchase those necessities.

The contact with Whites, and the subsequent dependency of Africans on them for survival led to a drastic change in the lifestyle of a traditional African. New needs and commodities of western origin emerged and they had to be satisfied or attained to enable him or her to cope in a changing world. Failure on his or her part to do all these, almost invariably led to trouble or even conflict. The impact of Western culture on its African counterpart was also felt in the economic life of a traditional African family as it has now lost much of its original self-sufficiency. It has become increasingly dependent on outside markets like trading-stores for most of its clothes, utensils and other manufactured goods. Currently, Africans are compelled to seek new sources of income; the most important of which is wage-labour. The emerged new state of affairs has had an adverse effect on the authority of the husband over his family.

The effects of the intrusion of Western culture among traditional Africans has been succinctly outlined in H P Maredi's play, *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* (1968). The play reflects tension within Namane's family because of his refusal to buy his son, Sefako, a pair of trousers in the place of the one devoured by a cow. His refusal stems from his wife's insistence to buy the son western clothes, despite his total rejection thereof. In terms of African tradition, Malegelegele, who has failed to abide by the head of the family's (Namane) decision, has committed an offence. The husband, as the most senior person within the family, has to be revered, and whatever has been decided upon by him, has to be strictly adhered to. The wife's misconduct constitutes an offence of higher

order and she therefore deserves a rehabilitatory punishment. It is in the light of the powers that are vested in the traditional African husband in his family, that the researcher is prompted to borrow Schapera's words when saying:

The husband's power over his wife is by no means absolute. He may beat her if she has misconducted herself (1938: 151).

Malegelegele's punishment in this instance is neither physical nor verbal (tongue lashing), but passive in the form of non-compliance with her request. Malegelegele and the children have adopted cultural norms of the west, the distinctive one being Christianity. Western culture requires its adherents to wear modern clothing, receive formal education and be Christians. Being a Christian herself, Malegelegele also sends her children to school and church in Western clothes. The children include Sefako, for whom the mother insists on buying a pair of trousers. These practices are all strange and unacceptable to a traditional African. Namane, on the other hand, is in contrast with his other family members. He is still an ardent traditional African who puts on loin-skins and adores his ancestral spirits. His abhorrence of Western culture is reflected in various ways: to him schooling is '*koma ye e sa hlaolego*' (indiscriminatory initiation), Western clothes (trousers) are '*mekhwamelwana*' (legged clothes that cling to the body), while written letters are referred to as '*matšeketšeke*' (something meandering). It is thus clear that there is no cultural unity within Namane's family. This schism is an indication of a decay of parental discipline and authority brought about by Western culture. According to Namane, Western clothes belong to another man's culture, not his. That being the case, they should be avoided at all cost, so that his culture could remain intact and survive foreign influences. He is, therefore, perturbed by what Malegelegele has done, that is, plunging the children, particularly the only son in the family, Sefako, into modernity, against the father's will. When asked whether it is an offence to put on a pair of trousers, he says:

Ee! Ga se molato go beng ba ona. Bjalo ba ba go wela dilo godimo e se tša bona, ba sa di tsebe! Šedio di ba paletše! (Maredi 1968: 16).

(Yes! It is not an offence to their owners. And now these ones who plunge themselves upon things not theirs, and alien to them! There they are, they have failed).

Malegelele's insistence on Western clothes undermines Namane's position and authority as the head of the family, affording him an opportunity to accuse her, especially now that the pair of trousers has vanished. She has ignored Namane's ruling that Sefako should put on loin-skins like himself. The playwright thus wants to reveal that lack of the desired respect from westernised women like Malegelele results in derogations from the heads of traditional families. Malegelele's insistence on Western clothes, and the resultant devouring of Sefako's pair of trousers by a cow, compel Namane to say:

Ke go boditše ka re o se ke wa lema ngwana ka diaparo tša majakane, tša borakgolo di le gona, gomme ka bohlogothata bjo bja lena, wa fo gapeletša. Bjale di kgone, nna ga ke fao! (Maredi 1968: 19).

(I told you not to spoil the child with the Christians' clothes, whilst traditional ones are there, but because of your hardheadedness you have insisted. Be responsible then, I am not involved).

The above passage indicates that Sefako is suffering the consequence of his mother's arrogance. Namane is cross about Malegelele's conduct because he regards her action as disobedience to him as the family head. He becomes emotionally shattered when considering the fact that Sefako, as the only son in the family, is supposed to be a source of pride to him. To Namane, putting on modern clothes is the perpetuation of another man's culture. Western culture, according to him, is not supposed to be given any room for survival. He strongly feels that traditional African culture should be upheld in its totality, hence his abhorrence of Western culture. He resultantly tells his wife that it is against his

will to buy Sefako modern clothes, but the modern influence behind her makes her to go ahead, thereby undermining his authority, an action which infuriates him. The harmonious relationship that has prevailed within the family before, is strained because of Malegelele's indulgence in modernity. Mistakes of this nature in most cases oblige traditional husbands of Namane's calibre to develop and adopt negative attitudes towards their disobedient wives and children. Insolence justifies the elders to be insulting towards their dependents.

Namane is distancing himself from the confusion that has been caused by his wife. He is adamant that he will not replace the devoured pair of trousers, so Sefako has to resort to the use of a blanket to cover his naked body. The parental love Namane had for his only son, is now diminishing because of his wife's misconduct. He distances himself from his plight because of his opposition towards modernity. Sefako's plight is Malegelele's own creation; Namane is no party to it and as such Sefako has to suffer for being plunged into another man's culture, a culture which is strange and which, he believes, ought not to be condoned but condemned.

Sefako's nakedness seems to have no effect on his father. He appears to be rejoicing in what has happened, as his utterance evidences:

*O kganyeditše kobo ya botatane, kobo ya badimo gomme
o paologile (Maredi 1968: 17).*

(He has shown apathy towards our father's clothing, the clothing of our ancestors and he is exposed).

Namane's words clearly indicate that it is a grievous mistake for one to sacrifice one's culture for another. He himself is not prepared to surrender or forsake traditional African culture as forsaking one's culture is tantamount to divorcing one's ancestors (*badimo*) which will result in frustration. At this stage, Namane is in a jovial mood because of his reverence to the ancestors, and disrespect,

on the other hand, has led Sefako into melancholy. Namane is even swearing by his dead father that he won't use money from his pocket to buy Sefako another pair of trousers. This incident causes a serious cultural conflict within Namane's family, the root cause of which is westernisation. The conflict between him and his westernised family members continues while his wife, Malegelegele, poses a passive challenge to his authority when she sends the children to school and church in modern clothes. They (children) can pray (to God), sing hymns and even write and read letters for their illiterate parents.

Namane has reasons for his disapproval of Western culture, particularly Western clothes. A loin-skin is durable when compared to a pair of trousers. According to him, one loin-skin can last for a year whereas one would require at least two pairs of trousers for the same period. In addition to this, a pair of trousers involves the usage of money, which, as he puts it, is difficult to attain. No money is involved in the making of a loin-skin; only a hide is enough for it to be made. Namane's other concern is that since Sefako had started wearing Western clothes, he is despising loin-skins. He does not want to put them on anymore. This being the case, would the father ever succeed in luring him back into his camp again? This is a worrying factor to Namane who does not hesitate to say this to his sister (Babuni):

O tlo nkwa, kgaetšedi! Nna ke sa re "tsweetswee!" Ga ke gape tše tšhweu fela bjalo ka majakane, ke sa di gapa ka moka. Lekgeswa, kobo ya borrawešo ke be ke mo šogela le tee ka nako, gomme o ra gore nka be ke mo rekele marokgo a mabedi ka nako e tee? Ke a bona ke tla be ke hlohlonwa ke tšhelete. Ge e le go mo rekela bjo bongwe, e le gore bjola le kgwedi bo be bo se bja e fetša, nka se go dire. Ge bo ka be bo feditše ngwaga bjalo ka lekgeswa, aowaa, gona go ka be go kwegga (Maredi 1968: 18).

(You will hear me, my sister! I am still in the right state of mind. I am not mad like Christians, but I am still normal. A loin-skin, our forefathers' wear, I used to make him one at a time, and now do you mean that I should have bought him two pairs of trousers at a time? In doing that I would

be squandering money. To buy him another pair, even though the previous one did not last for a month, I won't do. If it had lasted for a year like a loin-skin, no-no, it would be understandable).

Namane is not pleased with the current state of affairs. His family members have divorced African culture. He deems it necessary to declare them insane as compared to him who is still in his right mind. His sanity, as he always alleges, is attributed to his loyalty to African tradition. This he exhibits by, among others, wearing a loin-skin; a heritage of his forefathers. Moreover, modernity is costly as it implies unnecessary spending of money and has furthermore caused his family to split into two because of modern needs. It is thus becoming increasingly difficult for him to exercise his authority as head of the family. What has been done by the wife seems like a nightmare to him. Namane's cry over the situation in his family is serious and endless. This is epitomised by his complaint to the sister (Babuni) when he says: '*Ke lla ka tšhelete le ngwana wa ka*', meaning that he is worried about money and his child (Sefako).

3.2.2 Children and their Obligations

Children should at all times be subservient to their elders. They are expected to honour their parents, to address and speak to them politely and use appropriate conventional relationship terms. They are, furthermore, supposed to behave with considerable respect towards them and in their presence, as Malegelegele's children do towards her in the play. Their behaviour towards their mother is praiseworthy; it shows the much sought-after respect, which is an indication of superb upbringing of children. A proud and elated parent in a family of this nature, for instance, gets stung or even infuriated when a child happens to be oblivious of the fact that when waking up in the morning, or upon his arrival at home, he should think of greeting the parents first. Failure to comply with these requirements is regarded as a violation of African culture, and the transgressor is quickly alerted of the mistake. When Mmakgomo, on coming

from school, disregards this custom, Malegelegele immediately calls her to order by saying:

Go lokile ngwanaka, eupša o sentše fela ka gore ga se wa dumediša pele o mpošša ka lengwalo. Ga se wa kwa mogol'wago ge a dumediša pele a mpolediša (Maredi 1968: 9).

(It is alright my child, but you made a mistake by not greeting me first before telling me of the letter. Did you not hear your elder greeting before talking to me?)

Here the mother shows her dissatisfaction with the daughter's behaviour which is not in conformity with African culture. The child is expected to greet before she could impart any information or question the parent. Since that has not been done, the child is said to have violated African culture and this is a punishable offence. Failure to comply with that requirement is regarded as being ill-mannered, and the offender is quickly made aware of this serious oversight. A moral child will, in a situation of this nature, realise and rectify his or her mistake. Respect towards the parents comes in various ways. A child is at liberty to use a praise name when greeting a parent, for example, Napogadi. Totemic names, which are mostly used as reference to persons, for example, Kgomo, may also be used for purposes of greeting. Besides totems and praise names, honorifics may also be employed as signs of respect towards parents. In the play, there are instances where Mahlako refers to her mother as '*bomma*' and to the father as '*botata*'. The use of the plural forms of the two words is greatly esteemed in African culture. Besides for greeting purposes, totemic and praise names may be used as responses to statements or questions as well.

The respect that is being shown to Malegelegele (mother) by her children in this play, is also expected to be extended to Namane (father). He deserves more of that acceptable behaviour especially by virtue of his status as head of the family. Schapera (1938: 179) puts it succinctly thus:

Above all, unquestionable obedience is demanded from them [children] particularly towards the father, and they must willingly do whatever they are told.

The emphasis by African parents that their children should behave towards them with becoming modesty and respect emanates from the conception that 'a child's parent is its god'. Children are, therefore, expected, without any hesitation or question, to do as they are told, especially by the father. Children should always obey and honour their parents. The truth of this idea is entailed in a moral lesson presented to Sefako by Babuni:

O sware o tiiše ngwana wa kgaetšedi ya ka. Fela o se ke wa re go kgona go thalathala ka pene, wa ikhwetša o le yo mokaone wa gopola gore o phala yo mmago le tatago. O fele o tseba gore ke badimo ba gago. O a nkwa? (Maredi 1968: 26).

(Go on like that, my brother's child. But after being able to write, do not be proud and undermine your mother and father. You must always remember that they are your ancestors. Do you hear me?)

Children living up to these expectations or standards are spoken of with approval as being well-mannered, while those falling short of that are said to be disobedient and are continually held up as models of reproach to the rest of the community. Malegelegele expresses her appreciation and satisfaction after Mmakgomo has acceded to her request of greeting her first before talking:

Agee ngwanaka! Ngwana 'a Hlabirwa 'a Dimo! Motho wa moriri o dira bjalo. Bjalo gona iša pele o mpotše ka tša lengwalo leo ba le filego sekolong (Maredi 1968: 9).

(Thanks ... my child! The child of Hlabirwa of Dimo! A wise person does like that. Now go on telling me about the letter you have been given at school).

By conforming to the general code of behaviour, the child gains his or her

parents' esteem. He or she saves them from shame and disgrace and he or she should at all times try to avoid doing whatever might injure their status in the community. Any deviant behaviour puts the parents' social standing, especially the father's, in jeopardy; people will start looking at him as a social failure. They will openly say that the child is practising what he or she is being taught at home. This will obviously result in emotional instability and anguish on the side of the parents. They will be tormented by the knowledge that as parents they deserve unqualified respect from the children. The praiseworthy behaviour of Malegelegele's children aptly correlates with what is being conventionally purported among Africans:

Parents are often judged by the conduct of their children i.e. a child's behaviour is believed to originate from its parents; either from what it sees them doing or from what they teach it (Schapera 1940: 251).

It is nowadays generally admitted that parental discipline has suffered a profound deterioration. Modern children no longer willingly do what they are ordered to, and parents, instead of commanding them, have to request. Changes in lifestyle along the Western line have resulted in the devaluation and meaninglessness of some of the old traditional educational mechanisms like initiation and folklore narratives, by substituting them with the church and the school. Nowadays, complaints about the behaviour of children have become very common. Most children no longer willingly look up to their parents for guidance, but tend to act more and more independently. Parents thus often feel frustrated, believing that modern education and the general infiltration of European ideas of individualism are responsible for this state of affairs.

The attitude of modern youth often leads them into conflict with their traditional parents. Disputes usually arise when children persist in their individualistic and independent way of life. Parents, on the other hand, are culturally and socially obliged to enforce discipline on their unruly children. This difference in world

view often results in the formation of two opposing parties - children tend to view their parents as repressive and authoritative, while parents regard their children as ill-mannered.

Respect on the part of children towards their parents is of vital importance in African culture. It forms an integral part of the social structure. A parent in this case is not strictly a biological one alone, but any senior member of the community irrespective of kinship relations as well. By adhering to this social norm, one invokes countless fortunes and prosperity in life, from the living as well as deceased ancestors. Fortunes in this case include one's multiplication of days of life on earth. It is believed that by appeasing their seniors, children are averting disgruntlements that may result in their own derogation and disownment.

3.2.3 Despotism

Although a woman is socially a minor within the household, she deserves respect and good treatment. The husband should not be despotic, but is rather expected to protect his wife, treat her kindly and considerably. Namane has the tendency of undermining married women. Malegelegele can, therefore, be seen as a victim as well, and this brings him into conflict with *kgadi* (Babuni). She is displeased by the fact that Namane is undermining his wife, hiding behind the adage: '*O tlile ka kgomo*' (she is here because of a cow), forgetting that she is the one who begot him children. Although Namane is traditionally the head of his family, he is morally and culturally not justified to treat the wife as he pleases. Added to his bad tendency is the fact that Malegelegele is being ill-treated for defecting, together with the children, to modernity. Namane regards the move as the undermining of his authority, hence the ill-treatment. The tension that has emerged in Namane's family brings the importance of *kgadi* in an African family into prominence. *Kgadi* is culturally obliged to intervene in order to prevent the breaking down of the marriage. In the play, her reverential and influential status

has been utilised to curb despotism in Namane's family.

Babuni, in her capacity as *kgadi*, comes to the rescue of Malegelegele to resolve her dispute with her husband, Namane. Malegelegele makes use of the opportunity that has presented itself when Babuni pays the family a courtesy visit. The existing strife in the household is reported to her and Namane in turn informs Babuni of it, with the hope that as his sister, she will side with him. After being presented with the cause of the conflict, she immediately responds in the following way:

O re o tloge o lemošiša gore motho yo o reng o tlike ka kgomo ke mang? Afa o a lemoga gore o nyetšwe ka dikgomo tša tatagorena, Mmotlana, a nyalelwa go ba mmagorena? A o a lemoga gore ge o mo sohla, o sohla mmagorena, gomme o epa tatagorena? (Maredi 1968: 19).

(Do you really know the person you say came through a beast? Are you aware that our father, Mmotlana's cattle, were used to marry her, for her to come and be our mother? Are you aware that when ill-treating her, you are ill-treating our mother, and thus you undermine our father?)

This passage thus stresses the idea that the wife deserves respect and good treatment because she has been married primarily for the expansion of the lineage group, through her procreative abilities; hence the reference *mmagorena* (our mother). The livestock of the family has been used as marriage goods to procure her and her services, and for the appeasement of the ancestral spirits, her right to be has to be taken into account. Names of parents and grandparents are kept alive through children procreated out of the marriage. The philosophy of 'raising the seed' is kept going. Since Babuni is aware of all these implications, and in order to save the marriage she intervenes in the affairs of her brother's family. The conflict has now transcended Namane's nuclear family to include his relative. Horns are now locked between Namane and *kgadi*. Malegelegele is despised by her husband's use of words such as

mo-tla-ka-kgomo (she who came through a cow). Babuni is agitated by the ill-treatment of her sister-in-law. Her capacity as *kgadi* (sister) in the family obliges Namane to listen to her plea, and reconsider his decision. For fear of injuring his sister and thereby invoking misfortunes in life, he apologises.

The ill-treatment of Malegelele has transcended to Sefako who is denied Western clothes because of defecting to modernity against the father's will. He has covered his body with a blanket and has hidden himself in the backyard (*mafuri*) because of being shameful of his plight. Babuni also shows her discontentment even in this instance. Being the eldest son, Sefako deserves a particular respect in the family. The status of the eldest son is reinforced by the fact that among most African tribes, he is the one to be named after his father's father. The respect due to one's father, is expected to be displayed unto him as well mainly because of that name. This is done irrespective of whether one's father is dead or alive - he is referred to in praise and totem names. This reverence leads to the eldest son's exaltation over other children in the family. Sefako has been named after Namane's father, and this is the main reason why Babuni is not pleased with his treatment. Namane, however, is unconcerned about Sefako's plight and this brings him (Namane) into conflict with his sister. Here, Namane violates African culture by being despotic to both his wife and son. Babuni deems it necessary to call him to order for the sake of peace and harmony in the family. The conflict between the two brings the importance of the eldest son into prominence:

Gopola, go sohla ngwana yo o sohla tatagorena, gomme le dikgaetšedi tša gagwe, tšeo di reetšwego rena, ge di ekwa bohloko le rena re kwa bohloko (Maredi 1968: 19).

(Remember, by ill-treating this child, you are ill-treating our father, and even when his sisters, who have been named after us, are disappointed, we are disappointed too).

African culture here obliges Babuni to refer to Sefako as '*tatagorena*' (our father)

merely because he has been named after her father. Among Africans, the system of naming is predominantly after the father's relatives, that is, in line with patrilineal descent. Sefako, in this case, deserves the respect due to his grandfather even if he is still young. Namane's utterances and actions are humiliating the young man and as such he deserves to be called to order. In addition, an offence against him also infuriates his dead grandfather's spirit. The offender, therefore, is likely to experience misfortune of whatever nature. Namane, under pressure of his sister, Babuni, acknowledges his mistake and accedes to her request of buying his son a new pair of trousers.

The squabble in Namane's family has finally been settled by a person from outside, who is a close relative. Babuni came being unaware that there is tension within his brother's family, but because of socio-cultural obligations, she could not ignore the issue. The matter could not be settled within the family, that is why Babuni's services were sought and secured to save the family from breaking down. She has achieved success in reconciling the conflicting parties.

The outcome of the quarrel between Namane and his wife, Malegelegele, clearly shows that despotism in an African family cannot be tolerated since it drives out tranquillity in the family. Namane has therefore been severely rebuked for ill-treating and degrading his wife. According to Krige *et al* (1980: 75), the sister is socially justified to rebuke the brother who is in turn expected to subside immediately. For the sake of honouring the social status of his sister, Namane has to concur. He becomes aware of his mistakes and pledges never to repeat them:

Ke kwele mmane, nka se hlwe ke boeleditše. Ke lahlile ngwan'a Dimo (Maredi 1968: 20).

(I have heard enough my sister, I won't repeat. I won't do it again, Dimo's child).

Kgadi is a socially esteemed person among Africans; she therefore deserves respect. Offences that may result in the creation of feelings of indignation in her, are avoided at all cost. Namane has been aware of this, so after realising that Babuni is fuming over his social misbehaviour (*go kgathola mahlong*), he has no alternative but to calm down. He is even instructed to take out money now to buy the clothes, to prove that he really means what he is saying. His final capitulation is entailed in the following statement:

*Bosasa o nkgopotše ke go fe tšhelete o ye o rekele yoo
tatane marokgo* (Maredi 1968: 20).

(Remind me tomorrow to give you money to go and buy our
father pairs of trousers).

So strong is the social authority of *kgadi* here that Namane, such an ardent traditionalist, is compelled to surrender to modern needs. He is no more talking of '*borokgo*' (one pair) but of '*marokgo*' (pairs). The durability of modern clothes as compared to loin-skins is no longer an issue to worry about. He no longer refers to Sefako as the son but as '*tatane*' (father). The social status of *kgadi* (a woman) obliges Namane to act against his will - of succumbing to modern needs. His previous standpoint of swearing by his dead father not to change, is something of the past. One won't wonder if, because of this change of heart, Namane finally lands in modernity because of the situation that he finds himself in at this stage.

The influence of *kgadi* is reinforced by her religious position. Not all sisters play the role that has been ascribed in general terms to a man's sister. Where the family is single but the sisters numerous, the eldest one will usually take the lead in officiating a religious rite. In such instances the eldest sister is referred to as '*kgadi ye kgolo*' (senior sister), meaning that the younger ones are junior in status and obligations. She is the one best able to intercede with the spirits. Ancestors are believed to be sympathetic towards her, and her prayers are

apparently given a hearing more than those of her junior sisters. Krige *et al.* (1980: 76) go further to say:

Any displeasure or secret grievance against her brother on her part may have the effect of stirring up the spirits to cause illness in his family.

Being fully aware of the revered capability inherent in *kgadi*, Namane capitulates. He is morally bound to concur for the sake of peace, good health and prosperity in his family. Babuni's threats to stir up the spirits to cause mishaps is reflected as follows:

Bjale ka ge o ntseba ke le kgadi, o tsebe yo [o šupa mogadibo'agwe] ge e le mmawešo, go sego bjalo badimo ba ka se go robalele, go tee le rena dikgadi. Gomme ga ke tsebe gore ke eng se se ka go lokelang ge kgadi di ka se go phuthollele mahlong, tša bolela le bona gore ba go robalele. (O fetša a kgathotše mahlong) (Maredi 1968: 19).

(As you know me to be your sister, know this one [pointing at the sister-in-law] as our mother, otherwise you won't be at peace with the ancestors, as well as us the sisters. Therefore, I do not know how you will get your things together, if your sisters cannot accept you and beseech them [spirits] to be at peace with you). (She ends up fuming).

What a parent is to his child, is almost the same as what *kgadi* is to her 'linked' brother. The religious and social authority vested in her, makes her to be a 'living god' as well. These facts undeniably reveal that a man's sister has great influence over him and may be called to remonstrate with him, more especially in matters affecting his own household. Sometimes her assistance may be sought when even his parents have been unsuccessful, but she has no right to interfere without a just cause. However, in cases of illnesses in her brother's family, especially of his children, she is the one to be approached to come and beseech the spirits for the restoration of good health.

3.2.4 Violation of Traditional Laws

This play also deals with a number of instances where traditional African laws and customs are violated. Such cases include the one of a woman denying another of her cultural benefits on the ground that it is against Christian principles to do that. Traditionalists view this as unmoral mainly because one good turn deserves another.

Women are regarded as socially inferior to men and are always treated as minors. Before marriage, a woman is under the authority of her father, while after it, she is under the control of her husband. The husband, by virtue of his position as the head, is looked upon as being responsible for queries affecting his family. An offended person from outside will approach the husband for the solution of his problem, irrespective of whether the offender was the husband or not.

In this drama, Namane accuses Reratilwe for cutting a piece of meat to be taken along with the bride (*mohlobolo*) to her new place. She (Reratilwe) has actually cut the meat, but by virtue of her junior status, the husband, Moshabane, should be held responsible for the deeds of his undisciplined wife. As the head, he enhances the weaknesses of his junior family members. Reratilwe's claim for responsibility therefore, stuns the traditional Namane and the issue finally brings the two into conflict. Namane cannot understand why a woman, by virtue of her junior status, can be so bold to declare herself responsible for such an action. His amazement is revealed in the following words:

Re go rweše ona? Wena o le mang? Mosadi wa ntepa, motla-ka-kgomo, re a gafa? (Maredi 1968: 68).

(Should we make you responsible for it? Who are you? A woman with a loin-skirt, she who came through a cow, are we mad?)

Traditionally, a woman has no authority over and say in the running of family matters. Hers is just to be submissive and abide by the laws of her family. Claims for responsibility such as Reratilwe's leave traditional Africans bewildered. Westernised Africans, on the other hand, see no wrong in being held responsible for their deeds, irrespective of sex differences. This is probably the reason why Reratilwe sounds bold and shameless when she responds to Namane's accusations in this manner:

... *Bjalo ge, ge e ka ba ruri ke molato, le o rwešeng nna*
(Maredi 1968:68).

(Now then, if ever it is really a case, let me be responsible).

In this instance, Christianity has changed Reratilwe into a completely different person, who appears strange to her traditional relatives. The introduction of Christian ideals of married life has led the African woman to expect and demand greater consideration while the spread of education has likewise contributed towards making her more confident and independent in her attitude. In terms of African tradition, for a woman to claim such a responsibility, is tantamount to striving for gender equality. This is abominable among traditional Africans, who consider such a move as a violation of their traditional laws. Her husband is there to fend for her. Hers is just to be submissive and abide by the dictates of traditional African culture.

The feminist attitude that Reratilwe has displayed, which in this context is attributed to Christianisation, is the one which is traditionally believed to be responsible for the decay of authority in most African families. Traditionalists are disgusted by the fact that women are struggling for parity with their husbands, while the latter, on the other hand, resist and oppose these strange practices on traditional grounds. Their zeal to keep their families intact and governable is the strong driving force for their opposition. It has been culturally inculcated in them that 'there can't be two bulls in one kraal' (*ga go poo-pedi šakeng*). As

such, feminist attitudes and practices infuriate traditional males or husbands. Ardent Africans will not be shocked by males using derogatory utterances such as '*wena o le mang?*' (Who are you?) and '*mo-tla-ka-kgomo*' (she who came through a cow), in response to claims for responsibility like that of Reratilwe. African tradition allows a male in authority to utter such words, in order to make the offender aware and mindful of her social status, thereby bringing her back to the accepted cultural and moral path. It is thus assumed to be on cultural grounds that Phogole poses this question to Moshabane:

A ke o mpotše Mokone, e lego hlogo ya lapa le ke mang?
(Maredi 1968: 76).

(Tell me Mokone, who is the head of this family?)

Here Phogole is perturbed by Reratilwe's continuous violation of African culture. Her deeds, utterances and behaviour in general, which are mainly feminist, are that of a person in authority. Cultural violations of this nature are viewed with a serious eye as they may lead to anarchy which in turn may result in the breakdown of the family. Should the offender not correct or do away with them, severe punishment is likely to follow. In the case of a grown-up person like Reratilwe, family relatives may decide to isolate her by abstaining from all social activities taking place in her family. This is exactly what Namane intended to do, had it not been the powerful influence of his sister, Babuni, in her capacity as *kgadi*. This form of retribution will undoubtedly make life tough and unbearable for her, for even other community members may be reluctant to come to her rescue. Discipline within a family should start with the wife. Should she be out of hand, the children are likely to follow suit, because of her influential position and nature upon them in the family. From Phogole's question to Moshabane above, it is evident that Reratilwe's unbecoming behaviour is not a nightmare to Namane alone, but to the entire kingroup as well.

As the play progresses towards the end, we come across a changed

Malegelele; she is now a new person who abides by the rules of African culture. Her moral behaviour is in sharp contrast with that of Retatilwe at this stage. It may be assumed that this has been done purposely by the playwright to expose Reratilwe's unacceptable morality. Malegelele has proved her submissiveness at a family-group gathering, where the question of who to accompany Reshoketšwe to her new place, was being tackled. Although most family members have envisaged Babuni (*kgadi*) as an obvious choice, her family commitments impedes her to comply with the request. When the request is extended to Malegelele, she responds as follows:

Aowa, nna ke theeditše seo Bakone ba ntaelago gore ke se dire, ke ngwana wa bona, ga go lentšu le nka le bolelago go aroga go ao re a fiwago (Maredi 1968: 70).

(I abide by the decisions of Bakone, I am their dependent, there is nothing I can say against their instructions).

Here, Malegelele has proved to be an African woman recognising her status as a woman; to be always submissive to and abide by the decisions of her male seniors. She knows very well that she is not expected to challenge men's decisions; hers is just to comply.

Reratilwe, who is viewed as a contrast to Malegelele in the line of morality, should have come down to earth and apologised after realising that she has offended Namane. Instead of apologising, she stubbornly clings to her standpoint. She capitalises on the leniency of her husband, Moshabane, to always sound as a person in authority, especially in matters pertaining to the family. She has no respect for Namane and other relatives who have assembled in the family. She is defiant even to culturally crucial issues like the repayment of a cow and a sheep to Babuni. Her attitude exposes what most male married Africans fear when granting women the same social status as they have, that is, of eventually being surpassed. Sometimes, it so happens that she may have a dominant personality, and despite the formal restrictions to which

she is subject, she may actually be the real power in the household. There are known cases, although rare, of men who are notoriously controlled by their wives. Such men have never been able to gather sufficient courage to try and exert their legal authority over their dominant wives. Reratilwe's is a case in point. Whenever something is not acceptable to her, she voices her dissatisfaction for her opponents to hear. This is what she regards befitting to utter (in reference to Moshabane) in the midst of their relatives:

(O bolela a emelela a sepela) : O lokiše ka tša gago e sego tša lapa la ka (Maredi 1968: 72).

(She talks whilst standing up and going). (Make use of yours [cattle] not those of my family).

What an embarrassment to Moshabane as the husband and head of the family. The wife has turned herself into the head of the family, hence the utterance: 'e sego tša lapa la ka' (not those of my family). Such words are expected from the real head, but because she is unconcerned about African traditions, she finds no mistake in saying that. Traditionally, a married woman owns no family. Moshabane, on the other hand, admits that he is experiencing problems trying to control his wife:

Gape re swere ka mo go fišago ka mo go bommagobana (Maredi 1968: 76).

(We are having it thick with our wives).

Reratilwe remains obstinate until at last Namane cannot stomach her obstinacy any longer and becomes tired of being despised and dominated by a woman. He thus finds it necessary to prove his manhood by way of brandishing deadly weapons against her; he is driven by the need to retain African culture undistorted. In terms of his tradition, a woman is not expected to dominate her elderly male counterpart. What she is doing is foreign and strange, and ought

to be condemned and discouraged at all cost. African culture is strongly opposed to social equality between husband and wife. In African law the husband is the undoubted head of his family and as such he has considerable authority over his wife. She must obey his commands and account to him for her movements, and, as Schapera (1940: 282) puts it, "if she misbehaves, he is entitled to thrash her".

The conflict between Namane and Reratilwe revolves around the issue of leadership. By virtue of his seniority as the elder brother in the family, Namane is automatically the 'elder' of the Mmotlana kingroup. He is expected to exercise authority over the group the same way as the head of the family as he has replaced his deceased father as the head of the group. He has to take charge of its proceedings and in case of a deadlock in their deliberations, he has to give a ruling. He ought to have been the beneficiary at Ngwanamohube's marriage, had it not been because of his wife's ill-health on the day of the occasion. Namane's absence automatically rendered Moshabane the beneficiary of a cow and a sheep, by virtue of his status as the only brother to Babuni at the ceremony, that is, an uncle (*malome majadihlogo*) to Ngwanamohube. Expectations were high when Thema got married, either to return the cow and a sheep or to donate a bride to *kgadi* in their place. In terms of African tradition, the preferred option is to donate a bride in order to comply with the requirements of a preferential marriage. Since neither of the two options was complied with, this may be regarded as the cause of conflict between Namane and Reratilwe.

At this stage the kingroup is confronted with two mammoth tasks; that of the wedding of Reshoketšwe and the pending case of a cow and a sheep due to Babuni by Moshabane's family. Moshabane, who has played some delaying tactics for the wedding to be over to avoid the payment, had to be called to order at this gathering. As the leader of the group, Namane has presided over the meeting and he asks his younger brother, Moshabane, which of the two cases emerged first. The answer he gets is enough for him to give a ruling:

Re phetha wa mathomo pele, e be gona re tlogo fetela go wa bobedi (Maredi 1968: 71).

(We tackle the initial one first, and thereafter the second one).

The ruling is necessitated by Moshabane's reluctance to meet his cultural obligations, thereby violating African culture. The ruling is acceptable to all the attendants, with the exception of Reratilwe. In terms of the ruling, Babuni's case has to be attended to first. Namane, as the head of the kingroup, is culturally obliged to resolve the impasse while Reratilwe, on the other hand, as the wife in the family, also wishes that her authority should be felt. Reratilwe, Namane's social rival, is not ready to accept anything except the celebration and the smooth running of her daughter's wedding ceremony. Her reaction to the ruling shows sheer avarice to which Babuni reacts angrily. To bring the basic cause of the conflict into prominence, Babuni repeatedly utters the following words to her sister-in-law:

A nke mogadibo a se ke a rata go amogela yena a sa rate go fa (Maredi 1968: 49).

(Let my sister-in-law not be fond of accepting whereas she does not want to give).

Reratilwe appears to be oblivious of the fact that one good turn deserves another. Instead of accepting and thereby complying with what Namane is striving for, she makes her own suggestions. Her opposition brings into light the incongruence of modernity and traditionalism. She makes it clear that non-compliance with her proposals is seen as a sign of backwardness and heathenism. The conflict between the two intensifies when she becomes sulky and keeps on saying that traditional African practices are backward and barbaric:

Le sa rata go re bušetša leswising? Tihabologong ye?

*Rena re tlogetše tša leswiswi, ka gona, nna nka se dumele,
le ka upša la mpolaya (Maredi 1968: 71).*

(Do you still want to draw us back into darkness? In this era of enlightenment? We have done away with backwardness, and therefore, I won't agree, you may rather kill me).

Christianity has estranged Reratilwe from her traditional relatives who are bewildered to see her scorning at traditional African practices. Her reluctance to give what is due to Babuni is incomprehensible to them. She is hiding behind Christianity to deny her sister-in-law what is culturally hers. She wants to accumulate wealth at the expense of her relatives, a practice which is incompatible with Christian principles. She is using her distorted idea of Christianity for her own expediency - she is actually abusing Christianity. Her disillusionment with traditional practices nearly ended tragically because Namane ended up paying for her blood.

3.3 RESOLUTION

The play is nearing its end, but chances for a solution of the cultural differences between Namane and Reratilwe are still remote. The relatives have failed on a number of occasions to convince Reratilwe to abide by African tradition. However, despite Reratilwe's obstinacy, Namane is never despondent. He remains confident that he would retrieve what is culturally due to Babuni; a cow and a sheep. Since peaceful negotiations have failed to resolve this serious issue, force is the only means left to resort to, in order to bring this social turmoil to an end. The last infuriating response Namane got from Moshabane (through Phogole) about the pending issue of cultural obligations was: '*Mosadi (Reratilwe) o a gana*', meaning the wife is refusing. Namane immediately retorts angrily:

*Ke tsebile! Ga go ka mo gongwe. E se gore ga a di tsebe,
le gona ga a bone tsela ya makgonthe; o e bona go phala
rena ka moka, eupša o tshwenywa ke megabaru. O leka*

go širela ka sejakane, o iphora ka lefeela, gomme lejakane le legolo ke le kwele maabane kua kerekeng; le tloge le nyakana le bao ba sepelago ka molao gabotse, gomme ge a sa ntsebe, lehono le o tlo ntseba gabotse. A re a le bjalo, ge ke ikgethela ye ke e ratago ka mola 'šakeng; ka gore, ge bona ba sa rate go ntšha ye ba e ntšhago, nna ke ile go ikgethela, a roke molomo. Fela pele ngwana a etšwa, ke tlo be ke e ntšhitše go tee le nku ya go emela dinama tšela kgadi ya go ganetšwa e di kina, ge nka se dire bjalo lehono le, ba ka lemala, ba senyega. Gomme ka gore ga ke rate ba senyega, nka se ba lese (Maredi 1968: 77).

(I knew! There is no other way. Not to say she does not know them, she does not know the right reasons; she is aware of it more than all of us, but she is being troubled by avarice. She is trying to hide behind Christianity, she is deceiving herself, and I have heard the great Christian in church yesterday; he is after those who are on righteousness, and if she does not know me, today she will know me very well. Behaving the way she is, when I choose the one I like in the kraal; because if they do not want to have their own choice, and I have mine, she must keep quiet. But before the child departs, I would have chosen it together with a sheep to replace the meat that 'kgadi' was denied to cut, if I cannot do that today, they can be spoilt. And because I do not want them to be spoilt, I won't leave them alone).

Namane is not prepared to accept any excuse that will deny *kgadi* her cultural gains. Reratilwe's refusal is just a deliberate attempt to enrich herself at the expense of other people. There is no heresy in what Namane is demanding. He is backed by the African tradition that: *boyakgomo ke boboakgomo*, meaning one good turn deserves another. Reratilwe, who is hiding her avarice behind Christianity, must do as required by humanity. Namane is being encouraged on his stand by the sermon delivered by *moruti* in church during the matrimonial ceremony. From what *moruti* has said, Namane has gathered the knowledge that even Christian principles require of Christians to be benevolent. Reratilwe is, therefore, not justified, even in terms of Christian principles, to deny Babuni of what is rightfully and culturally hers.

Namane becomes more furious when seeing people who are to accompany Reshoketšwe to her new place (*bogadi*), loading their luggage into a car. The permission to do that ought to have come from him. This is another instance where Reratilwe is violating African tradition, which Namane won't stomach. Leaving them to do as they wish presupposes a loss on the side of Babuni. Namane's authority must be felt. He intends to bring things back to normal, this time, through the use of brutal force and thus he starts to unload the luggage from the car. Reratilwe shows her resentment towards that by insulting Namane in words such as '*morwalo*' (burden). Namane retaliates by brandishing an axe and a stick and charges at her whereupon Reratilwe screams and runs for dear life with Namane in hot pursuit, uttering words such as: '*O rata go ja tša batho o sa nyake go di buša*', which means you are greedy.

Moruti comes to the rescue of Reratilwe by calming Namane down. With *moruti's* sermon of the previous day in church still fresh in his mind, Namane complies positively by remarking:

Oo, aowaa, yoo yena ke monna ke mo kwele maabane, mo gongwe o tlo ka a tla a bolotša lejakane le la gagwe le hlwego le tšea kgang le banna, le ratago go ja tša batho gomme le sa rate go di bušetša (Maredi 1968: 79).

(Oh, no, that one is a man, I have heard him yesterday, maybe he can subdue this Christian of his who always want to argue and reap where she did not sow).

Reratilwe is a nightmare to African traditionalists. They have repeatedly tried to show her the right moral path, but all in vain. Now *moruti* is being looked at to resolve the longstanding conflict. By virtue of *moruti's* position as a Christian leader, Namane entertains hopes that through his stature, Reratilwe will be subdued. Reratilwe, nevertheless, still shows her anti-Africanness by involving herself in arguments with men. This is a violation of African culture for which Namane is not willing to compromise.

At this stage it seems that the conflict is nearing its end because a resolution to the problem appears to be in sight. *Moruti* brings the conflicting parties together in an attempt to find a solution. After Namane has presented *moruti* with the cause of the conflict, *moruti* eventually rules in favour of Namane by saying:

Aowaaaowaaa! A ba se ke ba rata go itšhireletša ka sedumedi ge ba dirile bošaedi. Sedumedi ga se kwane le bošaedi, ke sethakga, se kwana le wene (Namane) gabotsebotse, se re o dire motho seo o tlogo thabela ge a go dira sona. Ke bošaedi bjo bogolo bjoo ba bo dirilego. Sedumedi se nyakana le go dira go loka, e sego go dira maraga Ntšhang tšeo di lebanego bao ba le diretšego, le tlišeng khutšo lapeng le; le ruteng bana setho (Maredi 1968: 80).

(No, No,! Let them not hide behind Christianity when they have committed a mistake. Christianity has no room for mistakes, it is pure, it is totally in agreement with you, it says do unto others that which you would like them do unto you. What they have done is a great mistake. Christianity is after fairness, not a mess Take out what belongs to those who have served you, and bring peace in this family, for the children to follow in righteousness).

Moruti puts the blame squarely on Reratilwe and Moshabane, by accusing them for doing wrong things in the name of Christianity. He knows that they will definitely not be happy to be on the receiving side of what they are practising now, so they are urged to do unto others that which they would like to be done unto them. For the sake of peace in the family and among the relatives, *moruti* instructs them to give Babuni what she deserves. A cow and a sheep are taken out of the kraal. Namane is grateful for the wonderful role that *moruti* has played and he drives the two beasts home elated and convinced that there is nothing wrong with Christianity, it may only be that a Christian can misuse it for avaricious gains.

3.4 RÉSUMÉ

In *Namane and Reratilwe*, the playwright has presented us with characters belonging to conflicting cultural backgrounds. From the beginning Namane is an ardent traditionalist, showing his abhorrence of modernity in various ways. As the play progresses towards the end, he changes to a new person with no clear-cut direction. He appears to be heading towards modernity, especially the religious part of it. The Christian Babuni comes into the picture and her capacity as *kgadi* has not been fully utilised to perpetuate African culture, but instead to drive Namane into the modern world. Her stature overpowers Namane to surrender to modern needs by way of giving out money for purchasing modern clothes. Namane also falls sick and no other means of curing him is resorted to except a Christian prayer. The will of God is done and Namane eventually recovers from his sickness.

The conflict between Namane and Reratilwe reaches an alarming intensity when Namane resorts to the use of brutal force to regain *kgadi's* cultural benefits. *Moruti* comes in as a Christian leader to difuse the volatile situation by instructing Reratilwe to give away a cow and a sheep. This 'great' work by *moruti*, coupled with the sermon delivered in the church on the wedding day, makes Namane adore and regard him as a hero; hence his utterance:

*Ke wele pelo, gomme le nna ke a bona ke tlo ba ka itahlela
ka moo komeng ya gagwe, ke be lejakane (Maredi 1968:
81).*

(I am satisfied, and I see myself having joined, and being
a Christian).

Namane's confusion regarding Christianity starts to clear away now. He is firmly heading towards modernity, because of 'great' things that Christians have done. His earlier conviction that Christianity is bad, does not hold water anymore since he has realised that the personality of a Christian is the thing that counts. The

playwright has thus revealed to us, through Reratilwe's behaviour, that it is unfair to claim to be a Christian whereas one's deeds are not in conformity with Christian principles. Such deeds deter people from outside the Christian realm to understand the true nature of the religion. Once the truth of what Christianity really is all about emerges, namely humanity, people will flock to it. To summarise, the prominent message deriving from this play is: "Do unto others that which you would like them to do unto you".

One wonders not so much why we have been presented with such type of ending of the play, namely that Namane considers becoming a Christian, because it was the tendency of early authors in this literary genre to promote Western ideals and practices over African ones. As products of Western and pro-Western teachers and preachers, they were inclined to lead the flock out of 'darkness' into 'light'.

CHAPTER 4

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS AFRICAN TRADITION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Among traditional Africans, death is considered as the termination of one's life span on earth; either naturally through sickness or mysteriously through the use of evil powers used by evil-doers. Upon its occurrence, the first duties of the deceased's close relatives are to inform the chief about it and obtain his permission for burial. The relatives are also expected to send out personal messages to all the relatives in the neighbourhood to attend the burial. The burial used to take place on the night following the day of death and was mostly attended by those who lived near enough to come on such short notices.

With the dawn of modernity which has displaced and detribalised many Africans by way of employment and residence in urban areas, death is now perceived and handled in a different way. Christianity has led to this new perception and a resultant change in burial rites/customs, of African people was the primary objective of the missionaries to be accomplished here in Africa. Even though the missionaries did not side-line the education of Africans, their main aim was Christianisation. To achieve this, they had to persuade their intended 'victims' to change their lifestyles drastically, as Groenewald (1983: 3) says:

The traditional way of life had to be altered: the ancestor worship, the role of the witch-doctor, polygamy and many of the daily rituals and superstitious practices had to be done away with.

Indeed, a new moral and ethical code was introduced among and accepted by Christianised Africans. This new way of living undoubtedly made the 'new

Africans' to start despising and violating some of their traditional customs and practices thereby placing themselves in opposition to their conservative counterparts. Conservative Africans could not but challenge this strange ideology. As will be shown later in this chapter, traditionalists are fighting a fierce social battle in their quest to maintain traditional African culture undistorted. The resistance of the Christians on the other hand, to bow to the pressure of traditional Africans, merely fuels the conflict. The missionary activities were thus met with opposition of various kinds.

In this section of the study, it will be observed that death is handled differently by Christians and traditionalists. What is of prime importance and worth noting in this regard is that Christians and traditionalists do not conduct their burials the same way. Westernised Africans, with their Christian religion, have a preacher or *moruti* at the forefront to conduct the service which customarily has the singing of hymns and Bible reading as its accompaniments. The traditional African, on the other hand, disapproves of this practice which, in terms of his or her culture, is disrespectful and derogatory, hence the conflict. Discontent in this regard mainly emanates from the message derived from the singing of songs and reading from the scriptures. The burial of a traditionalist is characterised by silence, except only when a prayer, of a traditional nature, has to be conveyed to the deceased's ancestral spirits at the end of the process. Death has thus placed Christianity and African tradition at loggerheads in this section of the study.

Furthermore, another point to consider among traditionalists is their belief that death does not terminate marriage, while Christians do. Whereas Christians are at liberty to go away and remarry after death, traditionalists resort to secondary unions like levirate to perpetuate the relationship. A Christian who happens to be in a family of traditionalists, and be traditionally obliged to enter into such a union, usually resists, thereby causing conflict between him or her and the traditional relatives. Various forms of conflict that arise because of cultural

differences will be the focal point in this chapter. Nevertheless, the researcher views Christianity as the root cause of the conflicts. A person tends to disagree with others mainly because he or she is a Christian. The two parties differ with regard to issues like burial ceremonies, mourning observances, rituals and other traditional African practices that are believed to perpetuate marriage. Here, reference will be made to *Mahlodi*, by J S Mminele (1968).

4.1 A BACKGROUND TO THE TEXT

The playwright has presented us with characters coming from different traditions and having different religious convictions. *Mahlodi*, a Christian convert, and *Phadime*, a traditionalist abiding by the principles of African religion, feature prominently as opponents in the cultural conflicts reflected in the play. The two differ in matters related to death in a traditional African family. *Mahlodi*, who has been married into *Phadime*'s traditional family, refuses to succumb to the dictates of African tradition like the cleansing rites and the levirate union. The father-in-law, *Phadime*, on the other hand views *Mahlodi*'s non-compliance as a violation of African tradition, hence the conflict.

The death of *Mahlodi*'s Christian husband, *Sepheu*, serves as the point of departure for the manifestation of cultural differences in the play. The traditionalists feel derogated and upset about the sermon and hymns that dominated *Sepheu*'s burial. A rift has been created between them and the Christians. It widens when the traditionalists realise that *Mahlodi* has violated their tradition by way of cutting her hair short twice before the mourning period is over. The situation becomes exacerbated when she also threatens to take off her black clothes before the actual time. This is a shock to *Phadime* whose dignity and social standing among his fellow traditionalists are bound to be harmed.

Mahlodi also refuses to attend the cleansing ceremony designed to purge her

and other relatives of the impurities that have resulted from Sepheu's death. Instead of attending, she leaves for *moruti's* place where she is encouraged to scorn traditional African practices. With *moruti* on her side she becomes increasingly courageous not to waver on her stand. Back home, Phadime, backed by Mphogolle, is furious about Mahlodi's non-attendance of the ceremony.

Mahlodi, who has absconded from the cleansing ceremony, moreover rejects Lepadime as a levir. Lepadime has his own wife, and therefore, as she puts it, he is not entitled to cohabit with her. Death has separated her from Sepheu, and in terms of her religion, no relative is supposed to resuscitate his family. Christian principles have no room for levirate custom.

The conflict between Phadime and Mahlodi culminates when Mahlodi escapes and eventually finds refuge at *moruti's* place. Phadime cannot tolerate her any longer as this is proved by his harsh attitude towards her. However, her departure has positive consequences as she is eventually married to a wealthy Christian convert who pays out a large sum of money (R140.00) as *magadi*. The money is used to purchase an ox-wagon which becomes a source of employment and wealth to Phadime and his traditional relatives. Finally, they start to conceive Christianity in a new and positive light, and regret the wrongs they have done and insulting words they have uttered to *moruti* and Mahlodi. The traditionalists eventually unanimously agree to defect to Christianity, and they declare openly that there is life in Christianity.

4.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT

In this play, the incongruence of Christianity and African tradition has been reflected in various ways. To the traditionalists a modern burial is disgusting since it involves hymns and scripture readings, both of which are meaningless to them. For a female Christian to opt for another marriage after the death of

her spouse, is also unthinkable on the side of the traditionalists who fight tooth and nail to see to it that death does not terminate marriage.

4.2.1 A Christian Burial

Africanism, especially rites pertaining to death, is not totally discarded among African Christian renegades. This is the area of culture where one is prompted to conclude that it is not easy for one to completely divorce one's original culture. In this regard, most traditional practices are still maintained and adhered to and this leads the researcher to align himself with Schapera (1946: 423) when he says:

Despite the fact that burial now follows the European pattern, the observances connected with death still have much in common with traditional Bantu customs and beliefs.

The spread of Christianity and other European influences have affected the old religious system of an African. Burial customs have altered as well. People are no longer buried in kraals but are now taken to special graveyards on the outskirts of the villages. At the initial stages of westernisation, Christianised Africans were buried separately from their so-called heathen counterparts. According to my informants, there was what was referred to as heathen and Christian graveyards. In a case where not all family members were Christian converts, there was always a confusion and sometimes chaos when death struck. It became increasingly difficult for a senior member of the family to exercise his authority as head in the case of the death of a junior member whose religion was different. This inevitably led to conflicts based on cultural or religious differences. In a situation of this nature one party would conduct the burial in a manner that will never be appreciated by another.

The conflict between Phadime and Mahlodi as portrayed in *Mahlodi*, bears

testimony to the above assertion. The basic source of conflict between the two is religious differences. Phadime's deceased, son, Sepheu, together with his surviving spouse, Mahlodi, are Christian converts in Phadime's family which still adheres to African religion. In this play Christianity is a hindrance for Mahlodi to abide by the dictates of traditional African culture. The initial stage of the conflicts shows Phadime in a dilemma, not knowing whether to let Christian customs be followed in the burial of his son, or whether his own culture should take precedence.

Sepheu's death reveals weakened parental authority caused by Christian influence. The head of the family (Phadime) is at the mercy of a Christian agent, *moruti*. He is confused as to which line or direction to follow regarding the burial; Christian or traditional. Traditionally, he, as the head of the family, is expected to give direction regarding the burial, but that is not the case here. *Moruti* has surpassed him in the affairs of his own family, by being the one in authority by virtue of his religion to which Sepheu subscribed. Before Phadime could finalise the funeral arrangements, he sends Mphegolle to inform *moruti* about the death, as well as to find out when and where to bury his deceased son. Here are his utterances:

.... *Yena (moruti) a nape a re botše gore o bona poloko e ka ba ya neng, le gore na a ka bolokwa mo mabitleng a rena goba kua majakaneng* (Mminele 1968: 4).

(He must just tell us when does he think the burial can take place, and whether he can be buried at our graveyard or that of the Christians).

The above excerpt clearly reveals that Christianity has overridden African religion. It has rendered itself more powerful and dominant to the extent that even a man, known to be of a foreign culture, is at ease to dictate in another man's family. Among traditional Africans, such a practice will result in bewilderment.

Finally, Mphogolle comes back from *moruti* with the news that Sepheu will be buried at the local graveyard, in accordance with Christian rites and principles. Here, *moruti* has taken a decision on behalf of Phadime's family, and the family does not object to it. This lack of opposition shows that Christianity is the dominant belief in this play.

It is customary among African Christians that relatives and acquaintances assemble at the home of the deceased and spend the night before the day of the funeral in the company of the surviving spouse. All night long they sing, usually an impartial selection of Christian songs or hymns. At daybreak the young men of the village commonly known as *diphiri* nowadays, assemble and prepare themselves for the digging of the grave. As soon as the work is accomplished, mourners prepare themselves for the burial. Unlike at a traditional burial, they all sing hymns as they proceed slowly to the grave. This is strange to a follower of African religion because the solemnity of his burial is characterised by silence. From the hut, the carriers of the corpse wrapped in an animal skin, "march slowly, without a word, men and women following them silently to the spot of burial" (Junod 1962: 138).

These conflicting religious beliefs and practices usually come into prominence when Christians and African traditionalists have converged for a funeral. If the dead person was a Christian, he is expected to be buried with an appropriate church service. The funeral is then conducted by a minister of the church to which the deceased belonged. The absence of corresponding practices like the singing of hymns and Bible reading in African religion, makes a non-Christian to wonder, be apathetic and even disapprove of such a funeral. To him it is unthinkable for music to be an accompaniment of a burial ceremony. The silence that dominates a traditionalist's funeral does not prevail here. At Sepheu's Christian funeral, a non-Christian Mokhine, deems it necessary to refer to *moruti* as *'sefotle'* (rude person) because of his Christian pronouncement, especially the sermon which was based on Psalm 37: verse 5. One of the hymns

sung during the burial ceremony, which is believed to fortify Christians in their belief, is viewed as '*mafotle*' (rudeness). This is a hymn common to Christians of various denominations, which appears to be indispensable and integral to Christian burial ceremonies:

*Se u nkadimileng sona
Ha u re ke se busetse,
Le teng ke tla leka ho re:
Ho lokile* (1982, hymn 110).

(What you have lent to me
If you say bring back
I will always try to say:
It is all right).

Among Christians, life belongs to God. If He decides to take it away, believers should always appreciate the life-span of the deceased, no matter how short it may have been. To say '*ka mo Morena a dirang, go fela go lokile*' (what God does is right) is a bitter pill to a traditional African who still regard it as unacceptable for a family to be deprived of a young, childless member. Young people are not expected to die because their mission of procreating is not yet accomplished. Besides procreation, the man, before his death, is believed to have already buried his parents. Sepheu's untimely death is thus seen as a contradiction to this traditional belief. His death is a blow to his father who is now expected to bury him, instead of being buried by him. The father resultantly sobs over this tragic incident:

*Mola ke bego ke re ngwana o tla mpoloka, kganthe nna ke
tla boloka yena. [O šitwa go iša pele go feleletša polelo,
pelo e a kgaoga, megokgo e a sekaseka]* (Mminele 1968:
3).

(I thought the child will bury me, but instead I am the one
burying him. [He can't go further to complete his speech, he
becomes overwhelmed by grief and sobs uncontrollably].

In *Mahlodi*, Mokhine stands as one of the characters abhorring Christianity and

its practices:

*Ee, ba a opela, fela mantšu a ba a opelago a reng?
Monna, le Mantshegele ge re tla re ke wona, re kwa ka
difela (Mminele 1968: 8).*

(Yes, they are singing, but what do the lyrics mean? Even the goodness of 'Mantshegele' is determined by its lyrics.)

Here, the Christian hymn is compared to a traditional leisurely song, *mantshegele*, which is sung by elderly people at beer-drinking. Traditionalists perceive the song as being better because one can easily follow its lyrics and their meaning. Mokhine's attitude towards Christianity undeniably shows that there is no correlation between the two religions or even cultures. The divergence of the cultures in this regard places the two parties at extreme points from where they will oppose each other in matters of this nature.

Traditional Africans fail to come to grips with Western music or songs, because they regard a song as a means of communication where a singer communicates his thoughts to his audience, either literally or in a subtle way. Music, both vocal and instrumental, has always played a very important part in the life of an African. A song ought to be understandable and relevant to the situation, if not, its irrelevancy makes other people doubt the wisdom of the singer. Among traditional Africans, it is inconceivable to accept death, especially of a young person, by saying 'go lokile' (it's alright). Mokhine seals up his abhorrence of Christianity when saying:

*Nna le ge yo mongwe wa bana ba ka goba ngwana wešu,
a ka re ke ba lejakane, nka itshošetša kuwa (Mminele
1968: 9).*

(Should any of my children or my parents' children decides to be a Christian, I would spit out).

The irrelevance of the song has led to increased hatred of the Christian religion.

Lejakane (a Christian) has no place in the heart of Mokhine, to the extent that a Christian in sight incites him to spit. 'Go *itshošetša*' (to spit) is an indication of his total rejection of Christianity. Mokhine's tolerance has finally come to a peak, and the spitted saliva will in a way symbolise the abhorred practice he had previously stomached or tolerated. He will not even care where and how the ejected saliva lands - 'go *itshošetša kuwa*'. Christianity has thus been turned into a reject here. Moreover, Mokhine goes a step further to promote his African religion over Christianity in this manner:

Le iphalelwa ke rena re ipolokelago ka setu, le yo a nago le bošaedi re se ke re bo bona ka gore o itshwaretše bjona ka teng ga gagwe. Bjale lena le senya ka go ntšhetša mašaedi a a lena molaleng (Mminele 1968: 9).

(We are better than you because we bury in silence, even a wicked person cannot be exposed for his wickedness is concealed in him. You make a mistake of exposing your wickedness).

Moruti has revealed Christian weaknesses through his speech and hymns and as a result of that, he and his fellow Christians command no more respect from their non-Christian counterparts. Mokhine's utterances in this instance, are a public expression of disapproval of Christianity where the main target is its agent, *moruti*, because of being at the forefront of a Christian ceremony. The gap between the two religions in matters of this nature is wide; hence the conflict. Regarding the silence characterising a traditional African burial, Schapera (1946: 423) says:

Only when an individual is a rigid adherent of tribal religion and has not consented to the often nominal conversion, does the burial take on an utterly alien character devoid of any prayer or song.

The burial rites of the two religions differ, but it is not true that the African one is devoid of a prayer. The prayer is there, although its performance is not directed

to *Modimo*, but *badimo*. In this instance the spirits are beseeched to welcome that of the deceased in their world. Like in Christian religion, there is also a belief in eternal life among Africans who follow African religion. Kgobe (1997: 44) affirms this fact by saying:

To us survival after death is not a matter of argument or speculation, it is an axiom of life.

After the burial all mourners are expected to return to the stricken household. Just like after a traditional African funeral, they also dip their hands in large dishes of water placed outside, next to the entrance of the compound. The water is not medicated, but is believed to be capable of 'washing away' the pollution of death. This ritual is not of western origin, but Christianised Africans still observe it rigorously. The special meat (*mogoga*) of the slaughtered special beast (*h/oboša*) is then shared on the spot by all attendants. A black beast is preferred to be slaughtered because blackness is associated with mourning.

Sepheu's death is the bottom line of cultural differences in the play. It has created a fertile ground for Christians and traditionalists to wage a social war against each other. It is because of this death that the traditional Phadime and his associates want the Christian Mahlodi to indulge in traditional African practices like mourning observances, cleansing and the levirate union. The issue of a Christian being expected to take part in traditional practices is, therefore, a problem to be resolved in this play.

4.2.2 Mourning Observances

Africans are fortunate because attempts by the missionaries to stamp out the so-called heathen practices never fully succeeded. Many of the devotees of African tradition, especially the older people, took it upon themselves to conceal some of these practices from the self-appointed censors. Most have outlived Christianisation; they are still discernible today and their observances resemble

those of the past. Schapera (1940: 310) remarks about these surviving observances in this way:

While the beliefs and practices relating to the dead have so greatly changed, the old mourning ceremonies have survived relatively intact.

When the burial ceremony is over, all the close relatives of the deceased "are considered to be in a condition of darkness (*sefifi*)" (Mönnig 1967: 141). The surviving spouse in particular, is believed to be in a condition that necessitates purification rites. A family doctor is thus summoned to purge her of the ritual impurity which can contaminate others with the disease called *makgoma*. Other mourning practices involved include the shaving of hair by all relatives and the wearing of blackened aprons by the surviving spouse.

Even Africans who are members of the church adhere faithfully to most if not all of the traditional mourning rites. As a sign of mourning a widow and her children will all have their heads shaved by a senior female relative. The surviving partner will thereafter be provided with black clothes to wear for a period of a year. This is the case with Mahlodi, who, despite her Christian religion, also has to abide by the dictates of African tradition. She has to wear black clothes while her hair is also cut. This is the conventional modern outward manifestation of bereavement among Africans. The hair is cut once for the entire mourning period. It is only at the cleansing ceremony (*go boola*) that it is cut for the second time, thereby purging the surviving spouse. However, the Christian Mahlodi undermines and violates this mourning observance by cutting her hair twice before the actual time. This brings her into a serious conflict with her in-laws and relatives, who fail to understand how she can do so because it is traditionally believed to be a taboo to do that. What Mahlodi has done is, therefore, an insult to traditional African culture and it is difficult for the traditionalists to stomach it. Their frustration about this issue is echoed by Mphogolle when he says:

Taba ya ngwana yola e sa ntletše dimpa. Ge o bona ke ile tuu, ke sa e nagana. Ga e kgone go lekana ka mo mafahleng a ka (Mminele 1968: 14).

(What that child has done, is still a confusion to me. Quiet as I am, I am still pondering over it. I cannot stomach it.)

Mahlodi initially complied positively to the delight of the traditionalists when she was expected to mourn the death of Sepheu. What is tearing the traditionalists asunder at this stage is her unexpected infringement of mourning observances. In terms of traditional African culture the period to mourn is not yet over. The traditionalists are furthermore perplexed to hear that Mahlodi is also threatening to take off the black clothes before the proper time. All these come as a shock to the traditionalists who start admonishing Mahlodi so that their culture can remain intact.

4.2.3 The Cleansing Ceremony - 'Go Boola'

At the end of the period of abstention (a year), a ceremony called '*go boola*' or '*go ntšha setšhila*' is held, which finally reconstitutes the relationships of the group. All the mourners have to attend in order to have their hair shaved again. The family doctor is once more invited to cleanse (*go hlapiša*) the widow in medicated water again. Her blackened aprons are also washed and turned for normal positioning. A beast is slaughtered for sacrificial purpose at the grave of the deceased. In his prayer, the officiator will beseech the deceased for the ceremony to be performed in peace and good understanding. Schapera (1946: 424) maintains that Christians also slaughter beasts, but they discard some elements of traditional customs like the invocation of the ancestors, for which they substitute by the reading of the Bible. This ceremony marks the first reappearance of the chief mourner in coloured clothes. The mourning clothes are given to an old woman past child-bearing age, to burn to ashes.

Phadime also realises, after a year, that time is ripe for his family to be cleansed.

It is customary among Africans that before such a ceremony could kick off, close relatives should come together to share ideas as to when and how the ceremony should take place. The truth of this idea is contained in Phadime's speech, when talking to Mphegolle:

Mohwaduba, nna ke be ke re lebaka le fihlile la gore bjale re tloše ditšhila tše le rena re ke re swane le batho ba bangwe (Mminele 1968: 12).

(Mohwaduba, I think time is ripe for us to purge ourselves of these impurities so that we can be like other people).

That death 'dirties' people is true among Africans. Affected people are easily distinguishable because they are not the same as the others - they are dirty. They feel alienated from the rest. When time is ripe, its external manifestations need to be discarded for mourners to make a fresh reappearance into normal life.

Phadime and his relatives find it difficult to determine a suitable date for the ceremony because it is imperative for both Mahlodi (the Christian) and Lepadime (the traditionalist) to attend. The group is not yet certain whether Lepadime will manage to leave his place of work and arrive timeously on the Saturday. On the other hand, the group is worried about Mahlodi's regular attendance of church every Sunday. The worrying factor in this instance is whether she would comply when requested to abstain from church and attend the ceremony on that particular Sunday. Religious differences are posing a problem again here. The traditionalists find themselves in a predicament because they are worried about a suitable day for the ceremony. The real bilateral conflict starts when Mahlodi is approached for help regarding the determination of the date. Her response stuns and incites the traditionalists into action when she says:

A go kwaneng lena. Ge e le ka thokong ya ka gona, le a

tseba gore rena badumedi go tše bjalo ga re tsene. Le ge e ka ba ka Mokibelo goba Sontaga moo ke taba ya lena. Ge e le nna nka se kgone go ba le lena moo morerong woo wa mohuta woo (Mminele 1968: 13).

(Reach an agreement alone. On my side, you know that we Christians do not take part in such things. Whether it will be on Saturday or Sunday, that is your own issue. As for me I won't be with you at such a ceremony.

The widow has spoken out her mind. She is determined not to comply with the demands of African tradition by completely isolating herself from the practices, and all these misunderstandings surface because of her religious convictions. Her acceptance of Christianity makes her denounce and frown upon some of the traditional African customs. After the death of Sepheu, she complied positively with African dictates of cutting the hair short, wearing black clothes as well as spending the long and tedious mourning period, without any engagement in sexual intercourse. Now that the period is to be terminated ceremoniously, she all of a sudden becomes apathetic and unco-operative. The root cause of her non-compliance is the knowledge that the ceremony is going to entail the invocation of ancestral spirits and other customs not in conformity with Christian principles. As may be expected, Mahlodi's traditional relatives are not pleased with her attitude and behaviour in this regard. This disagreement and resultant tension between the two parties is viewed as another point of commencement of the conflict between traditional and modern social concepts in the play. Her conversion to Christianity has resulted in the emergence of a new ideology within the family, which is at this stage in opposition to African tradition.

Christianity has changed Mahlodi into an arrogant and insolent person who contravenes the mourning observances as her apathetic attitude towards the cleansing ceremony also reveals. Her contravention of the mourning observances is revealed in the following passage:

Mašela a maso wona ke tla a apola, le ge e le bosasa nka

no a apola. Ge e le moriri wona, bonang hlogo ya ka še, (o rola tuku) ke kgale ke šetše ke o ripile. Le gona go tloga ka lebaka lela ke šetše ke o ripile gabedi (Mminele 1968: 13).

(I will take the black clothes off, even tomorrow, I can take them off. Regarding the hair, look at my head (she takes off the head-cloth), it is long that I have cut it short. Since that time, I have cut it short twice).

Traditional African customs are being contravened here. From her utterances, one can deduce that what she has done and proposes to do are possible to be carried out individually and independently of any formal ceremony. Her actions thus pose a direct social challenge to the traditional elders, who are bound to be angered by this contemptuous act. Their tradition is being treaded upon. The dignity of Phadime's family is falling apart, and he is bound to act immediately in order to save his image and that of his family. The need to preserve African culture undistorted, prompts Mphegolle to eventually say:

Wena Phadime o na le pelo e telele. Ge e ka be e le nna, lehono go be go tla swa legong gwa šala molora. Ga ke kgone go kwešiša gore ngwana a re fetole ka mokgwa wo (Mminele 1968: 13).

(You Phadime have got perseverance. If it were me, today there was going to be chaos. I fail to understand why a child can answer us this way).

Mphegolle's tritagonistic role here plays a vital part in urging Phadime into action. He has to prove his manhood by confronting Mahlodi, the protagonist. Phadime's antagonism towards Mahlodi is likely to heighten the tension in the play which will eventually bring about the resolution of the problem. For Phadime, the challenge would be vital and necessary for the sake of retaining his parental authority and maintaining his culture. Traditional African culture is at stake here; it is likely to be washed away and be replaced by Western culture. The unwarranted behaviour of Mahlodi needs to be successfully challenged and curbed for the sake of the dignity of Phadime's family, as well as for his esteem

in society. Mphogolle is particularly worried about her tendency of challenging the elders by way of interrogating and entering into dialogue with them. A woman is traditionally expected to accept wholeheartedly what she is being told.

Phadime is thus urged, as the head of the family, to take disciplinary action against her. Mahlodi, on the other hand, is prepared not to succumb to traditional needs and dictates. She is determined to push her ideology forward to, if possible, eventually override traditionalism, hence the rising tension.

The apathetic attitude of Mahlodi towards the envisaged ceremony, which has become a nightmare to Phadime, results in a schism within the family and relatives. The traditionalists have started organising themselves into a powerful front, strong enough to oppose Mahlodi and her new ideology. Phadime is seen with Kgalema in the private courtyard, seriously debating this thorny issue. This is a serious and embarrassing obstacle that needs to be rooted out, otherwise it will be a precedent to those who would also wish to deviate, but still fear cultural repercussions. The ceremony, which was scheduled for Saturday, could not materialise because of her absence. Her social opponents rally against her in an attempt to bring her back to the acceptable African way of living. Phadime, who has some premonitions that they won't succeed, has to be assured of victory by Kgalema in the following words:

Se tshwenyega Phogole, re tla di bona. Motse wo o agilwe ke banna. Re ka se kgone go lesetša segagaborena se senyega re se lebeletše, re swanetše go ema senna (Mminele 1968: 19).

(Do not worry Phogole, we will see how to come out. This village has been built by men. We cannot afford to leave our tradition being destroyed in our presence, we must stand firm).

It is a feature of Africanism that politically and socially, men are in control. It is a taboo for a woman to scorn their power by doing as she wishes. She ought

to be submissive and abide by what men have decided upon. For African culture to survive undistorted, drastic steps have to be taken to curb any such tendency. From the above extract, it is evident that for Kgalema to call upon the traditionalists to stand firm, it is mainly because it would be a disgrace for men to dance to the tune of a woman. In order to avoid that embarrassment, they have to fight tooth and nail to subdue her.

4.2.4 The Levirate Custom

In terms of African tradition, death does not terminate marriage. Even when the period of mourning is over, a widow's attachment to her husband's family continues. Schapera (1938: 164) emphasises this point by saying:

A woman's dependence upon her husband and his family is not severed when she becomes a widow.

According to Ember *et al* (1973: 152), to sustain marriage, in many African societies, the person whom an individual is obliged to marry after the death of his or her spouse, is often determined by cultural rules. In the case of the death of a male spouse a secondary union known as levirate is entered into. This is the way in which the woman is passed, through the custom of '*go tsenela*' (to enter into the hut), into the care of a close male relative of her late husband. She is ceremoniously allotted one, preferably a younger brother to the deceased.

Various scholars define the levirate custom in different ways. Kupa's definition is both clear and embracive enough to surpass the others:

Levirate system is the custom whereby in an event of impotence or early death of a man, his younger brother substitutes him in order to bear children for him and his family-group (1980: 14).

From the above excerpt, one can deduce that not only death leads to secondary unions, but impotence also necessitates it. As child-bearing is extremely important in marriage, impotence is also covered by levirate. Extinction of the lineage should be guarded against at all times. This knowledge prompts Phadime to pose the question:

Re tla mo neela mang? (Mminele 1968: 14).

(Whom will she be given to?)

The question was asked when the mourning period was over, and the cleansing ceremony imminent. A levir has to be appointed to revive (*go tsoša lapa*) Sepheu's family.

The formal union of the levir and the surviving spouse is accompanied by a formalised ceremony. Such a ceremony usually incorporates sacrifices to the ancestors, where beer is the medium of sacrifice. It may be accompanied by a slaughtered goat, sheep or cattle, although in some instances, beer is considered sufficient by itself.

The finalisation of the preparation of beer implies the commencement of the ceremony. In *Mahlodi*, the ceremony is spread over two days; the first being for the cleansing ceremony and the second for the implementation of the levirate custom. When the first day (Saturday) dawns, Mahlodi, around whom the ceremony is centred, is nowhere to be found. She has sneaked to *moruti's* place. Phadime's family is left in a predicament. He is so embarrassed that, to avoid many teasing questions and complaints, he resorts to being indifferent (*go ithumula*). He has been emotionally drained because of the actions of his Christianised daughter-in-law. Christianity is behind Mahlodi's escape because she fears to be involved in traditional African practices which are incompatible with her new religion. Phadime's imperviousness prompts Kgalema to instead,

pose the following questions to Morabane:

E, a ke le mpotšeng gabotse wena mokgekolo. Na tše le di dirago mo lapeng le ke tša ba kae? Mong wa morero wo o kae? Kganthe lehono go boolwa mang? Ke ra Mahlodi (Mminele 1968: 17).

(Tell me, you old lady. Where on earth have you found what is being done in this family? Where is the person for whom the ceremony has been prepared? Who is being cleansed today? I am referring to Mahlodi).

The premonitions about non-compliance by Mahlodi that Phadime had before, have become true. His mental conflict, caused by utter frustration, makes him wild and cheeky. He is fully aware of what other people will say regarding the situation - '*batho ba tla reng*' (what will the people say?) He is bound to be frustrated because things are likely not to go the African way. What Mahlodi has done is totally alien to African culture.

The family-group members have to wait until late in the evening for Mahlodi to arrive. This is a real setback for the group which eventually concludes that the two occasions be executed simultaneously on that evening, fearing that on Sunday things might get worse:

Ge re ka re re letela bosasa, gona ke taba ye e lego molaleng ya gore o tla be a se mo. Ge a bile a padile lehono, e le Mokibelo, Sontaga gona a ka se re phankga. Ke letšatši la gagwe la go ya kerekeng (Mminele 1968: 18).

(If we wait until tomorrow, it is obvious that she won't be around. Now that she has failed to turn up today on Saturday, on Sunday she won't. That is the day on which she goes to church).

Here once again Christianity is portrayed as the source of conflict between the traditionalists and the Christian, Mahlodi. Phadime and his fellow traditional

relatives like Kgalema and Mphegolle are compelled to change their schedule because of Mahlodi's religion which is not in conformity with African tradition. For the sake of saving the pride of Phadime's family and maintaining African culture undistorted, the activities of the two days have to be contracted on one evening. Despite this concession, Mahlodi's standpoint remains unchanged - she is still unwilling to take part in 'go *boola*' ritual.

The cleansing ritual is traditionally expected to be followed by the handing-over ceremony. For an ideal and acceptable hand-over to take place, the relatives must converge in the courtyard, having placed a large pot of beer in the centre. The question as to who should 'enter the hut' is something that has already been discussed and finalised by the elderly, and that being the case, convergence is just a formality. For the occasion to run smoothly, the widow is also expected to have been informed accordingly. She will offer the first gourd of beer (*bjala bja legwahla*) to the man to take over as levir and the man is culturally bound to accept the offer. Undoubtedly, this will be an immediate younger brother of the deceased, the one preferred and agreed-upon by the relatives before. In the case of Mahlodi, Lepadime is the obvious choice to revive Sepheu's family. The arrangement is made irrespective of the fact that Lepadime is already married:

Le ge a šetše a nyetše, ke yena a swanetšego go tsoša lapa la mogolo wa gagwe (Mminele 1968: 20).

(Even if he is already married, he is the one to 'raise' the seed in his elder brother's family).

With regard to the performance of the ritual, a large degree of flexibility has been noted. According to Schapera (1940: 317), a Motswana widow is not obliged by tradition to accept her late husband's younger brother as her guardian. Any close relative-in-law, whom she likes and who is also willing 'to enter the hut', can be chosen. The man thus selected has henceforth the acknowledged right and duty to cohabit with the widow, even if he himself is married to someone

else.

In the case of Northern Sotho speakers, an elderly person among the family-group members, will offer a gourd of beer to the prospective levir. His acceptance of the offer implies acceptance of the widow. The performance of the ritual is also accompanied by a word of censure from the elder himself. In *Mahlodi*, when offering Lepadime beer, the elder, Potlaki, remarks:

Tšea bjala bjo. O a o bona mogopo wo? Ke wona mogopo wa mogolwago. Rena botatago re re o swanetše go hlokomela gore mogopo wo o se ke wa oma (Mminele 1968: 20).

(Take this beer. Do you see this wooden bowl? It belongs to your elder brother. We, your elders, say you must guard against its dryness).

The pot of beer, which in this case is referred to as '*mogopo*' (a wooden dish), symbolises normal life. The ritual aims at reviving (*go tsoša*) normality that ended with the death of the husband. Somebody has to take over the deceased's role, for life to go on. Should there be nobody to take over, the dish will get dry and that will be symbolic of the cessation of life. This conception of life correlates aptly with the idiom: '*go timelwa ke mollo*' (to have one's fire extinguished), which implies the death of the husband in a family. To prevent the wooden dish from getting dry, a widow has to be allotted a levir. Marital status in this instance is never a hindrance. Should the levir be unmarried at this stage, he will still be free to seek and marry a woman of his choice.

The socio-political superiority of an African man is also discernible in matters of this nature in that they take decisions separately from the womenfolk. After the decision has been taken, one from their midst has to go and inform the women of their decision.

After the male relatives have decided *Mahlodi*'s fate separately from their female

counterparts, Kgalema is requested to communicate the decision to the womenfolk. Mahlodi is then summoned to appear before the female elders to be informed of the decision that Lepadime is the one 'to enter the hut'. Because of the religion (Christianity) that she has adopted, premonitions are rife among the elders that she may resent the decision. Among those who are highly perturbed by this issue, is Phadime, the father-in-law. He shows his uneasiness before Kgalema can depart to inform the females about the decision by saying:

Ba tsebiše re tle re bone ka mo re ka tšwago ka gona. Fela nna ke na le pelaelo. Ga ke bone gabotse, nke re ka se apee ra buduša gabotse (Mminele 1968: 19).

(Inform them so that we may see how to come out. However, I have a suspicion. I doubt, it appears we won't succeed).

This is a thorny issue to Phadime. In an attempt to channel Mahlodi to submission in order to avoid the envisaged embarrassment, Mongatane says:

Rena ga go se re ka se bolelago ge go šetše go boledišane bona beng ba motse (Mminele 1968: 21).

(We have nothing to say if the elders have already taken a decision).

Mongatane's words above affirm a conventional notion among traditional Africans, namely that what has been decided upon by men cannot be altered. What is expected from the female juniors is just to accept and abide by such a decision. Mongatane tries to convince her by saying that it is out of love that the male relatives have reached this decision. They do not want to see her being helpless and destitute, but instead, someone should look after her and maintain the family. The female elders regard the decision as acceptable because there is humanity in it, and Mahlodi is therefore considered fortunate.

However, all the parental advices fall on deaf ears. Mahlodi exposes a defiant

attitude on the issue of 'go tsenela' custom - as a Christian convert, she regards it as against religious principles. The custom has been forbidden by the church to its members because it is considered as one of the heathen practices of traditional Africans. Mahlodi thus raises an objection against the decision, which, in terms of Christian principles, is justified:

Ke go kwele mma, fela nna ke bona gore ditaba tša bakgalabje ba nka se di kgone. Lepadime o na le lapa la gagwe leo a swanetšego go le hlokomela. Nna ke bona nka se dumele taba yeo (Mminele 1968: 22).

(I have heard you mother, but I think I won't accept the decision of these male elders. Lepadime has got his own family to look after. I won't agree with the decision).

Mahlodi's response leaves the womenfolk bewildered because it is a taboo in terms of African culture to challenge or argue the decision of male elders. Whether Lepadime is married or not, she is traditionally obliged to accept him as a levir. Traditionalists view this behaviour as disobedience and believe that the challenger is likely to experience mishap in life. The women's various attempts to persuade her to submission are all futile. They eventually become disgruntled, and to make matters worse, she tells them that she is not scared to stand in front of the male elders and air her discontent about the issue. From the African point of view, this is an extreme form of moral decay to which Maphale reacts in this way:

A rena ra lahlega, a ke sona sejakane? (Mminele 1968: 22).

(Oh, how lost we are, is this the way Christianity operates?)

It is because of Christianity that Mahlodi is behaving in this fashion and this indicates clearly that the Christian religion has played a paramount role in distorting African culture. Mahlodi is here defying African customs because of

her religious conviction. She is eventually taken to the male elders where she still proves to be firmly rooted in Christian religion by boldly referring the male elders to the ceremony where she was tying a knot with her late husband, Sepheu, in front of *moruti*. She recalls vividly the Christian message entailed in the sermon, and part of what has then been said has now become a reality:

Bjalo ka kgonthe lehu ke le le re arogantše le Sepheu, gomme lena se bjalo le ratago go se dira, ka mantšu a mangwe, ke gore Sepheu ga se a arogana le nna. Bjale le fapana le sela ke se ennego pele ga dihlatse tša Bakriste le pele ga Modimo. Ke ka fao ke bonago gore nka se kgone go kwana le polelo yeo ya lena (Mminele 1968: 23).

(Now, truly death has separated us from Sepheu, and what you are trying to do now, in other words, implies that Sepheu is not separated from me. Now you are against what I have sworn for in front of Christian witnesses and before God. That is why I cannot agree with what you are saying.)

The Biblical sermon on that day was centred around the Christian norm that 'only death will separate you'. This is a direct contradiction of African belief that death does not end marriage. Among traditional Africans divorce is totally unthinkable; hence the institution of secondary unions in marriage like levirate and sororate, to perpetuate it. To the Christians, a widow, especially if still young enough to be able to pursue another marriage, is free to go her own way after the death of her spouse. Mahlodi here is involved in an argument with men in an attempt to free herself from the 'bondage' of African tradition. She aligns herself with women of the West who strive to be on par with their male counterparts. This feminist attitude is abominable among Africans who still cherish their tradition. In addition, it is indeed strange for a woman to confront a male person in dialogue.

The repetitive mentioning of *moruti's* name in Mahlodi's speech literary puts Christianity and African tradition at loggerheads. *Moruti* is accused of luring

people into his own religion. This makes Mahlodi, according to traditionalists, to look down upon her parents - only *moruti* is worth listening to and respecting. *Moruti* is viewed as an impediment towards the performance and perpetuation of African culture. For a while, the focus of the conflict shifts from Mahlodi to him. He is seen as the spoiler and intruder in African culture because he is the only person whose advice is heeded by Mahlodi. Now that controversy has surfaced in Phadime's family, he (*moruti*) assumes the position and role of a parent over Mahlodi. His advice strengthens Mahlodi not to look back, but to forge ahead with her chosen way of life. On the side of the traditionalists, such advice will fuel the already tense situation for they won't easily surrender their main objective of maintaining African culture intact. Mahlodi's apathy to traditional practices is a jubilation to *moruti* who remarks:

Se nna ke se thabelago ke se wena o se dirilego. O laeditše gabotse se wena o se dumelago. Batho ba bantši ge mola ba re ba a dumela, ge meleko ye mebjalo e etla, ba akgofa go tlogela tumelo yeo ya bona (Mminele 1968: 28).

(What I rejoice at is what you have done. You have shown explicitly what you believe in. Many believers who happen to find themselves in such temptations, backslide easily).

Moruti here encourages Mahlodi to be a strong and ardent Christian. The battle against her social opponents is bound to intensify because of advice of this nature. Phadime is expected to be haunted by the firm stand that Mahlodi has taken. This tritagonistic role of *moruti* helps to heighten the tension in the play. The situation is now volatile; the determination of the victor between Christianity and African tradition is imminent.

Moruti advises and guides Mahlodi to go through this conflict situation unchanged and this earns him insults and all kinds of verbal abuse from the traditionalists. The transcendence of conflict from Mahlodi to *moruti* is entrenched in Mphegolle's words when saying:

Bjale go itšhupa ka noši gore rena ga re selo mo go ngwana yo. Motho yo a theetšago lentšu la gagwe ke yena moruti yoo wa gagwe. Le a mo kwa gore o eme ka mantšu a moruti e sego a lena (Mminele 1968: 23).

(Now it is self-evident that we are nothing to this child. A person whose word is heeded is *moruti*. You can also hear that she stands by his words not yours).

The conflict between African tradition and Christianity has reached an alarming stage here. This is a crucial point where one ideology has to triumph over the other. Will Mahlodi's obstinacy triumph over the conservativeness of Phadime and his fellow combatants? To the traditionalists, victory over Mahlodi is not in sight. They see no way of deterring her from her conviction. They finally resort to disownment as the last kick of a dying horse. Phadime renounces her by saying:

Ge e le Mahlodi yena, sa gagwe e no ba gore a ye go moruti yoo wa gagwe. Ge e le ka mo lapeng la ka gona ga ke sa mo nyaka. Le yena le mo kwele ka noši gore o re o ntšhitšwe ke lehu (Mminele 1968: 26).

(Regarding Mahlodi, hers is just to go to that *moruti* of hers. I do not want her anymore in my family. You have heard from her that she has been driven out by death).

Disownment in critical matters of this nature usually aims at deterring the offender from pursuing what is perceived as an unjust course in life. Phadime, in this case, wants Mahlodi to denounce her Western lifestyle. Fear of the undesired repercussions of being disowned, is used as a tool to bring Mahlodi back to African culture. However, even disownment does not bring about the desired results to Phadime and other traditionalists - Mahlodi is never deterred from her standpoint. The traditionalists thus have no chance of victory in this social struggle; theirs is just to capitulate and let Mahlodi lead her own Christian life.

On the whole, one is tempted to conclude that the cleansing ceremony has played a vital role in testing the strength of the two opposing parties. Each is determined to emerge as the winner of this socio-cultural struggle. Mahlodi, on whose side is *moruti*, remains firm in her belief. She has taken the decision alone (individualism) not to take part in traditional African practices. Her refusal is, however, grounded on her Christian belief. It is only after this refusal, when victory is clearly out of sight, that her opponents resort to violent means of defeating her. On her return from church on Sunday evening, she finds her in-laws cross. She is denied the chance of cooking and drawing water because she has been told never to touch their pots and tins. Her blankets and clothes are all burnt to ashes and she remains with only one tattered blanket, with which she wraps her body on her way back to *moruti's* place. This is the punishment Phadime deems fit to apply to the disobedient Mahlodi, but to his dismay, even this does not bring about a positive change.

4.2.5 Remarriage

Nowadays, a modern widow may, if she so wishes, go back to her own people. According to Schapera (1938: 167), this is fairly common with relatively young women, without or still capable of bearing children. Should she marry again, her new husband also has to part with *magadi* for her, otherwise her new children will still be regarded as those of her first husband and could be claimed by his people.

The hardships that Mahlodi consequently suffers, eventually forces her out of Phadime's family, into *moruti's* family for refuge. Her departure is a blessing in disguise for she ultimately gets married to Masilela's nephew, who is a Christian convert as well. Her remarriage is initially not approved of by her opponents, especially Phadime. Upon hearing that Masilela's nephew wants to marry Mahlodi, *moruti* immediately sends out one of the church elders to Phadime, requesting him for a discussion on this issue at his (*moruti*) place. Phadime,

however, declines as he feels that Mahlodi is no more a member of his family, hence his remarks:

Ba ntshenyeditše, ke lesego la batho, bjale ba sa fela ba rata go bapala ka nna (Mminele 1968: 37).

(They have messed me up, people are laughing at me and they still want to make a fool of me).

Mahlodi's refusal to enter into a levirate union and her ultimate departure to *moruti's* place have greatly disturbed Phadime. People are laughing at him because he has failed in his duty as the head of the family to exercise authority over Mahlodi. She has gone her own way and he has remained with a dented dignity. As a traditionalist, it is difficult for Phadime to accept why Mahlodi intends to part with the family-group into which she was married, and to which she is bound by *magadi*. This is tantamount to divorce after death as is viewed as a contradiction of what is being purported by the Northern Sotho proverb: '*Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*', meaning no divorce for a married woman. One is also not surprised to hear the stunned Morabane, when hearing of Mahlodi's remarriage news, duly enquiring:

Magadi? E, o tla ntšhetšwa magadi la bobedi? (Mminele 1968: 41).

(*Magadi? Will magadi be paid for her for the second time?*)

Remarriage has now reared as a source of conflict between Christianity and traditionalism. Like with the other previous issues of contention, Mahlodi is behind the new source of conflict. Should the conflicting parties fail to reach an amicable solution, accusations will be levelled against each other. Schapera (1940: 317) stresses the seriousness of this state of affairs among the Batswana by saying:

Should the widow refuse to accept any of her relatives-in-

law, they [relatives] would regard her as a dog.

To a European person, levirate and sororate customs are heathen practices. The missionaries considered them as heathenism and “they went to the extent of pressing colonial administrators to legislate against them” (Kupa 1980: 42).

Plans for Mahlodi’s remarriage, nevertheless, go ahead, and *magadi* are eventually paid for her for the second time. She changes her previous surname to a new one as well and severs her ties with Phadime’s family because she has to move away and stay with her new husband.

4.3 RESOLUTION

Phadime has been summoned by *moruti* to his place in connection with Mahlodi’s remarriage, but finds it difficult to finalise the matter with *moruti* on his own because he is accustomed to get the views of his male relatives regarding such issues. He, therefore, puts it to *moruti* that he is bound to go and consult with the relatives.

Before his departure, Phadime raises his discontent about Mahlodi’s remarriage. *Moruti* is blamed for the current state of affairs, especially for having made it impossible for the traditionalists to perform their customs. Phadime still maintains that *moruti* is behind Mahlodi’s disenchantment and non-compliance with traditional practices:

.... *fela molato o tloga o dirilwe ke wena, moruti. Rena re be re ratile go phetha segagaborena ka ngwana yo wa rena gomme wena o mo ganeditše. Le bjalo le ge ke re ke di iša go banna ga ke kgolwe gore taba ye ya gago e tla tsena ditsebeng tša bona. A ke o bone, ngwana o mo, fela ga a ke a kganyoga gore a ka tla a re hlola boroko ka gae* (Mminele 1968: 39).

(You are the one who has done wrong, *moruti*. We wanted to perform our tradition with this child of ours and you have prevented her. Even now when I say I am taking the matter to my fellow male relatives, I do not believe that what you are saying will be accepted. Just have a look, here is the child with you, and she does not even think of paying us a visit at home).

Despite the accusations, Phadime still promises to discuss the matter with his fellow male traditionalists. As communalism is deeply rooted in Phadime, he cannot face life without his relatives' advice.

Back home, Phadime's wife, Morabane, is stunned to hear of the suitor who has parted with R140.00 as *magadi*. The revelation of the amount results in a change of attitude in Morabane. She feels she cannot let go of such a huge amount. This brings about a split in Phadime's family; the wife shows signs of individualism while the husband remains communalistic. Phadime, nevertheless, insists on seeking the advice of Potlaki and Kgalema but his wife opposes the decision on the ground that people from outside usually spoil other people's family matters. Clearly, money has resulted in a division within Phadime's family, with the wife moving away from communalism, and in so doing, she becomes the one who is violating African tradition at this stage. Morabane's remark to her husband indicates the rift between them:

Lehono gona, ge o bolela nabo nka se tloge mo go lena. Ga ke rate gore ba no senya lapa le la rena re fela re re go bolela banna. Ge ba ka rata go fetola ka mokgwa wo mongwe nna ke tla ba tsena ganong. Tša malapa a bona ba tseba go di thakga, gomme tša malapa mangwe ga ba ke ba rata ge di ka thakgega (Mminele 1968: 42).

(Today I won't move away when you talk with them. I don't want them to just destroy our family whilst we say only men should speak. If they can suggest the other way, I will interrupt them. They are able to put things right in their own families, but hate seeing things going the right way in other families).

The misunderstanding between Phadime and his wife becomes more pronounced when the wife even threatens to violate traditional African culture by mixing with male relatives when discussing the remarriage of Mahlodi. To make matters worse, she is determined to interrupt them, should anyone come up with a suggestion that would deprive her family of the disclosed amount of money. According to Morabane, Mahlodi's remarriage is a family matter and as such, the decision to give it a green light should come from her family alone.

At this state, Mphegolle, who has sided with Phadime all along, also appears to be surrendering to modern lifestyle. As a traditionalist, he is expected to back Phadime on his decision to denounce the remarriage, but that is not the case. Mahlodi's refusal to attend the cleansing ceremony and her denial of the levirate union have not yet slipped out of Mphegolle's mind. Having failed to subdue Mahlodi then, Mphegolle sees no chance for the traditionalists to succeed now, and therefore, he cautions Phadime not to be adamant:

Wena Phadime a ke o se senye sebaka mo tabeng ye. Le ge o ka hlwe o re o gopola go bitša banna nna ke bona e no ba gona go senya sebaka. Ga go motho yo a kwišišago taba ye, ge e se yo e mo itiyago hlogo. Le bona ge o ka ba botšiša ba tla no go botša lona leo la gore taba yeo ga se ya ka ya direga. Lehono nna ke re a e direge e tla be e le gona go thoma ka wena (Mminele 1968: 44).

(You, Phadime, please do not waste time on this issue. Even if you can say you think of calling upon the male relatives, I regard that as a waste of time. There is no one who understands this issue better than the affected person. If you can ask them, they will still tell you that that has never happened before. Today I say, let it happen, you will be the pioneer in this regard).

Phadime is thus left alone in his world of communalism since even Mphegolle is supportive of Mahlodi's individual decision to marry again. His advice here is that whatever the decision the male relatives may arrive at, it won't change

Mahlodi's decision. As a grown-up, Mahlodi is to be freed to do as she wishes, since that would be in accordance with her chosen religion.

The predicament in which Phadime finds himself, obliges him to sit down with his wife and talk the issue over. The wife still dismisses the idea of involving people from other families in matters concerning their own family. Phadime is cornered by the wife, and is obliged to understand the reality of the situation at last. His capitulation is entailed in the following words:

*Ntlele le dieta ka moo ke e wele ka gore ke šetše ke bona
gore ge ke se ka dira bjalo nka se bo pate lehono (Mminele
1968: 46).*

(Bring me my pair of shoes there so that I may go because
I have noticed that should I fail to do so, I won't sleep
today).

The solution of the problem in the play is in sight now. Phadime has surrendered to the pressure of the wife to individualise his family affairs. He is on his way to collect *magadi*, part of which has already been assigned to purchasing an ox-wagon. He comes back late in the evening to the relief of Morabane who is becoming impatient for his arrival. She showers him with praises for having acted in a manly manner: '*Aga, bjale ga o bone ge o dirile senna?*' (Mminele 1968: 47). The wife is bound to be jubilant because her advice has borne fruit.

The acceptance of *magadi* by Phadime has now opened the door for Mahlodi to marry again. In addition, her Christian lifestyle is now endorsed by the traditionalists and she is free to start a new life with another husband of her own choice. Death has separated her from Sepheu, and in terms of Christian principles, she is at liberty to marry again.

The ox-wagon that has been purchased becomes the source of employment and

wealth to Mahlodi's former social rivals while Christianity is viewed in a positive light. Phadime's family can now live and let live: '*Hleng ke mo bjale re bona re tla phela ra ba ra kgona go phediša ba bangwe*' (Mminele 1968: 55). Phadime, his brother-in-law and Kgalema are the beneficiaries in this undertaking. The peculiarity of Christianity is realised and the traditionalists start to regret the wrongs they have done, especially to *moruti* and Mahlodi. A message deriving from the play at this stage is that a person who has come of age should be allowed to follow his or her chosen path in life. He or she is supposed to be mature enough to decide his or her own destiny.

At the end of the play, the traditionalists acknowledge that it was due to a lack of both knowledge and wisdom that they committed such disgraceful deeds. The families of Phadime and Kgalema finally denounce African religion in favour of Christianity and Phadime and Kgalema go to *moruti*'s place to confess:

... Lehono ke gona re lemogilego gore re be re gapiwa ke leswiswi. Ka gona re kgopela tshwarelo le go rata go ineela mo kerekeng. Ge re realo re ra rena le malapa a rena. Re lemogile gore se lena le ikgafetšego sona se na le bophelo e le ruri. Ke se se re tlišitšego mo lehono (Mminele 1968: 61).

(Today we have realised that we were lost in darkness. We, therefore, ask for forgiveness and repentance. When saying so we are referring to us and our families as well. We have realised that what you are committed in is worthwhile indeed. That is what has brought us here today).

Phadime's eventual acceptance of Mahlodi's *magadi*, the apology that he tendered to *moruti* and Mahlodi for his evil utterances and deeds, together with his defection to Christianity, denote victory on the side of Mahlodi. Perseverance in a lifestyle which has initially been abhorred by African traditionalists, finally pays off. Her hard-earned victory illuminates the message that every individual is justified to seek and subscribe to a spiritual home that is

appealing to him or her. The subscriber is in turn expected to abide by the principles of that religion. To conclude: Christianity has triumphed over African tradition while individualism rather than communalism becomes the new way of living. All these changes have surfaced because of a death affecting a Christianised and modern individual - Mahlodi.

4.3 RÉSUMÉ

Like his contemporaries, Mminele's aim in writing a play of this kind was to divert traditional Africans from their original so-called heathen way of life to Christianity. To achieve this aim convincingly, he had to employ two characters with divergent socio-cultural influences in the play. Mahlodi, on the one hand, has been endowed with amazing human qualities of, *inter alia*, tolerance, perseverance and kind-heartedness. These values have enabled her to withstand the inhumanity of her social opponent, Phadime. To contrast the humility of Mahlodi, Phadime has been made to be harsh, authoritative and merciless. The playwright has thus succeeded in his use of the literary device of parallelism.

Mahlodi's road to victory was never an easy one. She had to outlive various hardships posed by Phadime. One of her nastiest experiences was to see herself spending the night out in the cold, in the courtyard, in full view of dogs and other nocturnal creatures. In addition to that, she was deprived of clothes and blankets, all of which she witnessed being burnt to ashes by Phadime. For the playwright to see his character through all these hardships, he had to endow her with perseverance and determination to withstand all these hardships. These misfortunes were never a deterrent to her in maintaining a Christian life.

Mahlodi's eventual departure to *moruti's* place because of the hardships that were descending on her, is viewed as a blessing in disguise. Her contact with another Christian convert and their ultimate marriage played a vital role in

changing the attitude of her opponent(s) towards her. Her suffering was brought to an end when her Christian lifestyle was finally recognised. Mahlodi is not bothered about the past; she has forgiven her tormentors. To Kgalema, this is unbelievable. The peculiarity of Christianity comes into limelight when Kgalema says:

*... Na batho ba dikgopolo tše bjalo ba di tšea kae ka gore
ba tswetšwe bjalo ka rena (Mminele 1968: 58).*

(Where do these people get such thoughts because they were born the same way like us?)

Traditionalism is finally nailed to death when the traditionalists unanimously agree to defect to Christianity with Phadime and Kgalema taking the decision first, and their wives not wanting to be left behind.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research was to identify and analyse cultural conflicts in the selected plays. In the course of the analysis, it became imperative for the researcher to outline various causes leading to the conflicts. The causes are of both modern and traditional nature, and the incongruence of these two social concepts helps to heighten tension in the plays. The individual ways in which each playwright attempted to resolve the conflicts in his respective play, formed an integral part of this study. Each playwright has succeeded in achieving a satisfactory resolution of conflicts in his play because each play eventually exposes its specific message. Following the analyses of the individual play, this study will conclude by comparing the plays to reveal certain findings noted in the course of the research.

5.1 COMPARISON OF THE PLAYS

This study has demonstrated the immensity of the impact of Western culture on its African counterpart. The ideological changes that have come into being, have necessitated literary writings among the 'absorbed Africans', which greatly reflect the supremacy of Western culture, especially the religious part of it. Traditional African practices and norms are being pushed aside, with Western ones coming on board. Modern youth attend school and church in modern clothes, they choose marriage partners of their own liking, and often voluntarily opt for remarriage after the death of their spouses, depending on their age.

In *Mahlodi* and *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, marriage is the source of conflict

between modern characters and traditional ones. The two camps oppose each other, the bone of contention being the choice of spouses. The traditionalists want to exercise their powers as elderly people in authority and the modernists, on the other hand, want to exercise their rights as individuals.

In *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, marriage has to take place in accordance with traditional African principles. Parental choice is supposed to override individual preference. Mmakoma's parents have taken a decision for her to marry Thapudi. Matsobane's association with her is, therefore, viewed as an expression of contempt, especially that they are not on good terms with his parents. Modern characters as portrayed by Mmakoma and Matsobane often disregard their conservative parents' social differences and forge ahead with their love relationships. The parents' refusal to bless the relationship does not deter them from going on. In the drama, the strength of their relationship is tested by involving tragic incidents on the way to the resolution of the conflict. Maesela, from the traditional family of Matuba, who has been employed as a stumbling-block in the love relationship, gets killed by Matsobane. Mmakoma still loves Matsobane irrespective of the grief and suffering he has caused in her family. The conservative parents of the two lovers, on the other hand, are still determined not to give the relationship a go-ahead. The death of the main character eventually crops up to resolve the long-standing conflict between Mmakoma and her parents. The conflict, which has resulted in Mmakoma's mental instability, has thus far taken its toll; Mmakoma's beauty and physique have deteriorated drastically. To her, life is no more worth living, and as such, she commits suicide. Instead of rejoicing in her death, her antagonist (Matuba) regrets the mistake he has made and the play ends with a clear indication that parental control has failed to triumph over individual preference.

In *Mahlodi*, modernity (Christianity) has been made to override traditionalism as well. Like in *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, in *Mahlodi*, for Christianity to eventually succeed, is hazardous. The death of Mahlodi's husband brings Christianity

head-on with African tradition. Mahlodi has to mourn the death for a particular period, after which she has to be cleansed. The cleansing ceremony involves the institution of the levirate custom in terms of which Mahlodi has to be taken over by her late husband's younger brother as his wife. The custom is not acceptable among Christians and as such, Mahlodi has to oppose her in-laws. Her action infuriates the in-laws who fail to understand why a woman cannot heed their advice. The heroine of the play, Mahlodi, has to suffer for her victory in the sense that she is subjected to ill-treatments of various kinds. Her survival of the conflict situation is ascribed to *moruti*, the tritagonist, for his great encouragement and motivation along Christian lines. Mahlodi manages to stand firm on her individual decision not to accede to her in-laws' demand and eventually sees herself through all the hardships. Unlike in *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, in *Mahlodi* there is a comic ending where Mahlodi's social opponents (traditionalists) are lured into the Christian realm. The move-over of the traditionalists into Christianity endorses the modern style of choosing a marriage partner, and pushes into oblivion, the traditional one. The Western custom of remarriage has now been acknowledged in this community.

There are similarities between the two plays in the sense that the playwrights thereof have related social objectives to achieve, that is, of discouraging the traditional African way of marrying and encouraging Western ones. In both plays, the forcing of issues results in regrettable incidents which in turn breed remorse. In *Mahlodi*, the levirate custom has been discarded and in its place, remarriage has become a norm. In *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, individual preference has overridden parental control.

In *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo*, the same trend of driving traditional Africans into the modern world is being pursued. However, in this play the central concern is not based on marriage but on leadership. A male traditionalist (Namane) and a female Christian (Reratilwe) oppose each other on cultural grounds. Reratilwe refuses to honour her cultural obligations, so Namane, in his capacity as the

leader of the kingroup, takes up the matter and endeavours to claim the beasts on behalf of his sister, Babuni. Namane is failing to understand how a woman (Reratilwe) can be so bold enough to deny someone of her cultural benefits, whereas she (Reratilwe) once benefited the same way as Babuni wishes. One good turn deserves another; this is the driving force behind Namane's actions. Victory by modernity over traditionalism is achieved when a Christian is made aware of the fact that her refusal to cede the beasts to Babuni is unethical. Her actions also violate Christian principles. The playwright, in this instance, has successfully employed the services of *moruti* to convince the arrogant Reratilwe to rescind her standpoint. Namane's eventual success in attaining the beasts is attributed to the influence of *moruti* especially since Reratilwe has been portrayed as extremely stubborn. Her arrogance, which she claims to be morally and religiously justified, has made Namane's life miserable. *Moruti* has therefore done a great job in subjugating her. His appreciable efforts in turn convinces Namane that there is nothing wrong with Christianity, but the individual's personality is what counts. He, therefore, decides to convert to Christianity as well.

5.2 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditionalism is seen as a common enemy in these three plays. In each play, the playwright has employed a strong character to oppose the traditional life style of the Africans. Westernised Africans have been made to challenge traditional African practices. The earlier two of these plays reflect the common motive of most playwrights of their time to write about clashes between traditionalism and Westernisation where the latter often emerges as a victor. Moreover, being products of missionary institutions, these authors followed the trend of their time which saw it as a just course to move Africans from 'darkness' to 'light' as purported in most plays. The recent publication of *Serudu* (1990) has been adjusted in such a way that it aptly correlates with the first two. Recent as it is, it too condemns traditional African practices and condones Western

lifestyle.

Traditionalism prevailing in Serudu's work entrenches the traditional setting in the play. Characters are fighting over a plough-field, they resort to the services of medicine-men in cases of suspicion of witchcraft, parents decide for their children, *et cetera*. Because of the nature of conflicts in the three plays, their settings are both traditional and modern in nature, hence the talk of tradi-modern settings in the plays. In the plays, the lofty traditional lifestyle is eventually abandoned in favour of the modern lifestyle. Parental choice in *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, despotism in *Mo go Fetileng Kgomo* and the levirate custom in *Mahlodi*, to cite just a few traditional African practices, have all failed lamentably, thus paving the way for modernity to be the order of the day. In their places, individual preference, considerateness and remarriage have been ushered in. Christianity also starts to gain momentum among traditional Africans.

Given the standpoints of the three authors regarding traditional practices, especially in *Mahlodi* and *Šaka la Pelo ga le Tlale*, it remains a challenge for Africans now to decide which way to go. Being confronted with a noble plea for African renaissance which is spearheaded by the South African president, Thabo Mbeki, are we still to condone individual choices of marriage partners in the place of arranged marriages? Is remarriage supposed to gain the upper hand as opposed to levirate and sororate customs? These are the issues to be seriously considered, bearing in mind that literature is a society-oriented discourse, which either censures or encourages the perpetuation of certain practices in life.

Having investigated a large number of contentious ideologies in the course of this study, the researcher is convinced that the socio-political circumstances during the era of missionaries and colonial rulers contributed immensely to the nature of these literary works. An important factor in this regard is the fact that most printing and publishing houses were controlled by missionaries. As a

result of that, it is clear that any literary documents deviant from Christian principles, were to be rejected in its totality. Africans, who were regarded as dark people in a dark continent, had to be enlightened. Their cultural practices and norms were viewed as utter stupidity and backwardness. Africans had to come out of the darkness into the light ushered in by Western culture. The poor Africans had no alternative but to comply positively simply because they were politically and economically subjected to the Whites.

Now that the political situation in South Africa has changed, the first major task facing us is to wipe out the mentality that whatever is African in nature is barbarous and primitive. We need to realise the importance of being proud of our culture before we can think of making African renaissance a reality. African culture needs to be reshaped and accepted as a culture worth existing like Western culture. Going deeper into details as to why and how to revive African culture won't be possible here as the field is too wide to be treated here. This is, nevertheless, an area still open for research by scholars of African culture.

Even though the area of reviving African culture is recommended for further research, I deem it worthwhile to point out that some of the traditional practices being abhorred in the three plays, are still discernible today, though often in an improved or developed stage. Sporadic incidents of levirate and sororate customs can still be noticed among modern Africans. The family of the deceased male relative is usually not left in the care of a surviving female spouse alone, but instead, one recognised male relative in most cases steps in for conjugal as well as administrative purposes. Such a union becomes more feasible when the male to 'enter the hut' is a widower or still a bachelor. It has also become a common practice among Africans, especially the élite group, to persuade their children to marry children from families of their friends. This is done for one main reason; the family background from which a male has to marry and the female to be married are known to his parents. The fact that parents are involved in the establishment of the union, resembles an element of

a traditional marriage. To promote stability in African marriages such unions should be encouraged and perpetuated as much as possible.

Given the two forms of marriage rarely practised now, a beam of hope is there for Africans to succeed in reviving their culture. Parents can still sit down with their children and have discussions about their children's prospective partners. The partner should be known and acknowledged by the parents first, before any marriage negotiations can commence. A known and approved prospective partner will assure the parents that the resulting marriage will be stable. All is not yet lost, something positive can still be done to restore our culture as a national identity.

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