

***ISIHLONIPHO* AMONG AMAXHOSA**

**by**

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*ISIHILONIPHO* AMONG AMAXHOSA

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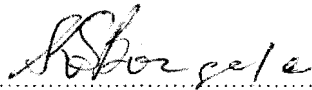
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Joint Promoter: Prof. N Saule

JUNE 2001

**DECLARATION**

I declare that **ISIBHLONIPHO AMONG AMAXHOSA** is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am enormously grateful to Professor Rosalie Finlayson, my promoter, for her wise guidance, meticulous criticism and consistent encouragement.

I would also like to thank Professor Ncedile Saule, the joint promoter, for his unflagging encouragement and invaluable assistance.

In the midst of scarcity of written material on *isihlonipho* among amaXhosa, I feel obliged to mention unequivocally that my success in the gathering and compilation of the information for this research study, is largely attributed to the enormous contribution made by the following groups of people: the members of my church, The Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa based in East London; members of the general public as well as the experts on African culture mostly found in the rural areas of both the Transkei, Ciskei and the Border regions.

I am eternally grateful to my wife Xoli for her encouragement and assistance as well as the support given by our children while I was battling with the work and in the process having had to neglect them.

**DEDICATION**

To my late father, Abraham, and my mother, Emmah Zwanana, now aged 91, for their wonderful contribution in making me what I am today. Thanks to you Mkhwane and also to you Rhadebe. *Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi.*

## PREFACE

This study has been designed to investigate *isihlonipho*, one of the major parts of the indigenous culture of amaXhosa. Although this national unit is basically spread throughout greater South Africa, yet the province of the Eastern Cape has been identified as their indigenous area of domicile. The Eastern Cape is predominantly Xhosa-speaking and encompasses the Transkei, Ciskei and the Border regions where *hlonipha* culture has been practised for centuries between Mpondos, Gcalekas, Rharhabet, Thembus, Mfengus, Phuthis, Ntlangwinis, Qwathis, Xesibes, Hlubis, Bhacas, Mpondomises and Bomvanas. All these are sub-units of the composite Xhosa population that speak the above mentioned dialects.

Sotho speakers are found in the districts of Matatiele and Mt Fletcher and are completely bilingual and practise *hlonipha* culture because of the strong influence of isiXhosa and Xhosa culture. Most parts of the Western Cape which are dominated by the Xhosa speaking people, also practise *hlonipha*.

To gather all the information needed for this study, various people and families were interviewed and these provided information related, inter alia, to cultural practices among family units, religion, attire, distinguished people, venerated places and shrines, circumcision and marriages. Besides general interviews, various sources of information such as libraries, museums, resource centre universities were consulted.

The consequences of abandoning *hlonipha* culture in today's generation are reflected in the concluding chapter where recommendations are also made with a view to recording and arresting this vanishing culture which has been the backbone of the wider Xhosa indigenous culture in South Africa. The study reflects that the indigenous nature of the Xhosa culture has been corroded by the arrival of western civilisation and Christianity in South Africa, hence much of what remains today is a diluted replica

of the original indigenous culture.

The researcher, during his research activities on the topic under the spotlight came to the realisation that very little has been written on the aspect of *hlonipha* among amaXhosa hence he experienced difficulty in securing appropriate reference material. He had to depend mostly on information given by general informants.

## ABSTRACT

*Isihlonipho among amaXhosa* is a study based on the indigenous culture of amaXhosa, a vibrant nation forming a black section of the South African population. In order to capture those interesting aspects embraced within the theme of this study, the researcher has deemed it proper and appropriate to focus his attention largely on the cultural practices of these people citing various stages of their cultural development.

Although some of the most important cultural activities such as religion, ancestor worship, totems and others have been highlighted together with the statuses of certain personalities, places and family units, nevertheless, the emphasis is on *hlonipha* language associated with cultural practices such as, inter alia, *ulwaluko* (circumcision) and traditional marriage. It is also placed on the language of respect associated with the veneration of aspects such as the weather, animals, rivers, graves, *inkundla* and many others.

Of grave concern to the researcher is the fact that arrival of western civilisation, the spread of Christianity and the miscegenation of Black and White races have been instrumental in eroding *hlonipha practices* and *hlonipha* language which has remained the pillar of the amaXhosa culture for centuries.

In view of the historical and political changes which have significantly affected the validity of these cultural practices, this thesis is inclined to support the spirit of renaissance which seeks to recoup those aspects of the past which our posterity needs for its cultural existence.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Historical overview

It should be mentioned from the beginning that a historical perspective of the subject of *hlonipha* affords the researcher a wide amplitude to determine among other things the scope of this thesis. It is precisely for that reason that it is important to give some background information regarding the subjects to whom *hlonipha* is attributed.

##### 1.1.1 The Setting

In dealing with the subject of *hlonipha*, which is a cultural concept signifying respect amongst amaXhosa, one has to take cognisance of the fact that it is not peculiar to this unit only. The custom of respect is part of African culture which has been practised for centuries by a large number of African tribes living on the continent of Africa. These tribes are postulated to have had a cultural relationship and link with each other during the period they were living in masses in Central Africa before the 6th Century. Before examining and describing the aspects of the *hlonipha* custom in detail, it will help to have some discussion on the origin of the African tribes and how some, such as the Nguni, came to be living in Southern Africa.

Levitas & and Morris (1984 :7) postulate that the Black peoples of South Africa are the descendants of Negroid peoples who moved out of Central Africa about two thousand years ago. The events that triggered off this great migration are not known, but during their journey southwards, these Negroids encountered and mixed with many cultures and races such as the Hamites and Pygmies.

Before the Negroid peoples moved into Africa south of the Equator, the indigenous inhabitants of most of the Southern African region were the Khoisan peoples whose languages later had an influence on the Nguni languages. The word Khoisan itself is used to refer collectively to the Khoikhoi people and the Bushmen or San peoples.

Phillipson (1977) as quoted by Davenport (1987:7) posited two early migration routes from Central Africa. One of these, the Eastern stream crossed the Congo basin to the area of Lake Victoria about 200 - 100 B.C. and then moved southwards from the 2nd to 4th Century A.D.. The Western stream which was fed by the migrants from the eastern group about the 3rd Century, travelled south of the tropical forest into Angola. This was followed by a third group from which further dispersal took place about 1000 A.D. and moved southwards into the Transvaal area which is today known as Gauteng.

The peoples of Nguni origin betook themselves to the eastern portion of the southern part of the African Continent and moved further south along the western coast with the Drakensberg between them and the central stream. Hence, south of the Limpopo in South Africa, the Black peoples made their geo-political homes. *AmaXhosa*, among other tribes, settled more or less along the coast in what was known as Xhosaland and which later assumed the modern political names of Transkei and Ciskei.

Supporting Phillipson's theory of migration, Du Preez (1980) confirms that the Black peoples of South Africa settled in this sub-continent over a thousand years ago and the speakers of *isiXhosa* who formed a Xhosa national unit were among the mass of those Black settlers.

According to Levitas and Morris (1984:8) these migration waves continued well into the 18th Century. Although all these immigrants spoke Bantu languages, each group possessed, and to varying degrees, maintained its own identity, customs and traditions. Simplistically speaking, it became possible to divide all the Bantu-speaking peoples in South Africa into two broad groupings viz the Nguni and Sotho. The Nguni now account for about two thirds of the Black population of South Africa. They reside along the south eastern central plain being known as the Zulus, and in the once independent territories of Transkei and Ciskei as the Xhosas and Pondos. Some have settled in the Western Cape. All the Nguni people share a similar language and culture.

The Xhosa language derived its name from King Xhosa who ruled the Xhosa nation about 1575 (Quail et al: 1980 :20). King Xhosa is the ancestor of several notable kings such as Malangana, Nkosiyamntu, Tshawe, Ngcwangu, Sikhomo, Togu, Ngconde, Tshiwo. But one of the most popular kings who is associated with the emergence of Transkei and Ciskei territories is King Phalo who was the son of Tshiwo. He was born in 1702 and died in 1777. He was the last chief to have ruled over the entire united and wholly undivided Xhosa nation. At his prime he was presented with two royal princesses on the same day. One was from the Pondo clan and the other was from the Tembu clan (Soga 1937 : 13)

The first princess to arrive gave birth to Prince Gcaleka and the second one begot another crown prince named Rharhabe. Phalo migrated to the area beyond the Great Kei River and later died leaving the two princes to take the chair of royal descendency. Gcaleka later recrossed the Kei and settled in the territory known as Gcalekaland which was named after him. The same Gcalekaland subsequently assumed the name of Transkei. Rharhabe retained the area beyond the Kei which later became Ciskei.

Gcaleka was the forefather of Xhosa kings such as Khawuta, Hintsa and Sarhili who were reputed for their ability in building and retaining Xhosa culture, tradition and unity. Hintsa is said to have been the only chief in his time who had accepted a new unknown fugitive race, the Mfengus (anglicised as Fingoes) into the Xhosa nation.

According to Hammond -Tooke (1937: 62) when Shaka embarked upon his career of empire building in Natal, numerous tribes were dislodged either directly or indirectly as a result of the ensuing state of war. Early in the 19th Century many thousands of refugees from Natal began to cross over the Umzimkhulu River seeking a new home among the Cape tribes, especially the Xhosa, and among the White colonists. They came both as solid tribes and in large and small bodies of

homogeneous or of composite character. Their numbers were further augmented from another direction by the fugitive Hlubi of Mpangazitha who had been driven out of Lesotho by Matiwane and his Ngwane tribe who were themselves also fugitives from Natal.

Many fugitives returned to Natal when peace was restored, but many others remained behind and assumed the new name of Mfengus, meaning people who were fugitives with no place of abode. These people were accepted by King Hintsa who instructed his subjects to welcome them as an additional unit to the Xhosa nation. Later during the clashes of King Sarhili with the colonial Government, the Mfengus were subsequently led out of Xhosaland but when at a later date part of the Western Transkei became vacant, they were settled there and still form the bulk of the population. These are today known as the Bhele, Hlubi, and Zizi tribes. Smaller units include Kunene, Maduna, Gubevu, Tolo, Miya, Khuse, Mbuthweni and Zotsho. Most of these are Zulu oriented.

On the other side of the Kei, Rharhabe gave birth to Mlawu who in turn begot Ngqika. Ciskei owed its cultural, political, religious and social development to King Ngqika. Both Transkei and Ciskei are today predominantly occupied by Xhosa people whose first language is *isiXhosa*. *IsiXhosa* is linguistically one of the four Nguni languages, the others being *isiZulu*, *siSwati* and *siNdebele*. (Quail *et al* 1980 : 20). The Xhosa people derived their nationhood and language from King Xhosa the founder of the Xhosa nation. According to Soga (1937 : Introduction: vi) the word 'Xhosa' :

*Ukuqala liquka wonke umntu oNtsundu, ukanti ke kodwa lifike ngentsingiselo liye kophela, maxa wambi, kuXhosa ngokwasemaXhoseni kwaPhalo ngendlela yokuzekelisa; sibe singuXhosa sonke ke namhla kuba nanku oNtsundu ethetha loo ntetho yesiXhosa, ephile ngala masiko.*

(First it encompasses every Black person but its connotation

sometimes has far deeper implications for *amaXhosa* of the Phalo genealogy for example: hence today we are all regarded as *amaXhosa* because we hear a Black person speaking *isiXhosa* and practising Xhosa customs).

In both territories approximately 60% of the vocabulary may be described as inherently isiXhosa. The other 40% is made up of words which are borrowed from the Khoi. Examples of these are:

XHOSA		ENGLISH
<i>icici</i>	(5/6)	earing
<i>iChafuto</i>	(place)	Chafutweni village
<i>ingqayi</i>	(9/10)	clay pot
<i>qaqamba</i>	(qual.)	painful
<i>qhwitha</i>	(verb)	strike a match
<i>xovula</i>	(verb)	knead
<i>xhentsa</i>	(verb)	dance
<i>gxagxaza</i>	(verb)	falling water

It is important therefore to note that when dealing with the subject of *hlonipha* among the Xhosas, one should realise that the *hlonipha* vocabulary covers words derived from Xhosa, Mfengu, Khoi, San, and other dialects such as Bhaca, Xesibe, Mpondo, Cele, Bomvana, Tembu, Mpondomise, Phuthi, Qwathi, Ntlangwini. Below are a few examples of words related to some of these dialects (Pahl 1983 : 259 - 272).

DIALECT		XHOSA	ENGLISH
Mpondo	ndriyahamba	<i>ndiyahamba</i>	I am going
	inkrosi (9/10)	<i>inkosi</i> (9/10)	a chief
	igutsha (9/10)	<i>igusha</i> (9/10)	a sheep

<b>Xesibe</b>	itshalwa (9)	<i>utywala</i> (14)	beer
	ukrubhekra (15)	<i>ukujonga</i> (15)	to look
	ukrushuba (15)	<i>ukugqiba</i> (15)	to finish off
<b>Hlubi</b>	ng' iyakhamba	<i>ndiyahamba</i>	I am going
	ng'iyabong'a	<i>ndiyabulela</i>	Thank you
	ugulima (15)	<i>ukulima</i> (15)	to plough
<b>Bhaca</b>	umfati (1/2)	<i>umfazi</i> (1/2)	wife
	inkunti (9/10)	<i>inkunzi</i> (9/10)	bull
	infombi (9/10)	<i>intombi</i> (9/10)	girl
<b>Cele</b>	inombatzana (9/6)	<i>intombazana</i> (9/6)	girl
	amadzi (6)	<i>amanzi</i> (6)	water
	iyosi (9/10)	<i>inkosi</i> (9/10)	chief

When the Dutch people settled in the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, they spoke Dutch which was modified with the passage of time into a new South African language known as Afrikaans, which is the language spoken by Afrikaans- speaking peoples of South Afrika. Like English and other languages already alluded to, Afrikaans had a significant influence on isiXhosa hence we have a number of words in isiXhosa that are adapted from Afrikaans . See the following examples:

AFRIKAANS	XHOSA	ENGLISH
broek	<i>ibhulukhwe / ibrukhw</i> (9/10)	trousers
hemp	<i>ihempe</i> (9/10)	shirt
jas	<i>idyasi</i> (9/10)	coat
tafel	<i>itafile</i> (9/10)	table
spoor	<i>isiporo</i> (7/8)	rail

gif	<i>ityhefu</i>	(9/10)	poison
skottel	<i>isikotile</i>	(7/8)	dish
ploeg	<i>ipuluwa</i>	(9/10)	plough
swaer	<i>usibali</i>	(1/1a)	in-law

There are also technical and commercial terms borrowed from English, a language which was brought into South Africa in 1820 by the British settlers. Examples:

ENGLISH	XHOSA	
bus	<i>ibhasi</i>	(9/10)
cup board	<i>ikhabhathi</i>	(9/10)
iron	<i>i-ayini</i>	(9/10)
gas	<i>igesi</i>	(9/10)
matches	<i>imatshisi</i>	(9/10)
desk	<i>idesika</i>	(9/10)

Some of these words which are derived from these foreign languages have also been affected by *isihlonipho* which forms part of the language of respect which is a means of communication in a traditional society. See 'Categories of *hlonipha* words' -10.1.1 (f) (v).

Despite the fact that they are now scattered all over the industrial centres of South Africa and in the large farming areas, the Xhosa people as a whole have all but one common characteristic among them and that is their cultural ties which are a unifying factor. Such ties consist of their basic language, their customs, their rituals, their beliefs, their religious and other traditional practices.

With the advancement of time which has brought about gigantic changes in the social structure of the indigenous peoples in this country today, it has become evident that



industrialisation, urbanisation, technological advancement, the commercial world, and the effects of western civilisation in general, have invaded and shaken the indigenous culture in South Africa like a buffeting wind that leaves a trail of destruction and confusion in its path. What has remained in the aftermath is a diluted form of culture.

Levitas and Morris (1984 : 10) in supporting the above assertion, state that:

The blending of traditional culture with that of the West has resulted in interesting and sometimes bizarre permutations and adaptations. Whatever the form of these customs, they have shown a remarkable resilience to change and to survive and adapt to their new surroundings. Generally, the tendency has been for traditional societies to be swallowed up by western culture. In South Africa, the ways of the past persist largely because they provide an anchor that continues to give meaning to a number of Black people. Their traditions and customs provide them with a link between the present and the past and a sense of belonging to something enduring in a rapidly changing society.

## **1.2 The field of study**

*Hlonipha* among amaXhosa covers a very wide scope. For the purpose of this thesis, only the essential aspects of the subject will be given attention. These have been tabled in the following paragraphs.

### **1.2.1 Code of ethics.**

This study is based on the unwritten code of ethics which can be equated with the constitution of a country. Because this code of ethics has not been recorded, it has been passed down from generation to generation through oral literature. According to the Heinemann English Dictionary (1979:191), “a code is a systematic collection of rules relating to a particular subject.” The subject in this particular case would be *hlonipha*. Ethics refer to a principle or rule of right conduct. In applying the connotations of the two words to the theme under study, one will find that the

concept of *hlonipha* in an African society is all embracing. It does not, as some people think, involve only the exclusive *hlonipha* language for *abakhwetha* (the initiates) and *oomakoti*, that is women who have recently married and who are therefore subjected to a set of *hlonipha* rules and language.

Every member of the African society is living under and is controlled, in a sense, by a set of rules which govern conduct, behaviour, morality, and these teach him or her the cultural norms of society. One of these is the observance of *isihlonipho* i.e. the linguistic rules of respect at all levels of society.

Furthermore, these rules encourage and motivate the persons to subscribe to the demands of their own culture at all times so that when they grow up, they should take their position as humble, respectable, knowledgeable and acceptable members of society in their adult lives. It is normally the duty and responsibility of every adult member of society to see to it that such rules are strictly observed and adhered to. Any infringement thereof is greatly frowned upon and may result in disastrous consequences for the offender.

By and large, in order to fulfil the requirements of this project, this study is expected to approach the aspects tabulated within the scope not only from a social point of view but also from a sociolinguistic perspective which will encompass the use of language to express each *hlonipha* aspect.

### 1.2.2 The scope

The focus of this study is the discussion of the *hlonipha* customary practices among all the Xhosa-speaking people who predominantly occupy the entire province of the Eastern Cape and also some parts of the Western Cape Province. This discussion will be unfolded in stages which represent certain aspects covering the *hlonipha* concept which falls within the ambit of African culture.

The discussion will delve into the premise that it is a unique concept that affects

basically all members of the entire society from early childhood to adulthood and that it is a valuable aspect of social life. The following sub-headings will help to indicate how this study will be tackled, highlighting some of the observations made regarding the family unit, certain important members of the society, special places regarded as shrines, the attire used, the language spoken and any other important aspect worthy of note. The emphasis is on language associated with such observations.

The impact of western civilisation on the culture of the people, the effects of industrialisation, and the dynamics of the changing times will be discussed to show how they have negatively affected *isihlonipho* which is so valued by its custodians. As a result of the influence of western culture, it will be shown how such *hlonipha* has undergone some form of transition. The following sub-headings which fall under the scope in this chapter will be discussed fully and individually after Chapter One as separate chapters and observations throughout the entire manuscript.

#### **1.2.2.1 The concept of *hlonipha* as a cultural feature in a family unit**

Family groups in a community build their relationships by applying *ukuhlonipha* to train children, men and women to respect each other and also members of society. The criteria used are age, gender and status. Language plays an important role as a means of communication and education. The code of ethics stipulates use of retributory measures to ensure adherence and continuity.

This sub-heading will take the following order:

- \* Definition
- \* Functional usage as a family norm with age as a criterion
- \* The role of children
- \* The role played by men in the *hlonipha* customary practices.
- \* The role played by women in the *hlonipha* customary practices.
- \* Cultural usage of clan names

#### 1.2.2.2 Religion

On religion, this study will consider practices and language associated with supernatural beings and ancestors who govern the lives of people and control their destiny. Indigenous societies such as the Xhosa, in addition to ancestor worship, also regard totems and special animals as religious symbols and are therefore revered in the same manner as ancestors.

On this issue Myburgh (1981: 145) states that "education aims at satisfying man's longing to know and understand the universe including man himself and the supernatural and his search for a philosophy and a system of values that will give life direction and meaning and his desire to show continuity in his cultural process".

Of paramount importance is the deep reverence accrued to the ancestors by all members of society. Details of the *hlonipha* rituals done in honour of the ancestors will be given in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

#### 1.2.2.3 People and Places

The study of the reverence of certain personalities in the community such as *imilondekhaya* (3/4) (old veterans) sages, heads of families, heads of communities, chiefs and other influential people provides a scope for *hlonipha*.

Because certain places are associated with the ancestors, they are accorded special reverence and are taboo to women in particular. These are places such as *ubuhlanti* (14) (cattle kraal), *inkundla* (9/10) (open space between the huts and the kraals), certain rivers where ancestors of royal families reside, and the reserved sides of the family huts where heads of families sleep and retire.

Certain communities preserve special places such as shrines. These may be graves of

royal personalities. With reference to their religious beliefs the names of Qamata and Thixo play a leading role in demonstrating how the Xhosa people show their reverence to these deities. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

#### 1.2.2.4 Forms of attire

Special forms of attire which are attributed to men, women, chiefs and other relevant personalities signify *hlonipha* in certain circumstances. These circumstances will be detailed later as much as possible to show when and why such attire is enforced as a symbol of *hlonipha*. Apart from that they will be referred to with regard to their linguistic implications. For example, married women are never allowed to go without a head gear such as *iqhiya* (9/10) when they are within the premises of their marriage home. The idea is to *hlonipha* the family members and ancestors. (See Chapter 5)

#### 1.2.2.5 Symbolic *hlonipha*

A symbolic *hlonipha* is a concept whereby some relationship in terms of reverence exists between people such as *makoti* (1/2a) for example, and certain objects which belong to a revered person such as the family head. More definition details will be given in Chapter 6. A list of all material objects which are associated with family heads, ancestors, revered personalities in the community and which cannot be used randomly by anybody who is not authorised to use them, will be given when the subject is discussed fully in that chapter. In a family unit this aspect affects mostly children, young people and married women. On this issue, Myburgh (1981 : 134) indicates that “objects that belonged to ancestors, such as axes, hoes, cloth, old horns, copper ingots, beads etc are treated with awe and used in ritual as if they represented the persons to whom they belonged.”

#### 1.2.2.6 Drinks and medicines

##### (a) Drinks

The most popular drink used in traditional societies was the traditional brew commonly known as *umqombothi* (3/4). This was not used for entertainment at drinking parties only, but it was also associated with ancestors. Whenever it was necessary to invoke the ancestors, traditional brew assumed prominence and was used as an instrument of invocation. This was regarded as a symbol of *hlonipha*. To maintain good relationships between the people and the ancestors, it has become a *hlonipha* practice at public and private drinking sprees to allow first the ancestors to have a sip of the brew before it is given out for general drinking. The *injoli* (9/10) pours a few drops on the floor and then gives *ibhekile* (9/10) to the first man.

Various reasons for brewing some traditional beer are given with a view to giving reference to each occasion of beer drinking. Such reasons are normally announced at the commencement of each drinking session. Such references give rise to the following types of beer occasions.

(i) *Utywala bomzi* (Beer for the head of the family)

This is usually a small quantity brewed by the wife of the family head for his personal consumption and that of/or his immediate relatives or personal friends.

(ii) *Utywala bomzi* (Beer drinks of the home)

This is a customary rite in which beer is brewed on a large scale in order to maintain the pleasant atmosphere of the home and to seek the blessings of the ancestors. In this rite no blood is spilt. As in the custom the beer is brewed by the females of the home. An old man of the family usually gives explanation before the drinking session begins.

(iii) *Utywala bemicimbi* (Beer for social occasions)

Occasions such as *imigidi* (boy's initiation parties), *intonjane*, wedding parties and

other big occasions are graced by the brewing of traditional beer. People responsible for the brewing are usually *abendi* of the particular home and the homes of those immediate relatives. It is usually stored in big barrels and is known as *imithayi*.

(iv) *Utywala beminyanya* (Beer for appeasement of ancestors)

Disgruntled ancestors sometimes render the lives of their people uncomfortable if they fail to render due services to them. This necessitates the brewing of beer on their behalf in order to appease them. This beer is usually brewed by women born of the home only without *abendi*. During the brewing process and the drinking session, all women are expected to *hlonipha* the ancestors by wearing their *hlonipha* attire. Speeches that are made often end up with piles of requests for their benevolence. Beer for the ancestors is also brewed when any member of the family decides to offer it to them as an act of appreciation for their benevolence.

(v) *Utywala bezibhembe* (Beer for customary *mbeleko*)

This beer is designed to introduce the newly born baby to its ancestors. A goat or sheep is also slaughtered and the baby, if older, is offered a piece of *inguba* (a piece of meat cut above the right hand shoulder of the animal) to munch. If he/she is too small, such meat is given to its mother to eat on his/her behalf. The beer is meant to thank the ancestors for increasing the progeny of the family.

(vi) *Utywala bokubuya kweenkabi emasimini* (Beer for the return of oxen from the lands)

This beer is brewed as a token of gratitude to those who helped with the reaping of mealies and other harvest. Reaping, like any other agricultural activity, is usually done by soliciting the help of other members of the community. They are normally thanked with traditional beer.

Red liquor such as brandy and whisky is also a very popular drink for traditional gatherings but white spirits like gin is associated with ancestors. This is regarded as a *hlonipha* item for them. It is usually offered to them during libation. The system of serving it to a traditional party in an African context is similar to the method of serving Xhosa beer explained above. The slight difference lies in the fact that the *injoli* uses one tot glass to serve the entire group of men or women in the party.

#### (b) Medicines

Traditional herbs play an important role in re-inforcing the concept of *hlonipha*. There are special herbs known as *ubulawu* (14) which are used by many homes during times of invocation of ancestors. These herbs are red and white in colour. The most popular of these herbs is the white *ubulawu* which is used by *amagqirha* (5/6) (traditional doctors) as a medium of communication with the ancestors. It carries an element of *hlonipha* for it is used when one appeals to the ancestors for their benevolence. There is another herb used for *ukuqhumisa* (15) (to fumigate) when one is trying to communicate with ancestors. This is known as *impepho* (9/10). There are others which are used by chiefs and other men of honour for respect. One of these is called *isindiya* (7/8). More details of these herbs and their functions will be given when the full chapter on this section is discussed in 7.2. Of great linguistic significance is the special vocabulary used to describe some of these herbs.

#### 1.2.2.7 Transition in *hlonipha*

It has already been alluded to in paragraph 1.1.1 that the impact of western culture and industrialisation on the traditional African culture has been so great that it has resulted in a diluted form of *hlonipha*. This is particularly noticeable in the following aspects:

##### 1.2.2.7.1 Socially



In the past, before the advent of western civilisation when the *hlonipha* ethics were still strictly adhered to, it was easy to notice a *makoti* for example by the *hlonipha* attire she wore --- long skirt known as *umbhaco* (3/4), use of *ixakatho* (5/6) (shawl) a black head scarf that almost covered her eyes, and many other items.

Nowadays such practices have undergone a remarkable transition. For example the *ukuhota* period (if any) is much shorter. The attire has undergone a drastic change and the element of sophistry has superceded all forms of traditional considerations. There appears to be very little or in some communities nothing left of the observation of the *hlonipha* language.

#### 1.2.2.7.2      **Economically**

In traditional societies, subsistence economy centred around agriculture where all members of the family including women participated. Cattle were coupled with economic prestige. Available land was ploughed and cultivated by oxen. The people who did this job were mainly boys and men but in the absence of either of them women were used with reservation since they were supposed to *hlonipha* these tasks. Their main task during this season was hoeing. As mentioned earlier where necessary they used *isihlonipho* to refer to these implements.

Tools and traditional utensils which were used by *makoti* for cooking, for gathering fuel, for hoeing, and for doing any other chore were also observed by *isihlonipho*. With the passage of time a remarkable change has taken place and the acceptable *hlonipha* standards have dropped remarkably in favour of the new order. Men and women who had observed the laws and rules pertaining to *hlonipha* economically have now entered a new era and have moved from the traditional rural environment to a new urban life where *hlonipha* has almost disappeared. Only the dry remnants of this culture have remained.

#### 1.2.2.7.3 **Politically**

Traditionally chiefs and headmen were political administrators of traditional society. They were accorded respect by every member of society. At no time were these rules of respect or *hlonipha* relaxed when they appeared in social functions or in political meetings or even in their everyday routine functions. In a party or feast, they were given special attention and were placed in a special place to give them the respect they deserved. Even the sumptuaries they ate were selected from the best portions of meat and other victuals.

Every man who joined the party gave a salute to the whole group using the chief's or headman's salutation code irrespective of whether the chief was there or not. For example "*Ah! Xolilizwe!*" Or alternatively "*Ngqanga neentsiba zayo!*" (literally meaning bateleur eagle and its feathers)" Or "*MaTshawe!*" if the clan name of the chief or headman is Tshawe. Failure to observe this procedure was regarded as an assault on the dignity of that authority and could lead to steps being taken to discipline the one who had defaulted.

The attitude and the respect accorded to the chieftainship in the past has now diminished because of the importance attached to politicians whose influence has superseded that of the chiefs especially in urban areas where the role of chiefs is minimal. During the homeland era, chiefs and paramount chiefs who also played the role of politicians were accorded the same respect country-wide. However, today the *hlonipha* emphasis is on politicians who were responsible for the birth of democracy in South Africa.

#### 1.2.2.8 **Significance of *ulwaluko*, its *hlonipha* element and its subsequent violation**

*Ulwaluko* (circumcision) particularly among amaXhosa is not only a customary

practise, but a philosophy of life. It is a known fact that missionaries especially, tried to destroy this practice. Whilst its operation is no longer what it used to be, the philosophy behind the practice is still deep. In the main discussion, it will be illuminated how significant *ulwaluko* as well as the importance of language attached to it. It is interesting to note that over the years this custom has undergone changes.

#### 1.2.2.8.1 Yesterday

It goes without saying that the cultural fabric of the Xhosa society is interwoven with cultural aspects, one of which is *hlonipha*. From time immemorial, it was a most valuable asset on which the moral and social survival of the nation depended. Every member of society was made to feel obliged to honour the *hlonipha* custom. Because of this commitment the moral fibre of society was always good. The teachings and rules that compelled and encouraged adherence to this *hlonipha* practice, were as good as a code of ethics or a constitution of the country. The sanctions, the penalties and all the retributory measures that were applied upon failure to comply with these rules, were accepted and obeyed. This made the Xhosa nation culturally one of the most stable nations in the Southern African region.

*Ulwaluko* (11) (circumcision) has always been regarded as a basic form of training a man to fit and to dovetail perfectly into the cultural fabric of indigenous society. This has been achieved by using the circumcision milieu which embraced life in the veld during the stage of transformation. It is here that a boy was exposed to tough conditions which prepared him for manhood.

#### 1.2.2.8.2 Today

By 'today' is meant a period of transition regarding the *hlonipha* concept. Although there are still traces of tradition and custom, yet the forces of change have brought about Western culture and technological advancement. These have resulted in the

cultural birth of a new generation whose presence is so overwhelming as to threaten the existence of the older one. This new generation has been influenced by the present day social and political demands such as industrialisation, migration from rural to urban areas, the transition of the social order from a traditional set up to present day democracy.

There prevails today an alarming situation where a great number of initiates are forced to break their *khwetha* training on account of a high incidence of sickness and death. Many observers believe that such deaths are caused by the traditional instrument, *umdlanga* (3/4), while others blame the traditional surgeons and traditional nurses who appear to lack the expertise and experience in handling the initiates. Some conservatives attribute these sicknesses and deaths to the abandonment of circumcision rules and regulations which are based on the need to *hlonipha* such living heritages as *ulwaluko*. It has become obvious therefore that the significance of the *hlonipha* culture that was once the pride of the nation has, today, become minimised and is threatened with extinction.

#### 1.2.2.8.3 **Tomorrow**

It is evident from what is happening today that the next generation which will be begotten by the present one will possibly know nothing of the *hlonipha* practices of yesterday and today because of the factors described in 1.2.2.8.2. Such practices as *isihlonipho*, *hlonipha* attire and *hlonipha* ethics will, no doubt, have been relegated to the back corridors of history or thrown into a limbo of oblivion and will be a subject of scorn and ridicule to those who may contemplate resuscitating them. Another factor that is likely to contribute to the extinction of this custom is the fact that like most African customs, traditions and folklore, no written records are available because of the customary practice that was popular on the African continent, and that was that of handing down literature from generation to generation orally. Unless steps are taken to record the remaining traces of these cultural practices the

future of this valuable asset is at stake.

#### 1.2.2.9 Significance of *hlonipha* in a marriage situation and that of *amagqirha*

As will be realised *hlonipha* permeates all aspects of life especially the marriage sector among amaXhosa. This is very significant as it gives the married woman identity and respect of the in-laws. With the changing times one often asks the question as to whether *hlonipha* is still important. The answer is definitely yes.

##### 1.2.2.9.1 Yesterday

In traditional society, the *cweza* and the *hota* practices which encompassed the wearing of the *makoti* attire, use of the *hlonipha* language and all that went with it, were practices which were part of the marriage situation. Observance of this *hlonipha* marriage practice gave the woman some dignity and a measure of respectability in her new home. It was believed that if *makoti* (1/2a) kept all the *hlonipha* rules to the maximum she would be rewarded by the ancestors. Great benevolence awaited her. If her marriage was a success, credit was given to her ability to observe all the *hlonipha* rules. On the contrary, failure to observe them often led to disaster. Every woman therefore looked forward to her marriage and was prepared to undergo all forms of the *hlonipha* ritual for she knew that that was where her future lay. This section on the significance of *hlonipha* in a marriage situation also deals with the significance of *hlonipha* in respect of *amagqirha*.

##### 1.2.2.9.2 Today

A survey of the present day population of married women reveals that there are two sets of married women and these are the traditional ones and the modernised ones who live mostly in urban areas and detribalised rural areas. The modernised group

which seems to be in the majority has already begun to lose touch with the traditional *hlonipha* described above in 1.2.2.9.1 thereby minimising the importance of this custom today. Again the influence of Christianity, formal education and the modern way of living have created an impression in the minds of the people that it is no longer necessary and important to observe cultural practices such as *hlonipha*. People have taken to heart all that the western civilisation has offered and is continuing to offer, thereby putting into jeopardy the very essence of *hlonipha*.

#### 1.2.2.9.3 Tomorrow

The damage done by the vanquishing culture of the White people to the traditional culture of the indigenous people of this country leaves one with a feeling of despair and very little hope that the *hlonipha* custom will survive the onslaught of this foreign culture. There are already signs that parts of the *hlonipha* practices such as *ukucweza* (15) *ukuhota* (15), and the *hlonipha* language are already diminishing. The majority of the young people who get married today begin their own homes away from the homes of their in-laws. Others buy properties in urban areas and live independently from their parents-in-law. The implication of this is that they observe no *hlonipha* ritual, custom or practice. In the detribalised homes, only a few of the newly wedded *makotis* do a token *hlonipha*. For example the only items left of the *hota* practice is the scarf around the waste and a fancy head scarf. This therefore leaves one with no alternative but to surmise that the future holds very little or no hope for the survival of *hlonipha* among women.

### 1.3 Mode of research

The approach to this study is a functional one as it looks at the rationale behind the concept of *hlonipha* with special emphasis on its linguistic significance. It should be noted that this study specifically examines *hlonipha* per se and not necessarily how it conforms with certain theoretical paradigms.

The scope of this thesis, besides delving into the aspects reflected in 1.2 above, will also cover the methods of research to be used in gathering information. These will mainly involve the assessing of information using libraries, museums, and any other available source of information. Interviews will also be done with people with a knowledge of *hlonipha* practices in general and the use of *hlonipha* language by men, women, *abakhwetha* and if possible *amagqirha*. The information obtained will be sifted, analysed and prepared to fit into all the aspects already discussed under Field of Study in 1.2.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

When concluding this project the researcher will have to consider the question of whether the concept of *hlonipha* in an African context has had no bearing on the Afrocentric values vs Eurocentric values. Whether the problems that beset the South African nation today in the form of violence, crime, moral decadence in our society, deterioration in the moral and behavioural standards of the youth and the gap of disunity discernible between youth and adults today, are not as a result of the violation of the *hlonipha* custom which was a unifying factor in indigenous African society. The researcher has attempted to analyse the consequences of abandoning the principle of *hlonipha* as reflected in modern society. General recommendations as to how some of the lost values can be retrieved for the sake of the future posterity, will be made.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONCEPT OF *HLONIPHA* AS A CULTURAL FEATURE IN A FAMILY UNIT

#### 2.1 Definition

In attempting to define the term *isihlonipho*, most English Dictionaries such as Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition) (1978 : 889) and Heinemann English Dictionary (New Edition) (1979 : 882) for example, approach their definition of 'respect' in terms of an appreciation of a person's worth or qualities. The next synonym which they use for the term 'respect' is 'revere' which also reflects a meaning implying regard with deep respect. This definition, taken in its literal context, does not altogether reflect the entire connotation of the term *isihlonipho* (7/8) as viewed by Xhosa speakers although it also carries an element of respect in it.

The English- Xhosa Dictionary by Fischer *et al* (1985) defines 'respect' and 'revere' as *ukubeka* (15) and *ukuhlonela* (15) from which the following nouns *imbeko* (9/10) and *intlonelo* (9/10) emerge. The Terminology and Orthography No. 3 ( 1972) gives the meaning of revere as *ukuhlonipha* (15). It is from this verb that we have a noun *isihlonipho* (7/8) which hardly appears in English dictionaries. This is a cultural term that is exclusively used in special circumstances which will be fully explained later in this study. It is a very important term for it is a basis for the theme of this study.

Various authorities have attempted to define the word *hlonipha* and most of them seem to approach their definitions from a cultural perspective. For example, John Henderson Soga (1931: 208) speaking of the life and customs of AmaXhosa says:

The word *ukuhlonipha* - to respect, to reverence, to be bashful, is used in connection with these various renderings, according to the circumstances of the case. It is usually applied to the custom whereby a married woman is debarred from using the name of her father-in-law - *usondoda* (1/2a), and must avoid all words, whose initial syllable is the same as the initial syllable of her father-in-law's name or indeed any word that includes the whole of the father-in-law's name.



To show that this custom is a universal one from an African perspective, Kunene (1985 : 159) speaking about the *Hlonepha among the Southern Sotho* also defines the word as follows:

The expression *ho-hlonepha* includes among its meanings 'to respect, to honour'. *Hlonepha* is often used in a more concrete sense to refer to the custom whereby respect is shown in a conventional manner to people by other people in the social life of the Southern Sotho. Even more concretely it refers to certain specific forms of behaviour which together make up this custom - hence one of the meanings of *hlonepha* in Paroz's Southern Sotho's English Dictionary viz 'to avoid certain words.'

The word *hlonepha* is used here in a specialised sense to refer to one of the forms of behaviour mentioned above. Some societies which *hlonipha* certain people or objects use the word *taboo* which is synonymous with *hlonipha*. Fromkin and Rodman (1983: 274) aver that:

In all societies acts or behaviours are frowned upon, forbidden or considered *taboo*. The words of expressions referring to these *taboo* acts are then also avoided."

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 11 (1768-1771: 483: 3b)

*Taboo* is the production of an action or the use of an object based on ritualistic distinctions of them either as being sacred and consecrated or as being dangerous, unclean and accursed. The term '*taboo*' is of Polynesian origin and was first noted by Captain James Cook during his visit to Tonga in 1771. He introduced the term into the English language from which it achieved widespread currency. *Taboos* were most highly developed in the Polynesian societies of the South Pacific, but they have been present in virtually all cultures.

Herbert (1990: 303) also reflects that :

*Hlonipha* is the name given to a range of social avoidance customs practised by the Nguni speakers. The general use of the term in the socio-linguistic literature is restricted to a linguistic *taboo* process

whereby women are barred from pronouncing the names of their fathers-in-law and other senior male affines. Among traditional Xhosa and Zulu speakers, it is not only the name itself that must be avoided, but also any of the composite syllables. Thus a woman whose father-in-law is named *Bongani* must avoid the name itself and the syllable *bo* and *nga* wherever they occur in speech. Since it is not only the name of the father-in-law but those of all senior affines and the mother-in-law that must be avoided, the effect on each individual woman's speech may be dramatic.

It is clear from these definitions that the connotation of the word *hlonipha* carries a concept of avoiding to do or say something which might offend certain people or certain spiritual powers. The bottom line in applying the custom practically is the moulding of a character in preparation for a specific and acceptable role in society.

## **2.2 Its functional use with age as a criterion.**

The concept of *hlonipha* commonly known as *ukuhlonipha* is a cultural feature or norm which an individual acquires at a very early stage of physical or cultural development through the auspices of a group life or family life. Among many things taught to them, children learn to respect adults, other children and also other members of the community. This they are taught in order to be fully adjusted, stable, respectable and responsible beings in their community. This is commonly known as *ingqeqesho yomntwana* (cultural training of a child).

This cultural knowledge, according to Myburgh (1981: 16):

Is not transmitted genetically, but has to be acquired by the individual from birth onwards and the individual normally acquires the culture of the people to which one belongs by birth or adoption."

Herskovits as quoted by Myburgh (1981: 146) has this to say on this issue:

Among all peoples, children learn basic skills and acquire the basic knowledge necessary for life in their environment. They learn to control their bodily process, to speak correctly on different levels, to

interpret the conduct of others, to observe the required morals and etiquette and sometimes to perform ritual.

As Herskovits points out, one of the basic things taught to children is how to conduct themselves in the required manner by learning how to *hlonipha* other people who are their seniors by birth. The importance of training a child to maintain certain cultural requirements is normally the responsibility of the community starting from family groups to wider membership of the community.

Hornle' (1946) as quoted by Finlayson (1984 :137) noted that there was an

.....ordered group life, with reciprocal rights and duties, privileges and obligations, of members, determining behaviour patterns for each individual member towards other members and moulding the feelings, thoughts, and conduct of members according to these patterns, so that it is only in and through them that the individual can achieve his personal self realisation and participate in the satisfaction offered by the life of his community.

### 2.2.1 The role of children

The importance of training a child to be respectful towards other people was a cultural demand and was not negotiable as it seems to be the case today. Like any customary practice it was subject to punishment. Soga (1937: 36) calls the practice of teaching people to respect each other *ukuhlonelana kwabantu* - (the respect people accord to each other). He writes:

*(Le nto intlonelo nembeko ibikho, abantwana bebahlonela kakhulu abazali, umntwana engenalizwi ntweni nokuya esele wangumntu omkhulu usabethwa ngabakhulu kunaye. Suka yena abaleke ebonisa imbeko ngokwenjenjalo).*

(Respect was a valuable phenomenon in a traditional society whereby children were taught to accord high respect to their parents; a child had no say and even though he was a grown up, he was subjected to punishment by his superiors. By taking to his heels, he was showing respect).

The acquisition of *hlonipha* vocabulary by children is attained through education by

their parents. Myburgh (1981: 145) defines education as:

The aspect of culture the purpose of which is the provision of an active and directed process by which the individual may acquire the culture of his group, be equipped to initiate refinements and innovations and undergo a development of his personality. Education aims at making the individual fit for the positions he will hold, these involving him in cultural relationships in accordance with the various aspects during his life span from infancy to adulthood. For all these positions culture prescribes standardised attitudes, activities and techniques which he must learn so that he may identify with his group and culture."

According to Magubane (1998: 108) "before missionaries introduced schools, education took place during initiation, marking the passage to adulthood."

Thus a child in its cognitive stages of development learns words such as:

XHOSA		ENGLISH
<i>umama</i>	(1/2a)	mother
<i>utata</i>	(1/2a)	father
<i>usisi</i>	(1/2a )	sister
<i>ubhuti</i>	(1/2a)	brother

These are terms that remind the child that the persons referred to are his/her biological parents (*umama* and *utata*) and his/her brother and sister. They carry no other meaning besides this. They do not refer to any other human beings besides their blood relations. As they grow older they will be taught the element of respect towards their mother and father simply because they are their direct and biological parents. The same applies to their brother and sister if they are older than they. If they receive gifts from them, they are taught to say:

*Enkosi tata, enkosi mama*

(Thank you father , thank you mother).

If any one asks a question, their reply is expected to be:

XHOSA	ENGLISH
<i>Ewe, <b>mama</b> ; ewe, <b>tata</b>.</i>	Yes, mother, yes, father
<i>Hayi, <b>mama</b>, hayi, <b>tata</b></i>	No, mother, no father
<i>Andazi <b>mama</b>; andazi <b>tata</b></i>	I do not know mother; I do not know father
<i>Andikhange ndiyibone, <b>mama</b></i>	I did not see it mother
<i>Andikhange ndiyibone, <b>tata</b></i>	I did not see it father

The emphasis in pronouncing **mama** and **tata** each time they reply is a demand they cannot avoid as it is cultural training. This element of respect on the basis of age is extended to one's elder brother and sister. Here the terms **sisi** and **bhuti** are used to address one's elder sister and one's elder brother. If there are other brothers and sisters older than they, the terms **sisi** and **bhuti** precede their actual names. For example:

- 1      *Ndithunywe ngusisi Nondumiso ukuba ndiye kumkhelela amanzi.*

(I have been sent by elder sister Nondumiso to fetch some water for her.)

- 2      *Ndibizwe ngubhuti Sam.*

(I have been called by elder brother Sam.)

As the children grow older, they mix with other members of the community and learn to identify age. They will use the same references they were taught when they were talking to their parents and elder sisters and brothers. In all these cases if they forget or persist in ignoring the accepted ways of addressing older people, they receive punishment. This is a cultural education which they grasp and carry over to the world of adulthood. Other relatives of theirs are also accorded a similar respect.

**XHOSA****ENGLISH**

<i>utat' omncinci</i>	(1/2a)	my father's younger brother
<i>utat' omkhulu</i>	(1/2a)	my grandfather
<i>umakhulu</i>	(1/2a)	my grandmother
<i>umalume</i>	(1/2a)	my uncle
<i>umakazi</i>	(1/2a)	my mother's sister.

Whenever a child comes across an old man the age of his/her father or his/her grandfather he/she uses the references quoted above but in this case the actual names of the characters he/she meets must appear. Examples:

1. *Molo tat' uNkawu!*  
(Good morning father *Nkawu*)
2. *Ezi mpahla zezikamam'.Kitizwa*  
(These goods belong to mother *Kitizwa*.)
3. *Le ntsimi yekatat' omkhulu uDasoyi*  
(This land belongs to grandfather *Dasoyi*)
4. *Ndiva iindaba zokuba umakhulu uTyaliwe uswelekile*  
(I have recieved news that grandmother *Tyaliwe* has passed away.)

There is no way a child in any traditional society can address a person older than he/she by his/her name as is the case with some European cultures. This is frowned upon and is regarded as a travesty of African cultural traditions. What pertains today in this era of democracy in some westernised Black communities, is different from the cultural practices of the indigenous societies where *hlonipha* still plays a significant role in the lives of those communities.

Ludwig Alberti (1968: 57-58) commenting on the need to train children says:

Greater stability is imparted by the fact that the moral education of the young is not completely neglected. Children treat their parents with respect and accept their advice, even when they reached maturity and are masters of their own households. In fact parents exercise a certain reasonable authority over their children which is founded on the

obedience of the latter and which endures throughout their lives.

## 2.2.2 Men and *hlonipha* customary practices

Men in the Xhosa society are regarded as the custodians of custom and the fact that they also have to undergo the *hlonipha* practice speaks for itself. It is interesting to note how this practice obtains from one level to another.

### 2.2.2.1 Levels of division

In a Xhosa society, a male is not referred to as a man until he has undergone a stage of circumcision. Ndungane (1992: 12) postulates four cultural stages which an African male goes through in his society in order to gain recognition as a man. According to Ndungane:

1. *Ibutho lokuqala yayileleempobole zamaxhego nokhomokazi lwelo butho lawo.*

(The first stage was that of very very old men)

2. *Ibutho ebelilandela eli ibiba lelamadoda amakhulu*

(Next was the stage of old men)

3. *Elilandela elo ibiba lelabaafana*

(Then followed stage of young manhood)

4. *Kulandele elamakhwenkwe kuye koobhuq' eludakeni.*

(The last was the boyhood stage).

For the convenience of this study, these stages will be discussed in a reverse position which makes this approach a little different from Ndungane's. In fact the order of these stages makes much more sense than his because it shows a more logical approach in considering the stages from youth to old age rather than vice versa.

(a) *Inqanaba lobukhwenkwe* (Boyhood stage)

Very little consideration was taken of all the males in this group by way of *hlonipha* training. As long as the boys did their pranks and little mischief before circumcision, they were generally ignored. There was even a general adage that *inkwenkwe yinja* (a boy is a dog). Of course this did not cover any criminal acts on his part. Law was law. Culturally, however, this adage did not nullify the basic lessons he got in his early stages of development about his duty to respect his parents, relatives and other members of the community. There was great emphasis placed on boys to respect circumcised men irrespective of age. They could not bathe together or urinate together. Men were not expected to undress in front of boys.

(b) *Inqanaba lobufana* (Stage of young manhood)

This is a stage that begins after a boy has gone through the circumcision ritual. On the day the *abakhwetha* (1/2) return from the bush, there is a transformation ritual which brings them to their first stage of manhood called *ubukrwala* (14). Here they receive special words of caution that guide them as to what to do to maintain, respect and keep their status as men. Gwashu (1983: 2) spells this out in his novel Izanzwili zobudoda.

*Namhlanje ke ningamadoda. Ebudodeni apha singatsho ukuthi ningabatshakazi. Umtshakazi ngumntu ozele yintlonelo, uhloni nentlonipho. Ucezela konke okungendawo ehlonene lonke uluntu ade ahlonene nabangaphantsi kunaye. Ngokwenjenjalo ke uhombisa indima angene kuyo; indima yobufazi. Usingethe undiliseko nesidima sobufazi. Makube njalo nakuni ukususela ngawo lo mhla.*

(Today you have become men. In manhood we dare say you are like brand new *makotis*. A *makoti* as you know is a woman full of respect and reverence. She eschews all that is wrong, respecting the entire society and even giving respect to those under her. By doing so she is embellishing the stage she has just entered into, her womanhood. She is carrying her dignity as a married woman. Let it be so with you as from today.)

In many places in the Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa an *ikrwala* (5/6)



was given a new name such as Dalophu, Dasoyi, Dyadyamba etc as a status symbol. In this way all men from his age group upwards used this new name as a sign of respect towards *ikrwala*. Women also called him Bhutokrwala or Dokrwala. Other names of respect were Mbokrweni and Qabisisu.

(c) *Inqanaba lamadoda amakhulu/ amaqina* (The old men's stage)

This is the group from which ways and methods of training the first two groups were obtained. Generally all problems facing the nation were referred to this group. They also acted as a bridge between *abafana* and the fourth group which was reputed for its advanced age. These *amaqina* (5/6) (middle aged men) were always expected to be very close to the fourth group so that all matters involving the state and society would easily filter down the line to the lowliest member of the community.

(d) *Inqanaba leempobole zamaxhego* (The grey headed, very old men)

According to Ndungane (1992: 12) these extremely old men were so old that they had to be nursed time and again because of their peevishness and sensitivity. But they always commanded respect from everybody because of their sharpness of mind and vast experience. They were also respected because they were very close to the ancestors.

2.2.2.2. *Hlonipha* ethics

There were certain rules men were expected to follow in order to maintain their status and dignity as men. These were formulated out of the *hlonipha* concept and they were obeyed by every man.

(i) *Ukuphathwa kwentonga* (the carrying of a stick)

All men irrespective of age were expected to carry one stick instead of two as was the case when they were boys. Gwashu (1983: 2) emphasises this when he highlights their entry to manhood:

*Musa ukuhamba indlela uyindoda ngaphandle kwentonga.*

(Never travel without carrying a stick. A man does not do that.)

A stick was a symbol of dignity and peace. Every man who carried it was respected for it was known that the stick was there for protection and was never carried for offence. Symbolically it was a weapon for fighting the problems of life. But besides that it was a symbol of respectability.

## (ii) **Types of food revered by men**

Soga (1931: 356) analyses certain kinds of foods and victuals men were precluded from eating. This was part of the *hlonipha* system amongst them.

During autumn season, men did not eat pumpkin because it was feared that they would be unhealthy and weak. The bottom line here was that pumpkin and a lot of other types of foods enumerated below were regarded culturally as female victuals and men had to *hlonipha* them.

Men did not drink *amasi* (6) of a household with whom they were connected by marriage. This was considered an act of deference or respect (*ukuhlonipha*) to that particular household.

*The food of a lying-in woman* was taboo to men. Partaking of it would reduce them to the weakness of an infant.

During the circumcision period *abakhwetha* (1/2) would not eat *unqweme* (minced intestines of cattle or small stock), for if they did the circumcision wound would not readily heal. There is no indication that this was medically correct. This could have been one of the *hlonipha* theories.

## (iii) **Other forms of taboo**

All men were not supposed to eat *imifino* (3/4) (wild vegetables) for it was alleged it would make them weak.

When an ox had been slaughtered the special portion for *abafana* (1/2) was *ugeme* (1/2a) (brisket). Every other person was precluded from partaking this meal.

The oldest men in the community were given *ubambo* (11/10) (rib) and *inkamanzi* (9/10) (mouth of an ox). No other person would partake from this portion.

*Imilowo* (3/4) (relatives) were given *intsonyama* (9/10), head and legs, and breast of an ox.

In a traditional beer drinking party, all the old men occupy the portion starting on the left hand side of the door down the wall. This area is always assigned to them as a sign of honour and respect and the beer container always starts from them. Bongela (1977:12) confirms this when he says:

*Ukuba ungena endlwini yentselo, wofumanisa ukuba ngasekhohlo  
ngasemnyango kuhleli iintshetshevu zamaxhego.*

(If you enter a room where there is drinking of traditional beer, you will notice that next to the door on the left hand side sit *amaxhego* (5/6) the oldest members of the community.)

If the drinking party is that of the *abafana* (1/2) the last sip of beer at the bottom goes to the oldest of them. The same happens when the party is being patronised by old men. The remaining small quantity, *ingqokoqho* (9/10) goes to the oldest *xhego*. This is done to accord them respect. Under no circumstances will this practice be violated by anybody besides the two groups mentioned above. Anyone who ventures to do so will be regarded as showing disrespect to them.

According to Soga (1931: 355) a man's name cannot be shouted either during the day or during the night. If it happens, this is regarded as being derogatory to the dignity of a man.

A husband has to *hlonipha* his *umkhwekazi* (1/2) (mother in law) as well as the names of her mother i.e. the wife's grandmother and all female progenitors on his wife's side (Soga: 1931: 208). He must respect his wife by calling her by her new name such

as Nobuntu, Nobutho and not by her maiden name. Alternatively he will have to use her clan name - *isiduko* (7/8) such as MaDlamini, MaTshezi, MamBhele.

A husband of a daughter-in-law will not shake hands with his mother-in-law. He *hlonipha's* her as his wife does her father-in-law (Soga 1931 : 211).

### 2.2.3 Women and *hlonipha* customary practices

The *hlonipha* customary practice obtains among women in the same manner as it does among men. Nevertheless, the language used differs.

#### 2.2.3.1 Levels of division

As in the case of men, women groups are segmented into no less than five divisions. These divisions do not operate independently of each other but have some co-operative and working relationship with each other. Of much significance is the respect each accords to the other. Within these divisions women are divided into girls or (unmarried women) and married women .

##### 2.2.3.1.1 *Iintombi zamakhwenkwe* (Girls of the boys' age group)

This is the youngest group of girls whose ages range from about thirteen to sixteen years of age. Their ages correspond to those of the boys . These girls are generally known as *amagqiyane* (5/6). They are characterised by the wearing of short skirts and the carrying of handkerchiefs on their heads. They and the boys of their age often entertain themselves by attending a dance party known as *umtshotsho* (3/4) which is normally held on Saturday evenings.

They are taught to respect all the members of the divisions above them both from the women's and the men's sides. They may not jump over a stick used by people of the opposite sex. They must also refrain from jumping over yokes and chains and over the stretched legs of a relaxed person. In the past it was culturally unacceptable for a girl of this stage to stand, sit or relax with a boy of her age in a public place. Whenever an adult member of the public appeared she used to shy away as a sign of

respect. In a typical traditional society no romance, love play or romantic advances were generally allowed to be made and displayed publicly.

#### 2.2.3.1.2 *Iintombi zamadoda/ abafana* (Young men's age group)

When the boys who have been colleagues of *amagqiyane* (5/6) have reached a circumcision stage, *amagqiyane* are also accorded some cultural promotion by having their hair completely shaven to symbolise transition from *iintombi zamakhwenkwe* stage to that of *iintombi zamadoda*. This is generally known as *ukuchetywa* ritual. This has its cultural significance for the transition is symbolised by the shaving off of their hair. That is why it is regarded as a ritual. After this episode they will not be allowed to fraternize with uncircumcised boys. They will be expected to be in the company of *amakrwala* and any other young men. They will be taught to display more respect to the members of the public and to the male members of their age group. As a mark of *ukuhlonipha* their skirts or *imibhaco* are a little longer and cover the knees.

If *umfana* (1/2) demonstrates interest in one of the girls of his particular stage whom he notices along the way, and makes a whistle for her to stop, she is obliged to stop and wait to hear what he has to say, no matter how much in a hurry she may be. This is the respect she is expected to show to the young man. Girls of this level are also subjected to the same ethics as *amagqiyane*. They have to shy away when they are discovered by adult members of the public walking or standing with men.

Other taboos involve entering *ubuhlanti* (14) during menstruation because of the belief that menstruation has a tendency to defile cattle and other stock and also interferes with fertility. This applies also to *amagqiyane* who reach menstruation period. There is also taboo with regard to milk and eggs. No woman of any level is allowed to jump over yokes, cattle chains and sticks used by men.

Soga (1931 : 356) mentions that girls do not eat kidneys, colon of animals, birds and a few other things. The penalty for transgressing this prohibition is that they will not

reach maturity, besides which should they have children these would have no hair on their heads.

Again girls will not eat marrow, for it is believed that their children will have runny noses. Further, they are not supposed to eat meat of fowls, for it is held that they will be great wanderers after the fashion of fowls. Again it is taboo to burn the floor sweepings or throw them out at night, for this would cause the family to be constantly in debt.

#### 2.2.3.1.3 *Ibakala labatshakazi/ oomakoti* ( The recently married group)

Of the six stages, this level suffers more restrictions than other levels with regard to movement, attire and language. Attire and language will be dealt with under their respective sub-headings. The following are some of the observances a *makoti* is often subjected to:

According to Finlayson (1984 :138) a recently married young woman

..... is taught to respect all the senior relatives of her husband, especially the male relatives and her mother-in-law. She has to avoid certain areas of the homestead which are frequented by the men and also the cattle kraal (Hunter 1961: 36-47). As the daughter-in-law she is expected to be responsible to her mother-in-law even more than to her husband and, in turn, the mother-in-law is expected to protect her.

Other restrictions will be dealt with under the sub-heading *Observances for women*.

#### 2.2.3.1.4 *Ibakala labafazana* (Young women's stage)

After a few months (depending on which homestead a woman is married within) certain restrictions with regard to attire and a few other observances are relaxed and *makoti* is now transformed into a young married woman *umfazana*. At this stage it is not necessary to carry *ixakatho* (5/6). An *umfazana* (1/2) can now use just a scarf or a three-knotted white cloth called *unomemeza* (1/2a) round her waist. There is also some adjustment to her head gear known as *iqhiya* (9/10). She is now free to walk

and work around the homestead without of course violating the prohibitions on some of the restricted areas. She is expected to respect all the levels above her and she continues to receive directions from the mother-in-law and sister-in-law with regard to other *hlonipha* practices.

#### 2.2.3.1.5 *Ibakala loomama* (Level of old/ mature womanhood)

The criterion for reaching this stage is usually age and experience in the world of marriage. This experience covers personal and social responsibilities and one of these responsibilities is to give guidance to the levels below them in all matters regarding *hlonipha*. Although they command a lot of respect from the *makotis* and *abafazana*, they also pay due respect to *amaxhegwazana* (5/6) who are their social seniors.

#### 2.2.3.1.6 *Ibakala lamaxhegwazana* (the very old women's stage)

This is equivalent to the last stage of the very old men *amaxhego* (5/6). *Amaxhegwazana* who have gone through the mill are no longer actively involved in social and cultural activities. If there is an occasion such as wedding, circumcision ritual, *intonjane* (seclusion ritual) and any other cultural activity, their attendance is only ceremonial. However, because of the high respect they command they may be asked to say something or to give a word of advice or to sort out a dispute or solve a problem emanating from any of the levels below. At any feast, special meat parts such as kidneys, offal parts, and sheep heads are given to them as a sign of respect.

### 2.2.4 **General *hlonipha* observances by women**

It should be noted that *hlonipha* is an all encompassing concept as it will be shown in the following discussions.

#### 2.2.4.1 **Bodies**

It has been the prerogative of traditional society to maintain certain restrictions on *abafazi* (1/2) particularly *oomakoti* (1/2a). Practically all married women are expected

to have their bodies fully covered at all times when they go public. Hence they all wear long *imibhaco* (3/4) and long dresses that drop as far as the ankles. Their arms are under cover and their heads are also covered with head scarves. These restrictions fall under the category of *isihlonipho*. The major reason for showing no body parts is to *hlonipha* male relatives-in-law starting from *umninimzi* (1/2) ( head of the family ) to other members of the public. The exception to this rule are *amagqiyane* and, to a certain extent, *iintombi zamadoda*.

#### 2.2.4.2 Babies

One of the *hlonipha* rules applying strictly to *oomakoti* and *abafazana* is the one that precludes them from suckling their babies in the presence of their fathers-in-law. If this becomes unavoidable, the baby and the breasts have to be fully covered while suckling is taking place. The father-in-law is so revered that the young woman is also not allowed to remain in the same room alone with him or sit next to him or even touch him. This prohibition also affects greeting. Soga (1931 : 211) confirms this when he says:

Again there is an interdict whereby the daughter-in-law shall not salute her father-in-law by shaking hands with him until the interdict has been removed.

#### 2.2.4.3 Laundry

It has been generally one of the functions of all women in a traditional society to wash all dirty clothes for the entire family. But *makoti* is, as a sign of *hlonipha*, not allowed to wash the underwear of her father-in-law. They may be washed by her mother-in-law.

#### 2.2.4.4 Milk and *amasi* taboo and *ukutyiswa kwamasi* ritual

The taboo on milk which is placed on girls continues and is also applied to the newly married women. For them to partake of milk, there is a special ritual known as *ukutyiswa kwamasi* - (the eating of sour milk). There is also another aspect of milk



taboo which Soga (1931: 355) describes. He maintains that :

The first milk from a cow which has just given birth to a calf is not partaken of by women for it is held that if they partake of the beestings, the new-born calf would wither and die. It is also believed that the local cattle would contract sickness or they would die.

With regard to the same taboo on milk, Levitas *et al* (1984: 64) have another version.

They allege that:

Women are not usually allowed to milk the cattle or even to touch the milk utensils. Among the Nguni women are also forbidden to drink milk with non-clansmen. Because newly wedded brides come from outside clan, they are initially barred from drinking milk in their husbands' homes.

What the above authors have said has some element of truth in that every married woman in a traditional society is forbidden from drinking milk at her married home before the ritual on *ukutyiswa kwamasi* has been officially conducted.

Also on *ukutyiswa kwamasi* Mkonto (1991 : 124) comments thus:

*Baya kuboniswa loo bhokhwe yaloo msebenzi ixhelwe bekho. Kukhutshwa intsonyama kumkhono wasekinene yosiwe kuziswe amasi. Umninimzi uya kulaa ndlu inomtshakazi, ehleli yena emva kocango amtyise, ethoba loo nyama ngamasi eenkomo zekhaya. Kweminye imizi kuqhutyelwa ebuhlanti. Iya kuphekwa ke loo nyama ityiwe ngumntu wonke.*

(The bridal party will be shown that selected goat for the *amasi* (6) ritual and will be slaughtered in their presence. A small portion of meat called *intsonyama* (9/10) is cut from the right front limb and is roasted on fire. The head of the family will take it to the hut where the bride is kept behind the door and give it to her to eat. She will drink the milk obtained from the cows belonging to her husband's home. In other homes, this little ceremony takes place inside the kraal. The rest of the carcass is chopped, sliced, cooked and dished to everybody to eat)

#### 2.2.4.5 Eggs

The eating of eggs has been a taboo particularly for young women. There have been many theories around this prohibition. One of the theories is that unmarried women who eat eggs will have the misfortune of getting pregnant because of the richness of the egg yoke. Bongela and Makubalo (1983:35) express the same opinion when they say: "*Intombi yona akufuneki itye amaqanda ngokuba iya kusuka ilahlekwe sisimilo*". - (A girl is not supposed to eat eggs because she will lose her moral fibre.) Soga (1931: 354) has another theory which says "Women will not eat eggs under any circumstances; at least this may be said of women still in the state of heathenism. It is a self imposed prohibition. The idea underlying it is the belief that eggs are supposed to make women both incontinent and incapable of conception."

#### 2.2.4.6 Stepping over a stick

The prohibition on stepping over a stick used by men continues from the girls' level and affects all women. As already explained in the case of men, a stick is a staff of authority and respect and is always associated with men who are either alive or dead. Soga's comment on this aspect is that "stepping over a stick or any household article by a woman is strictly taboo. No woman will step over it, and if it is in her way, she will move it aside or go round it before passing. So also with any household utensil, yoke chains or even a leg stretched out by some reclining person." (Soga (1931: 354)

#### 2.2.4.7 Entrance to the kraal

The prohibition which precluded girls from entering kraals during menstruation is also applied to married women. In the case of the latter the prohibition applies at all times except under special circumstances as will be explained below. The main belief is that they render the kraals unclean and all cattle will become weak in the knees and subsequently die. Soga (1931: 354) explains thus:

The idea arises from women being subject to menstrual periods and at

such times are liable to defile anything they come into contact with, especially as no protective shields are used. The taboo is less imperative on old women who have gone past menopause. They may enter the kraal when circumstances demand this departure from ordinary usage. If, for instance, young calves which are herded apart from their mothers should get to the latter while within the kraal, and there are no men about, any woman may enter the kraal and separate them, but she must first scatter a few white beads in the kraal, and at the same time conciliate the ancestral spirits by saying 'ndingenel' amathole' - (I am entering for the calves). If she enters without this oblation and prayer, she will have an excessive flow of menstrual period.

There are other occasions for *amaxhegwazana* to enter the kraal. It is when they want to gather dry loose top manure called *irhugula* (9/10) which is used to kindle fire during cooking. Again it must be emphasised here that they normally do this when there is also no one else to send. When there are things like ancestral invocation, *imbeleko* ritual and other ceremonies, no woman is allowed inside the kraal irrespective of age except blood relatives.

#### 2.2.4.8 Marrow taboo

According to Soga, women will not partake of marrow - commonly known as *umongo* (1/2a) for, should they do so, any children which they may give birth to will be troubled with nasal mucus.

#### 2.2.4.9 Dishing up food

In a family unit, food is prepared and dished up by *makoti*. Usually there is a dish for every member of the family and all children are usually grouped together. The most important dish is that of the father-in-law. *Makoti* has to make sure that the first scoop of food goes to the dish of the children or females and never to that of the men. The belief is, according to Soga (1931: 355), that to reverse the order and dish up for men first would cause them to suffer from side stitches *amahlaba* (5/6).

#### 2.2.4.10 *Ukucweza*

During the first few months of her *mendo* (marriage), a *makoti* is subjected to a *hlonipha* rule which restricts her from walking in front of the dwelling structures and thereby making use of *inkundla* (9/10) (open space in front of the buildings) freely like any other person. She is expected to walk behind all dwelling structures as she goes about her daily chores. This is known as *ukucweza* (15). The idea is to *hlonipha* ancestors who are presumed to be staying at liberty within the premises particularly at the *inkundla* and at the cattle kraal.

#### 2.2.4.11 Conclusion

According to Finlayson (1984:138), "the woman is expected to *hlonipha* throughout her life. She is not allowed to treat this custom lightly and is subjected to severe public shame should she ignore the rules laid down for her. The forces exerted by public opinion are a very important deterrent in upholding these rules as one may be ostracised."

### 2.3 Cultural usage of clan names for *hlonipha* purposes

A clan name or *isiduko* (7/8) is a name used by a family unit or a group of people who trace their genealogy from one ancestor. A number of authorities have attempted to define *isiduko* using examples.

Kuse (1973: 2-3) describes *isiduko* by explaining that:

An ancestor from whose name the nomenclature of a clan is derived is the most pre-eminent one of many ancestors who still live in the collective memory of the clan. His pre-eminence is based upon the clan's memory of some heroic deed he performed or some outstanding contribution he made to the well being of the clan. His position is not based solely on chronological - genealogical factors. The names of

other prominent ancestors or heroes of the past are of great importance as designations for members of the clan.

Nyamende (1998:1) as quoted by Bongela (1991:126) puts his definition thus:

*Isiduko ligama elimele uludwe lwamanye amagama ezithi iintsapho eziphuma kumnombo omnye zaziwe ngawo. Kwakhona la magama ngamagama aziqukayo ezi ntsapho zibe ngabantu abanye.*

(*Isiduko* is a name which represents a list of other names from which families which trace their origin from it are known by it. Again these names tend to keep these families into one united family unit.)

The following are some examples of *iziduko* (7/8) which belong to the different groups of the Xhosa national unit.

1. **Hlubi**

From the Hlubi clan we get the following *iziduko*: Rhadebe, Mhlanga, Msi, Ndlovu, Mthimkhulu.

2. **Msimang**: Mthwakazi, Songo, Sobehle, Nombutho.

3. **Thsele**: Msiya, Nkatyana, Mshweshwe

4. **Majola**: Ngwanya, Vukuzumbethe, Mphankomo, Mthwakazi, Mlanjeni, Mphahlwa. Ndlebendlovu

5. **Nozulu**: Mpafane, Luthukela, Nonkosi, Mnguni, Mbanguba

6. **Mkhwane** : Mwelase, Ngwekazi, Ntukela, Sigasa, Cilili, Sivunda and many more.

On the subject of *hlonipha*, *iziduko* play a very important role in fostering human relations and maintaining discipline.

### 2.3.1 The role of *iziduko* with regard to men

Men generally address or refer to each other by using *iziduko* as a sign of respect. Their real names are hardly ever used and they are replaced by *iziduko*. This can be noticed during conversation, salutation, (*Ah, Jolinkomo!*) dialogue, persuasive talk and friendly argument. A person may use as many varieties of the same clan name as he likes and there is usually no limit to the number of *iziduko* he wishes to use.

One thing peculiar about the use of *iziduko* is that they are not used to address living people only in their everyday language usage but are also used to talk to or about the dead as well and the tone in which they are used is strictly that of *ukuhlonipha*. Bongela illustrates this in two of his works viz.

(i) Inkaba: (1983: 92)

*Kusuke enye indoda yakwaMvulane egama linguNtatyana engumhlabi weenkomo. Iye yanqula kumavayo ithetha ngomlomo isithi: 'Nina mathongo akuthi, zinyanya zikabawo, bantu abakhulu, nto zikaNcilashe, zikaMvulane, zikaBhayi, zikaMsuthu, zikaMfokeni, yini na ukuba niqumbe kangaka bantu abakhulu?'*

(One man from the Mvulane clan by the name of Ntatyana, tasked to slaughter the cow, came forward. He invoked the ancestors saying: 'You, our ancestors, fathers of my father, great people, sons of Ncilashe, of Mvulane, of Bhayi, of Msuthu, of Mfokeni, why are you so angry you great people?')

(ii) The silent people: (1983 : 87)

Great forefathers of the Miya", began Lindile, "Gcwanini, Sbewu, Mancopho, Rhengqwa, Sjadu, whose power over the Miya clan is indisputable, we, your offspring, have made this invocation at your

son's place today in an attempt to appeal to you for help in these troubled times.

### 2.3.2 Their role with regard to women

As soon as a woman gets married, greater emphasis is put on the use of *isiduko* as a mark of *isihlonipho*. This, in a way, brings some cultural recognition to the woman because of the position she has assumed. This emphasis starts when the girl reports that a certain young man has proposed marriage to her. Her parents will start making investigations in order to make sure that the young man's *isiduko* is not related to hers as it is the case with some *iziduko* such as *iBhele lakwaLanga* (Bhele from the Langa division) and *iBhele lakwaKhuboni* (Bhele from the Khuboni division). Also *iZizi lakwaSijadu* (Zizi from the Sijadu division) and *iZizi lakwaRhadu* (Zizi from the Rhadu section). There have been rumours and talks of people from these clan groups marrying each other although they are basically from the same clans. The Xhosa culture strictly precludes any marriage of people from the same clan name on the grounds that it is incestuous.

When the marriage has been contracted either by civil rights or customary union, the *makoti* is addressed in an elevated fashion based on *isihlonipho* as from the period she begins her married life. She is given a new name such as Nowinile, Novungamile, Nobuntu etc or she is called by her *isiduko* e.g. MaNkala, MaRhadebe, MamBhele, MaDontsa. This is done by affixing the prefix 'ma' to her *isiduko*.

To ensure *makoti*'s respectability, even the husband is duly bound to address her in the form prescribed after she has assumed the status of a legally married woman. This new status which carries a mark of respectability, is widely recognised and the community members also address her as *uMamJwarha umkaThobile* - (MamJwarha, Thobile's wife), or *uMaNkilane umolokazana kaDumile* - (MaNkilane, Dumile's daughter-in-law).

To a married woman the use of *isiduko* is very important for it carries a mark of dignity and respect. It remains permanent until the woman reaches the very old woman's stage. It is therefore common to hear an *ixhegwazana* being addressed as *umakhulu uMaDlamini* (grandmother MaDlamini).

### 2.3.2.1 Use of *isiduko* from a general perspective

#### \* **Clan villages**

Clan families living together tend to be recognised by many communities in most parts of the Eastern Cape especially if that clan has a track record as having played a significant role in history, in politics, in social matters and in many other attributes which render such a clan highly respected as a unit. As an example it is common knowledge that the Bhele, Zizi, Hlubi and a few other notable clans living together in recognised villages in the Eastern Cape have, for many years inhabited these villages referred to as *ilali yasemaBheleni*, or *emaBheleni*, *emaHlubini*, *emaZizini*. (The Bhele village; the Hlubi village; the Zizi village). Political leadership of such villages is normally picked from leaders with the relevant *isiduko*. For instance it has been widely known that, as an example, *ilali yasemaBheleni* (The Bhele village) is headed by a Bhele chief or headman who normally commands great respect from his subjects and people in the neighbouring villages.

#### \* **Individual homes**

Besides group clans, individual people with exceptional qualities have won the hearts of many people by their social, political, religious and other vital contributions towards the welfare of such people both near and far. Such contributions have earned them respect to such an extent that their places of residence have been referred to by their clan names in order to honour and respect them. A notable example is that of a certain Mrs Mali who is well known for her great contribution in social and



religious matters and also for possessing healing powers. She is widely known as *MaNgconde* throughout the Eastern Cape and other Provinces and her residence is also widely known as *KwaMaNgconde*. There are numerous other places such as, *KwaRhadebe*, *KwaMamtolo*, *KwaMaya*, *KwaSukwini* and others where owners of such places have earned respect for their contributions to society in various ways.

In his work, Bongela (1983: 1) illustrates, the use of *isiduko* to refer to a residential place:

For a moment he looked puzzled, then, as he noticed his fellow workers starting to move slowly up the hill, he nodded to himself, remembering that today there was a wedding at *KwaMiya*. Andile, second son of Rufus Mendile, was getting married.

## 2.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the above exposition that the *hlonipha* training and practices described in this chapter were not only the choice of individual members of the family per se, but were the responsibility of the entire family unit ranging from early childhood to the level of old age. Such *hlonipha* practice was a cultural feature which formed the basis of a traditional mode of living, behavioural pattern and cultural stability in an indigenous society.

## CHAPTER 3

### RELIGION

#### 3.1 Introduction

The concept of *isihlonipha* as defined in Chapter 2 does not only prevail from person to person but also between man and the Supreme God who is regarded by amaXhosa as the creator of the universe and the world around them. Although the manner of worship of the traditional societies differed from that of the White missionaries who brought Christianity into this country during and after 1799, yet the Xhosa people manifested their religious inclinations by worshipping *uMdali* the creator and the Supreme God they called *Qamata* or *iNkosi yeZulu* (Lord of the Heavens) and also the ancestors.

Soga (1937: 29) clarifies this in his assertion.

*UTHixo lo kwakusithiwa ukubizwa kwakhe ngumDali-uQamata.*

(This Supreme God was called Qamata the Creator.)

This chapter will also attempt to describe the worshipping of totems which were associated with religion. Soga (1937: 29) mentions this in his writing.

*Uthe esaziwa ngale ndlela phofu suka nako kukhonzwa milambo, iinyoka, oohili, iingwenya, iintaka, izivivane, iimpundulu, imishologu ngemishologu esingeyithi nqa.*

(In addition to the worshipping of Qamata, totems such as rivers, snakes, crocodiles, ordinary birds, lightning birds, *izivivane* (pile of stones dropped by travellers to make small heaps) and various spirits, were also worshipped).

This worship was done in an atmosphere of great *reverence*. For example when people referred to the river they did not mention it by name but used references such as *emzini omkhulu* or *komkhulu* (at the great place) *abantu abakhulu bomlambo* or *abahlekazi* ( to refer to river occupants like snakes, crocodiles, birds etc).

Again when travellers went by and came across *isivivane*, each dropped a stone on the heap murmuring such words as:

*Bagqithile apha abakwaDlomo, kwaSopitsho, kwaNtomntwana, kwaNgqolomsila, kwaYemyem nabo bezikhonzela becela amathamsanqa neentsikelelo kule ndlela bayihambayo kuni zikwalaxu ezaluse iintsizana ezingabahambi. Makudede ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya.*

(There came by travellers from the Dlomo, Sopitsho, Ntomntwana, Ngqolomsila and the Yemyem clan asking for blessings and safe journey from you dignitaries and ancestors assigned the task of looking after the poor travellers. Let there be light in this journey)

### 3.2 Supernatural Beings

Hodgson (1982: 47), writing on the African religion has this to say:

Traditional thought patterns indicated that the Supreme Being was closely associated with the sky which is sometimes called *iZulu* (Sky or Heaven). There was a belief that all the awesome aspects of nature such as drought, thunder, hail, violent rain and wind were attributed to the Supreme Being and were often personified by *iZulu*. For example when lightning struck a person, the common reaction was that *uthatyathwe liZulu* (he has been taken away by the Sky or Heaven).

In confirming Hodgson's theory, West (1976: 18) says: "Like most Africans, the Xhosa speaking peoples believed in the Supernatural Being, a Creator, who was, however, a remote God never approached directly and who never deigned to mediate in the affairs of the world."

Lightning was sometimes referred to as *iNkosi* - (a Chief or Lord of the Sky) hence there was also another expression used when lightning struck such as *iNkosi idlalile* - (the Lord has played) . Because of the fear and terror caused by lightning to people, animals and nature, people tended to respect it tremendously. What Hodgson (1982: 47) affirms, is today still a practical phenomenon which can be observed among traditional and semi-traditional people.

During thunder and when lightning flashes, they gather themselves in solemn humility inside their homes. If they talk, they talk in soft voices and no open mouthed smiles or careless laughter is allowed. All mirrors and shiny objects such as chains, kitchen utensils are either covered or taken away into concealment. Stricken animal carcasses are buried as a sign of respect and are not consumed which is similarly done to any dead domestic animal. Pointing a finger into the heavens has always been avoided, for, doing so is regarded as arrogance and display of lack of respect for the Supreme Being. Confirming this *hlonipha* rule Nomathemba Dekeda, one of the researcher's informants said:

*Musa ukukhomba izulu ngomnwe wokukhomba kuba uza kutyhaphaza iNyange leZulu. Loo mntu lowo uyahlonitshwa.*

(Avoid using a pointing finger to point at the skies because by doing so you are going to dazzle and blind the God of the Sky. That supreme Being is highly respected).

These used to be warning remarks passed by the parents to their children.

### 3.3 The ancestors

"Traditionally Xhosa speaking people believed in the existence of ancestors. These were the spirits of the dead members of the lineage who were the focus of religious activity in their daily lives. The ancestors were thought to be present in and around the homestead, but they were also believed to be living in a spirit world, either below the ground or water". Hodgson (1982: 26).

The zenith of the *hlonipha* activities in the lives of the Xhosa people has been reached with the practical veneration of the ancestors who are believed to have powers to control the lives and destinies of men in a similar manner as Qamata. West (1976: 18) claims that:

Far more significant in religious activity was the role of the shades of ancestors. They concerned themselves with the fate of their descendants and were believed to help or harm them according to their behaviour. Ancestors communicated with their descendants in most cases through dreams and could give instructions, express displeasure and so on. They had power only over their own children whom they could punish with sickness or misfortune if they were displeased or good fortune if they were satisfied.

When ancestors appear in dreams as West presupposes, they either make signs to indicate what they want or they express their wishes in words such as:

1.     *ndiyagodola"*  
      (I am feeling cold) or
2.     *kutheni le nto nindigcine apha ithuba elide kangaka?*  
      (why do you keep me here for such a long time?)

In both cases the implication is that ancestors want to be returned home through the *ukubuyiswa ritual* or at least something should be done by way of slaughtering an animal or brewing some traditional beer on their behalf.

Bongela (1983: preface) also expresses this world view with regard to ancestors in the following terms:

Health, intellectual gifts, social eminence and prosperity are all visible signs of the ancestors' benevolence and generosity towards those who recognise them. Ill health, poverty, economic, social and educational deprivation are, on the other hand regarded as signs of an ill disposition towards those who not only neglect the ancestors, but also fail to accept their existence. Their wrath may result in death in the

form of unnatural causes, or the destruction of property through mysterious circumstances for example death of livestock in spite of medical attempt to rescue them.

Because of the recognition of such powers, traditional societies have always shown some inclination to venerate these ancestral spirits by indulging in the following:

### 3.3.1 *Ukukhatshwa* (A send off ritual)

When the head of the family dies, a beast is slaughtered either during the day of the funeral or a day or two after, in order to honour his spirit as the body is laid to rest in his grave. During the period of mourning after his death, there are certain restrictions pertaining to *hlonipha* such as the removal of all shiny objects in the huts, use of black tea or coffee only, use of *iinkobe* (boiled mealies), use of black mourning attire and black buttons by the entire family as a sign of respect and mourning. During the slaughtering of the *nzila* beast, words of reverence such as these are uttered by the piercer.

*Kuyintlonelo nembeko enkulu ukuba sihlabe wena Bhayilam  
ngenjongo yokuba sikhaphe umninimzi weli khaya, uSpokojane into  
kaVelem. Nantso ke Cekwane inkabi esiyikhuphayo ukukhapha wena  
sisithi ndlela-ntle.*

(It is with deep respect that we have chosen to sacrifice you Bhayilam as a symbol of respect to accompany the head of this family, Spokojane Velem. Cekwane, accept, with pleasure, this beast which we are slaughtering on your behalf. Farewell to you.)

### 3.3.2 *Ukubuyiswa* (A bringing back ritual)

According to Ndungane (1992: 56) after six months or more, another beast is slaughtered in honour of the same ancestor and a ritual is performed where his spirit is asked to come back to his homestead and look after the entire family. This occasion is marked by speeches of reverence and special *hlonipha* attire characterised by traditional garb worn by both men and women. The speeches are generally made by

men only inside the cattle kraal where the blood of the slaughtered beast soaks the *umthonyama* (3/4) i.e. kraal manure. All women, old and young, have to abide by *hlonipha* rules on this day. Before the beast is pierced, words of reverence such as these are said usually by the most senior member of the family.

*Sizakele, bawowethu sonke kolu sapho lwakwaSikhutshwa, namhlanje sidibene kweli khaya lakho ngeenjongo zokubuyisa wena Thsele, Msiya, wena wakwaMshweshwe. Ngale nkabi yalapha ekhaya, uSelani, luthi olu sapho buyela ekhaya uze kuba phakathi kwalo, ulwaluse. Eli gazi lale nkabi, liphalezwa kulo mthonyama namhlanje lolu sapho lwakho ngeenjongo yokuhlonipha nokwamela wena Thsele. Makube chosi kube hele.*

(Sizakele, father of us all in this Sikhutshwa family, today we have gathered in this home of yours with the aim of bringing you back home Thsele, Msiya, Mshweshwe. With this beast named Selani from this home, your family pleads with you to come back and be with them once more. The blood that is going to be spilt on this manure will symbolise their respect and welcome to you Thsele. Let there be peace and harmony.)

### 3.3.3 *Ukuhlanjwa komzi* (Rinsing of the home)

According to Ndungane (1992: 52) *ukuhlanjwa komzi* was a service meant to cleanse the home which was visited and plagued by misfortunes and bad luck caused by the neglect of ancestors. During times of conflict, discord, bad luck, ill omen, stagnated progress and development and other disturbing signs of suffering experienced by members of the family, a beast was slaughtered to invoke the sympathy and help of the ancestors who were subsequently invited to ameliorate this disturbing situation by sorting out all the above mentioned problems and to rinse the home. Again here conciliatory speeches were made in an atmosphere of humility and respect.

Nobantu Mshumpela, one of the researcher's informants from Butterworth cited the following oblation as an example of home rinsing. She belongs to the Nozulu clan:

*Njengoko ikhaya eli lakwaNozulu, kwaMpafane, kwaKheswa, kwaThukela ligutyungelwe lilifu elimnyama, apho ukufa, izifo,*

*indlala, imimoya emdaka namashwangusha ezenzela ukuthanda kolu sapho lwalapha ekhaya, ngale nkabi siyiwisayo apha namhlanje sizama ukuwucoca lo mzi sigutyula konke okungendawo, sicela futhi namathamsanqa kwizinyanya zakwaNozulu ukuiba zingasifulatheli zisiyekele ngobubi nokungendawo.*

(As the Nozulu, Mpafane, Kheswa and Thukela homestead is under a dark cloud because of the presence of death, diseases, poverty, evil spirits and bad luck which are roaming all over the place, with this beast which we are slaughtering here today, we are trying to cleanse all that is evil and we are invoking the benevolence of the Nozulu ancestors pleading with them not to give us their backs and allow such evil spirits to take control of the place).

The attire is usually the same as in the other two aspects above.

#### **3.3.4 Other activities**

All other activities or processes such as *imbeleko*, *utsiki*, *ilobola*, circumcision (*ulwaluko*) which are directly or indirectly connected with ancestors are normally done inside the cattle kraal by men and male relatives only. Here again the ancestors are asked to bless each of these occasions.

#### **3.3.5 Appeasement**

Occasionally each family indulges in a programme of offering gifts to the ancestors in the form of traditional brew where people gather and drink in the name of the ancestors who are given such gifts as a measure of showing gratitude, veneration and indebtedness to them for the benevolence they have shown to individual members of the family. Sometimes such gifts are offered to appease them when they have displayed indignation at some wrongs committed by the family members. The spokesman will utter words such as:

*Le bhekile, mawethu, ndiyenzela ukupha izinyanya kamanjalo ndibulela nezinto ezintle nezinkulu ezithe zasenzela zona kweli khaya.*

(I dedicate this beer drum to our ancestors who have been so



benevolent and generous towards this family.)

West (1976 : 18) in his confirmation of the above says: "To appease them regular offerings were made in the form of traditional beer or ritual killing of animals. Such sacrifices took place in times of family crises, and as a family affair were carried out by the head of the homestead."

### 3.4 Totems

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 26 (1768-1771: 540), "a totem is an object such as an animal or plant that serves as the emblem or symbol of a kinship group or a person." The term totemism has been used to characterise a cluster of traits in the religion and in the social organisation of many primitive peoples.

Totemism is, therefore, a complex of varied ideas and ways of behaviour based on a world view drawn from nature. There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects, the so called totems. The group or individual totemism exhibits common basic characteristics which occur with different emphases and not always in a complete form. The general characteristics are essentially the following: (1) viewing the totem as a companion, relative, protector, or helper - superhuman powers and abilities are ascribed to totems and totems are not only offered respect or occasional veneration but also can become objects of awe and fear: (2) use of special names and emblems to refer to the totem: (3) partial identification with the totem or symbolic assimilation to it: (4) prohibition against killing, eating, or touching the totem, even as a rule to shun it and (5) totemic rituals.

Totemism is particularly developed in the Australian Aborigines but other Black nations in Africa also practise it and various authorities have written at length on totemism. According to Myburgh (1981 : 116):

..... a totem is an animal, object, or other phenomenon symbolically linked with a particular group such as a clan or lineage and is often connected with the origin and survival of the group. Ritual acts may be performed to show the survival of the totem and thus also the group, and transgression of taboos concerning the totem is often supposed to have a dangerous supernatural effect. The totem is therefore venerated as sacred, but this does not mean that it is the god of the group.

Most Xhosa families use the term *izilo* (7/8) (beasts) to describe their totems which may appear in the form of reptiles, crustaceans, insects, birds and animals. A brief synopsis will be made below of each example of a totem among amaXhosa and how such a totem is given a special reverence or *hlonipha* attention.

#### 3.4.1 The snake totem (*uMajola*)

This is a well known totem amongst amaXhosa particularly those who are linked to the Mpondomise tribe. This light brown snake of the mole snake family is called *uMajola* (1/2a). It is named after the *Jola* or *Majola* clan whose other clan names are Mphankomo, Ngwanya, Vukuzumbethe, Ndlebendlovu, Mpondomise, Qengebe, Mthwakazi, Mlanjeni, Mphahlwa and Jolinkomo. The snake has a characteristic of paying silent visits to the MaJola clan members particularly after events such as child birth and before or during family and clan functions or *imicimbi* (3/4).

The appearance of *Majola* inside the house or within the home premises is regarded as a great honour by the members of the clan. Women begin to *hlonipha* it by adjusting their head gear and dresses and will tie *oonomemeza* or scarves around their waists. Men begin to sing praises unto it thanking it for the visit which they consider as bringing fortune or good luck to the clan or family.

*Wena Majola kaNgwanya, kaVukuzumbethe, kaMphankomo,  
kaMthwakazi, kaNdlebendlovu, kaMlanjeni, kaMphahlwa,  
kaJolinkomo! Tyaph' ufike Mpondomise lomthonyama! Ulibululu  
lethamsanqa nelizisa impilo kulo mzi kaNgwanya.*

*Sonke sithi 'Bayethe Jolinkomo!' ubukho bakho Buyasiphilisa."*

(You Majola of Ngwanya, Vukuzumbethe, Mphankomo, Mthwakazi, Ndlelendlovu, Mlanjeni, Mphahlwa and Jolinkomo clan! It's good you came you indigenous Mpondomise. You are a snake of good fortune and bringer of health and affluence to this Ngwanya home. We all hail you in unison saying 'Good day to you, Jolinkomo! Your presence is a source of health and inspiration to us.)

Offerings of mealies, beans, pumpkin, sorghum seeds, tobacco and a few other important gifts are made and it is expected to disappear after these offerings. But if it remains for a couple of days longer than expected, traditional beer is brewed and figuratively offered to it as a sign of respect and a method of persuading it to go. It will secretly disappear without anybody noticing its departure. Under no circumstances may this snake be killed or tampered with.

One of the factors which made Jordan's *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* such a popular book was his inclusion of the *Majola* totem snake into the story and the tragedy that befell the chief character Zwelinzima and his wife Nobantu and their only child, Zululiyazongoma, was attributed to Nobantu's destruction of this totem snake much to the disgust of the Mpondomise traditional group.

### 3.4.2 The animal totem : *Ikati yehlathi* (The leopard)

The *Phakathi* clan which also calls itself Nonkosi, Nongwekazi, Nofayise, Mabhengu, Mngunikazi, and Nomxongo claims that their totem is the leopard commonly known as *ikati yehlathi* which dwells in the thickness of a dense forest while its counterpart *ikati* or *ingwe yomlambo* (the river leopard) dwells in the vicinity of the deep waters of the river. According to Ngcauzele, one of the researcher's informants, it pays occasional visits to the Phakathi families by night a day or two before there is a family function purported to honour their ancestors. It is always preceded by a rainbow silhouette. This totem is visible to the members of the clan only and will easily take the shape of a big brown dog or a huge cat to those who see it.

Besides honouring family traditional functions or rituals, it will appear also when the family is undergoing a crisis. The old man Ngcauzele who supplied the researcher with the details about this totem, narrated a strange story about his hectic experience when he was, one day, involved in a motor car accident. His car after leaving the road rolled over and locked all its doors and was threatening to burst into flames while he was still inside. Suddenly he saw a pack of what he thought were brown dogs and these surrounded the damaged vehicle and started barking.

Suddenly one of the doors unlocked and he managed to escape unhurt. The so called dogs had vanished.

Kota, a *Bhele* who claims that the Bhele totem is also the leopard, corroborates Ngcauzele's theory. He says that a member of the Bhele clan who is undergoing training for *ukuthwasa* (15) i.e. call for priesthood or *ubugqirha* (14) is trained under the aegis of *ikati yehlathi*. During crises the huge cats appear in dreams and if the end results of that particular crisis are showing positive signs, they will appear very friendly. But if the ancestors have a complaint against a member of the clan, the cats will scratch and bite that particular person. In that case it will be necessary to show respect to them by brewing some traditional beer which will be accompanied by a can of *ubulawu* (14) in an attempt to rectify the situation.

The ingredients of this medicine will be a herb called *umfaz' onengxolo*., another herb called *umomzane* and another one called *ubulawu obumhlophe* called *ungcana* or *unozithodlana* or *unkom' entaba*. This white *bulawu* is mixed with the red one known as *impendulo* (9/10). All these ingredients are mixed together and kept in a can or *ibhekile* (9/10) and will be used to soothe the wrath of the ancestors. When this has been done the totem cats will appear very friendly in the dreams and there will be general welfare in the family. Besides the use of beer to *hlonipha* the totems a goat is sometimes slaughtered when circumstances demand.

Another informant Mlulami Buso from the *Skhosana* clan, also claims that their totem is the leopard which is commonly known as *ingwe yehlathi*. This is an animal that makes its visitation at midnight when any of the following occasions are taking place:

- (a) Slaughtering of a beast in honour of an ancestor.
- (b) Seclusion ritual (*ukuthomba kwentombi*).
- (c) *Ukwaziswa komzi* i.e. making known to the ancestors and people in general a newly built home.
- (d) *Ukwenzela intombi intambo*. This is a special ceremony purported to make a traditional necklace with hair strings plucked out of an ox tail for medical purposes.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to organise all the clan members particularly men and women other than married ones and to visit the forest for a ritual known as (*ukuqokelelwa kwezihlewele*) i.e. to bring together all the ancestral spirits of the clan. This takes place where the totem cat is staying in the middle of the forest. To *hlonipha* the totem men wear no coats but cover themselves with blankets and they walk bare-footed. They must be completely disciplined and quietly spoken to show some respect. The speeches made in front of the totem are intended to call upon the ancestral spirits and to *hlonipha* their totem.

At home while waiting for the men to come back, the married women are expected to wear long traditional skirts made of animal skin and to wear other traditional *hlonipha* attire. They also remain disciplined and are also quietly spoken.

### 3.4.3 Bees and ants totems

These two totems may not exclusively belong to one clan or group as there are many individuals and clans who also claim to have had visitations from them and the method of spiriting them away seems to be similar. One of the clans interviewed is the

*Madiba* clan which also calls itself Dlomo, Sopitsho, Ngqolomsila, Vela bambhentsele, Ngubengcuka, Ndabanyamakazi, Mthombo and Dilikandonga.

#### 3.4.3.1 *Iinyosi* (The bees)

The researcher was told by Dr. Nokhwabuza one of the researcher's informants that when bees come to any member of the *Madiba* clan in huge swarms and settle anywhere inside the premises of a homestead, particularly inside a house, they are regarded as highly important visitors and are treated with great respect. No one is allowed to use insect killers or hot water or any method used for the purpose of killing them. Instead of flying away they become vicious and may kill animals and people if they are so provoked.

It is alleged that if these bees are treated with respect they become humble and will mix easily with the members of the family and their domestic animals. The purpose of the visitation is presumed to be a message from the ancestors who would like the family to do something for them. This may be the brewing of traditional beer on their behalf or the slaughtering of an animal or both. Ancestors generally make such demands.

The *Madiba* bees normally invade the entire home and will not leave until their "request" has been met. Thereupon it becomes imperative to brew some traditional beer and call all the members of the family and the clan together. If the bees have been around a little longer and have produced honey, all the honey combs will be removed by a very close relative and will be placed on small tree branches before being consumed by the family. But most importantly words of respect will be said to them as they are being persuaded to leave.

*Bayethe nina zinambuzane zakwaMadiba!  
KwaSopitsho, kwaNgqolomsila, kwaVelabambhentsele!  
Nina nithumywe kwaNgubengcuka, kwaNdabanyamakazi,  
kwaMthombo, ewe kwaDilikandonga bo!*

*Nina niphaphela phezulu njengokhozi!  
Siyanibulela ngokuza kwenza isidima, inzolo nesithozela  
Kula maxhanti omzi wakwaMadiba.  
Besizazi kakade ukuba niza neendaba ezimnandi.  
Siyabazi ubusi benu, sibazi ngencasa nonambitheko.*

*Umzi lo wakuni uyabulela ngobukho benu, zinto zikabawo.  
Umzi lo wakuni uyanamkela ngembeko, zinto zikabawo.  
Umzi lo wakuni wanelisekile bubukho benu, zinto zakuthi.  
Xa kukwesi sithuba uthi ningakhululeka nihambe ngoxolo.  
Umzi wakwaMadiba uthi wanelisekile kuba umsebenzi  
Niwufezile.*

(We greet you all ye Madiba insects!  
Born of Sopitsho, Ngqolomsila, Velabambhentsele!  
Ye messengers of Ngubengcuka, Ndabanyamakazi,  
Mthombo and Dilikandonga!

Ye high fliers in the fashion of a hawk!  
We thank you for bringing peace, dignity  
And harmony in this, our Madiba home.  
We knew you were carriers of good tidings!  
We knew your honey for its sweetness and deliciousness.

This family highly appreciates your presence, honourable people.  
This family warmly welcomes you, ye honourable people.  
This family is humbly satisfied with your visit, ye honourable people.  
At this juncture you are now free to go, ye honourable people.  
At this juncture you may leave in peace; your mission is fulfilled.)

All the married women will be expected to wear their *hlonipha* attire. The bees may leave after this ritual but if they come back again after a relatively short time, the family will gather again and choose male delegates who will visit an *igqirha* (5/6) (a diviner) i.e. *ukuya emntwini* to find out why the bees won't leave. If the diviner professes the reason as a further demand of a serious nature from the ancestors, a beast will now be slaughtered. But before the slaughter, the entire family will be required to go for *imfukamo* (9/10). This is a gathering of all the family or clan members in a traditional hut known as *ungquphantsi* (1/2a) where they will all spend the night there worshipping. The idea is to enable *izilo zakwaMadiba* (Madiba ancestral asipirits) to visit them, to lick them, to fraternise with them and to rub

shoulders with them. On the following day the beast will be slaughtered. Its bellowing will, indeed, bring much jubilation and happiness. Then the bees will subsequently fly away.

#### 3.4.3.2 *Ubugqwangu* (Red ants)

These huge ants arrive mysteriously and will invade the entire homestead and will be found in large numbers in almost all the huts and houses: in the kitchen, in the bedrooms, between sheets, inside the crevices, and almost everywhere. No amount of fumigation will destroy them and if they remain for a long time without any move from the family to honour them, they will move in a line as is their characteristic and will pinch and make everybody uncomfortable. They may even grow wings and fly all over premises to cause panic. The solution is to brew some traditional beer and to humbly request them to leave. If they persist, the same technique as is done to the bees is also done in their case. They will then leave. Note that it is possible for both the bees and the ants to visit the home simultaneously.

#### 3.4.4 **Animal totem** (The dog)

A dog is a common animal which is regarded as a pet in most South African and Eastern Cape homes. Most people use it as a watch dog but to some families or clans it performs the function of a totem. One of the informants approached was Zolile Mahambehhlala of the *Mnkabane* clan which also calls itself Noqazo, Ndluntsha, Khamanzana, Majeke nomthi weemboty.

Besides the general belief that a dog is a good representative of an ancestral spirit when it appears in a dream even to people outside the Mnkabane clan, the Mnkabanes emphasise specifically that when a dog appears in their dreams it is indubitably their totem and that it comes as a special agent to send special messages designed for them only. These are:



- (a) When the dogs appear to be barking and threatening to bite, this is meant to be a warning of an imminent danger threatening to befall the clan or family members. They are therefore warned to look out for dangerous signs portraying physical assault, conflict, quarrels, disputes, family division, injuries and even death.
- (b) If they actually bite but not injure or kill, this is regarded as an ominous sign that all is not well with the clan or individual families. The Mnkabane ancestors may be unhappy or actually angry about the wrongs some or all the clan members may have committed at some specific time and place.

Mahambehhlala argues that because dogs are generally domestic pets for most families, the respect the Mnkabane clan nurtures for their totem dogs is also transferred and applied to dogs in general. For example:

- (a) When dogs from the local surroundings appear on any occasion where there is a feast or ritual designed to honour the Mnkabane ancestors, they are all welcome and are given the share of the ritual. The belief is that some could be representing their totem.
- (b) Dogs are not to be brutally killed or assaulted unnecessarily by any member of the Mnkabane clan. They are always treated with respect and are protected.
- (c) *Abendi* (1/2) i.e. women who are married into the clan may not touch a dog even if it appears to be a nuisance to them during the time they are working on their daily chores. Anyone who breaks this injunction is immediately brought to book.

### 3.4.5 The crustacean totem: The crab (*Unonkala*)

One of the well known crustaceans with a hard outer shell and which is generally known as *unonkala* (1/2a) (the crab), is a reputed totem amongst a few Xhosa clans residing in the Eastern Cape. One of the clans approached in terms of this study is the *Rhadebe* clan whose other clan names are Mashwabade, Ndlebe-ntle zombini, Mthimkhulu, Bhungane, Mbhucwa, Zulu, Mbanyaza, Mwaca, Hlubi, and Mafuz' afulele njengelifu lemvula.

As *Nonkala* predominantly stays in the river which is its natural habitat, the *Rhadebe* people also regard themselves as the river people. Their totem quietly and occasionally pays the clan a visit during the following occasions:

- \* When a pregnant Rhadebe mother is about to deliver a baby.
- \* When there is going to be a traditional function aimed at slaughtering an ox in honour of *izilo zakwaRhadebe* i.e the ancestral Rhadebe spirits including other totems:
- \* When there is going to be a huge gathering of the members of the *Rhadebe* clan to consider matters adversely affecting the clan.

When the ancestors have a complaint against some or all the members of the clan, they send the totem crab to visit the premises of such a family. The family is expected to make a follow up to find out the purpose of the visit and if it is a serious one, something is done to attend to the ancestors. Sometimes such visits are portraying nothing serious but may be considered as courtesy calls by the totem. To *hlonipha* it, men begin to sing praises raising the crab to the level of a respected human being or ancestor.

*A! Mthimkhlu! A! Mashwabada!*  
*Abashwabadel' iinkomo neempondo zazo.*  
*Nina bakwaNgobizembe, bakwaMbhucwa,*

*AmaBhucw' emlanjeni koononkala.*  
*Nina zilo zisilayo, hayi nidume ngokudidiyela.*

(Greetings to you you Mthimkhulu and Mashwabada ancestors!  
Ye fierce people who destroyed cattle including their horns!  
We refer to you people from the Ngobizembe and Mbhucwa clan.  
The Mbhucwas who are synonymous with river crabs.  
Ye generous creatures so reputed because of their brewing skill.)

Married women also show their respect by adjusting their attire to the full *hlonipha* style during the period of the totem's stay. The crab is allowed the freedom of movement within the premises and may not be tampered with or killed. It is expected to stay for a reasonably short time with the people but if it remains much longer, steps are taken to find out its actual mission. A sizeable delegation of very close relatives approaches a diviner for clarification. This is generally known as *ukuthatha iintonga*. It may be possible to brew some traditional beer or slaughter an animal on its behalf after the purpose of its visit has been established and verified.

#### 3.4.6. **The bird totem - *inqilo*** (Orange throated longclaw- *Macronyx capensis* collecti)

"This bird is generally found throughout in an open grassveld, favouring well grazed and recently burnt sections. It is subject to some post breeding movement, often in association with other pipits on burnt grazing" (Quickelberge 1989:107).

The Mlambo clan which is also known as Mbinga, Khakhaza, Bhinitha, Lusiba, Mdladla, Gocini, Ngoma, Ngcwabane and Mgeza claims this bird to be their totem. According to Madladla Ngcuka, one of the researcher's informants *amanqilo* (5/6) generally do not move about in human residential areas as they are grassveld birds but when the Mlambo clan or family has organised its traditional religious function, in honour of their ancestors or their members, they appear and fill up the *inkundla* just before the function begins. They flip around chirping and singing happily as if to throw some blessings on the function.

The male members of the clan reciprocate by honouring them and they usually go to the cattle kraal posts (*amaxhanti*): (5/ 6) and offer words of gratitude, appreciation and respect towards the birds using *iziduko zamaDladla* (Madladla clan praise names):

*Awu! Khawubone ukufaneleka kwezinto zikaMlambo, ZikaMbinga, zikaKhakhaza, zikaBhinitha, amanqilo asekhaya kwaMadladla, kwaGocini, kwaNgoma apho Umculo ungapheliyo! Siyaviya, siyachulumanca xa la maNgcwabane akwaMgeza ephithizela kweli Khaya. Tshotsho nifike, kwaqal' ukulunga nto zakuthi. Ntinga ntakandini!*

The spokesman in the little poem above, appreciates the presence of these birds. He uses *izithakazelo* (clan names) to express his joy and excitement as he sees these birds flapping around bringing an atmosphere of warmth here. The married women folk and very close relatives wear traditional *hlonipha* attire and will also reciprocate by ululating as a symbol of welcoming the birds.

Sometimes the birds appear in their dreams. This is regarded as a good omen for members of the clan. Those who have, for example, ploughed their lands, are likely to have good harvest. Those who are working are also likely to have some promotions, other benefits and so on.

It is on that score that the Mlambo clan stipulates amongst its members certain restrictions such as avoiding injury, maiming, or killing of the *inqilo* (5/6) bird under any circumstances because it generally brings good luck and promotes goodwill in the entire clan. Other bird totems are *unomyayi* (1/2a) (the black crow *corvus*) generally venerated by the *Nozulu* clan and *icelu* (5/6) (the plain backed pipit- *Anthus leucophrys*) which is the totem bird for the *Mvemve* clan.

### 3.4.7. The leguaan totem (*Uxam*)

The leguaan or *uxam* (1/2a) is a four legged reptile that stays along the river and also in the forest. It does not normally visit areas where people live except when it is looking for cow dung which it uses to make its nest. Under normal circumstances there is no way that this creature can ever enter a building except under the circumstances described below.

Certain families or clans regard the leguaan as their totem. One of the clans approached with regard to this study is the *Ntshilibe* clan which also calls itself Bhanqo and Mdumane. To them *uxam* is a respectable totem which, like many other totems, pays any Ntshilibe family a visit at any time when the need arises.

To differentiate it from an ordinary leguaan, it appears only to the blood relatives of the Ntshilibe family or clan particularly males and may sneak inside a residential structure unnoticed. The *hlonipha* practice followed when it is discovered is that men immediately shower praises and blessings on it using the Ntshilibe clan names and family praise names. The idea is to accord it the greatest respect and to show humility. Its presence is thereby duly recognised and its visit regarded as some form of ancestral visitation. Promises of official traditional welcome are made.

It becomes imperative thereafter to brew some traditional beer on its behalf. During the brewing period, married women are expected to wear traditional *hlonipha* attire and to talk in soft voices and respectable tones. During the drinking of the traditional beer, speeches are made and peace and harmony are also made to prevail in order to venerate the ancestors of the family or clan on whose behalf this creature appeared.

*Silondini samaNtshilibe akwaMdumane, ukusihambela kwenu apha phakathi kwekhaya lakwaBhanqo siyakubulela sikuthakazelela sizezi nkonde zeli khaya lamaNtshilibe kuba siyazi ukuba apho ninyathele khona nishiya ithamsanga, nentlutha. Nakuba nifafazele ubuqili bokuphila obuvela komkhulu apho nisuka khona, niyacelwa*

*ngembeko enkulu ukuba nize nicimbe ukubuyela emva emzini omkhulu nakube nizifumene izipho ezisuka kweli khaya lemu lakwaNtshilibe.*

(Your prompt visit into this Bhanqo home by you Ntshilibe and Mdumane creature is highly appreciated by the grey heads of this home mostly because we know that wherever you set foot you leave good luck and affluence. After showering blessings and well wishes from the main ancestral house, you are now humbly requested to go back home particularly after receiving gifts from this humble Ntshilibe home.)

Like all the other totems the leguaan will disappear after the occasion has been completed to its utmost satisfaction. But if it does not, the usual practice of approaching a diviner for clarification is made.

#### 3.4.8 Goats and oxen

These two animals are not regarded as totems per se but they play a very important role in promoting totem related activities such as those explained in the sub-sections reflected from 3.3.1 to 3.3.7 above. They are traditionally regarded as a link or a medium of spiritual communication between man and his ancestors because of the loud sound they make when being pierced for slaughter.

It is this sound that convinces members of that particular clan that the sacrifice has been accepted by the ancestors. Soga (1937 : 187) explains.

*Iyabonakala emvelini ibhokhwe ukuba inxulumene namangobotini olu hlobo kuba iyakhala njengenkomo eqhawulwa umxhelo xa ibulawayo. Iyibhokhwe nenkomo ke, zithe zabalasela kumadini okufa.*

(It is clear that from time immemorial the goat has been associated with the ritual of this kind for it makes a crying sound like the bellowing sound of an ox when it is pierced with an instrument at the time of slaughtering it. Both the goat and the ox therefore have played an important role in promoting sacrificial rituals connected with death and ancestor worship.)

There is no doubt therefore, that whichever clan deems it necessary to kill one or both animals with a view to spiriting the totem away and to appeasing and honouring the ancestors, the atmosphere of peace, respect, goodwill and tranquility subsequently remains after the sacrifice. Of paramount importance is the *hlonipha* atmosphere that prevails during the sacrifice.

### 3.5 Conclusion

From the study of all the aspects reflected above such as the involvement of supernatural beings, ancestor worship and of totem related activities, one is inclined to conclude that the traditional religion of *amaXhosa* with its *hlonipha* element, is a unique concept which is based on the communication of man with the world of spirits using not only ancestors but also totems.

Of paramount importance is that this communication is facilitated, to a large extent, by the use of media such as the traditional brew and sacrifice of animals. Practically every clan, as evidenced by the examples cited in 3.2 and 3.3, practises the use of Xhosa beer and sacrifice of animals when they want to communicate with their ancestral world.

Death in an African context is not the end per se. Spiritual communication between the dead and the living comes through dreams. The burial of the dead particularly the head of the family, is accompanied by the slaughtering of a beast. After this ritual, another form of ritual is performed to bring the spirit of the dead back to the living by slaughtering another beast. (See 3.2).

The function of the totems is, on the whole, to keep the thread of communication alive between the living and the ancestor world. They are often regarded as agents of ancestors for that particular clan. In order to maintain a strong bond of communication between the living and the dead, use of *hlonipha* ethics and practices

is often regarded as a measure of utmost importance.



## END NOTE:

The following informants provided all the information on totems appearing in this chapter:

- \* *Majola:* Dr. T.T.D. Hongo  
111 Sunnyside  
AMALINDE  
EAST LONDON
  
- \* *Ikati yehlathi:* (i) R.M. Ngcauzele  
KwaMathole  
MIDDLEDRIFT  
  
(ii) Dr. W.N. Kota  
Buffalo Street  
EAST LONDON  
  
(iii) Mlulami Buso  
Mekeni Location  
NGQAMAKHWE
  
- \* *Bees and ants:* Dr. Madiba Nokhwabuza  
830 Bengu Road  
Duncan Village  
EAST LONDON
  
- \* *The dog* Zolile Mahambehhlala  
10426 N.U.3  
MDANTSANE
  
- \* *The crab:* Nontuthuzelo Mafongosi  
Durban Location  
PEDDIE
  
- \* *Uxam* Linda Maqenge  
Kwelerha  
EAST LONDON

## CHAPTER 4

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

#### 4.1 People

Although the practice of *hlonipha* in an indigenous Xhosa society applies generally to all the stages of development of men and women as stated in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.2 and 2.2.3), yet strong emphasis is focused on people of senior status such as the heads of families, the very senior male citizens of communities commonly known as *imilondekhaya* (3/4) because of their advanced age, wisdom and great experience, the headmen, chiefs and paramount chiefs.

##### 4.1.1 Heads of families (*Abaninimzi*)

Every section of the Xhosa society exercises its privilege in regarding the head of every family as a very important senior member of the family who is endowed with power and authority over his entire family. He generally supports his family and is responsible for its upbringing, education, health, discipline, and general welfare. For these he gets maximum respect from all the members of his family.

His material possessions which include, inter alia, his own room or hut, his items of furniture, mats (or beds), blankets, spoons, dishes, pipes, crockery, axes and other paraphernalia, are exclusively reserved for his personal use as a mark of respect and honour. Under no circumstances may any of the above items be used by any junior member of the family especially *oomakoti* (1/2a). His wife who also shares a rondavel with him and sleeps on the right hand side of it, may use some of these items albeit in a limited fashion. As a mark of respect, the head of the family normally gets a lion's share in all the sumptuaries of the home and his decisions in matters of policy affecting his family are final and may not be challenged.

*Abendi* (1/2) commonly known as *oomakoti* (1/2a) are taught to use a special *hlonipha* language when addressing or talking about him and other male living and non-living members of the family and there is no relaxation on the use of *hlonipha* attire when *umninimzi* (1/2) is around. They may also not greet him by shaking hands with him and they are not allowed to remain in the same room with him alone, let alone sitting at his retirement side (See also 2.2.4). His wife rarely calls him by his first name. Out of respect she uses expressions such as *uyise kaThemba* (Themba's father) *uyise kaTobhana* (Tobhana's father) if his first born is a son or daughter respectively, or *ubhuti kaNosipho* (Nosipho's brother) - to call him by his eldest sister i.e. if he has no child yet.

All transactions affecting his moveable and immovable property and his family are controlled and sanctioned by him. He has jurisdiction over all cases of dispute within the family.

#### 4.1.2 *Imilondekhaya*

Old men who reach the advanced age of 80 and above, are categorised under a group of men (and sometimes women) who are generally known as *imilondekhaya*. Their experience in matters of war, history of the nation, its customs, traditions and set values, its political development, its knowledge of culture and art of the people and other aspects of knowledge regarding certain personalities who have been directly involved in the development, growth and building of the nation, makes them sources of information and stalwarts to which an appeal for guidance and advice can be made in times of crisis.

Samuel Krune Mqhayi's novel *Ityala lamawe* typifies such an example in the name of Majeke who was residing at Nqabarha, Willowvale and who was summoned to appear before King Hintsa's court at Thoboshana, Butterworth to sort out the disputed seniority claim in the case of the famous twins, Babini and Wele. Indeed his

contribution in the case sorts out which twin has a genuine case. Such a group of old *amanyange* (5/6) (aged veterans) commands respect throughout Xhosa society because of their wisdom, expertise and experience.

Whenever there is a social occasion such as circumcision ritual, wedding party, *intonjane*, meetings of any kind, they are normally honoured by being given special seats and are offered special and comfortable service as a mark of respect. They often get invitations to attend important meetings which may be characterised by disputes and policy formulations. Their opinion is highly esteemed particularly if it is inclined towards the solution of such disputes.

The information they possess because of their vast experience, is used to guide the younger generation. Because they are highly respected people in their communities, all problems affecting the Xhosa nation are often referred to them for solution. The society generally takes umbrage at any member of the community who unnecessarily displays arrogance and vindictiveness towards such men and may even take the matter up to the traditional court if there is a proof of either physical or verbal assault towards them.

The descriptive language used to refer to them is *iingwevu zasekhaya* (our grey olds), *iintshetshevu zamaxhego* (grand old men), *iimpobole zamagqala* (old veterans), *amanyange* (5/6) and many other references. Whenever there is a need to communicate with ancestors as is the case when the nation is reeling under the scourge of war, drought and other nation killing diseases, *imilondekhaya* are normally the most appropriate and suitable people to undertake this task as they are very close to ancestors themselves.

#### 4.1.3 The headmen, chiefs, paramount chiefs: other people of royal blood

Although these levels differ slightly according to status, yet the above personalities, in addition to the respect they normally enjoy as family heads, are given some extra measure of respectability by their communities by virtue of the positions they hold as politico traditional leaders of their communities.

It has been an unwavering tradition in African society to apply all *hlonipha* techniques and practices in a systematic way when dealing with headmen and chiefs irrespective of their status levels. For the purposes of uniformity in this study, the word "chief" will be taken to mean all political and traditional heads from headmen to paramount chiefs who are sometimes referred to as traditional kings.

As the greatest mark of respect, chiefs are never addressed by their first names in public but by their salutation codes commonly known as *izikhahlelo* (7/8).

Examples:     *Aa! Daliwonga!* (for Paramount Chief Kaizer Matanzima)  
                  *Aa! Ngweyesizwe!* (for Chief Lennox Sebe)  
                  *Aa! Gqavushigqili!* (for Chief Mnyango Sandile)

This salutation practice is not necessarily done at the appearance or sight of the revered chief only but may also be done when the saluter comes across the premises of the particular chief irrespective of whether he is in or out.

Again, to avoid addressing the chief by name, an *isiduko* (7/8) is also used to salute him. Examples: *Aa! Gadluma! Aa! Nokhala! Aa! Madiba!*

Before a chief speaks, his *iphakathi* (5/6) (counsellor) normally makes introductory remarks before handing over to him. This is known as *ukugabulela inkosi izigcawu* -

clearing the way for him.

A chief is never allowed to travel alone for a long distance. He must always be accompanied by his counsellors. This is a traditional practice that is purported to honour his status so that he should be noted and given respect all the way to his destination and back. Before the introduction of vehicular transport system into South Africa, chiefs and counsellors used horses and it was easy to entertain the chief's party wherever they stopped. In those days it was a great honour to show hospitality to the chief and his men.

Whenever he is entertained with traditional beer, one of his counsellors must take the first sip. This has a double pronged implication. The first one is to make sure that if the beer is poisoned it must kill the counsellor and not the chief. The second one is to honour the tradition of always clearing a way for a man of such royal status as the chief. After the chief has completed his address in a public gathering, as a mark of respect nobody else of junior status is allowed to speak after him.

Under no circumstances may the authority of the chief be undermined in public or derogatory remarks be made against him in public. Any violation of this injunction may land the offender into serious trouble. A classic case to be quoted from the legal records of South African Law is that of Paramount Chief Kaizer Matanzima who was then also the State President of the Republic of Transkei and who pressed court charges against Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo for insulting his dignity in public. The case was tried at the Supreme Court of Transkei at Port St Johns in 1980 under Chief Justice G.S.A. Munnik. Sabata was sentenced to a fine of R700 or 18 months imprisonment.

Direct conversation or dialogue with the chief if you are a commoner, out of respect for his status, is never permitted unless it is done at the will of the chief himself. Communication is always through the medium of a counsellor. Official business is also

conducted through a counsellor or authorised officer.

Nobody is allowed to come near the chief's sleeping or resting place except his wife or his most senior counsellors. Next to his bed or mattress, there is always an animal skin which he uses for resting his feet. Nobody dare touch this skin except with his permission.

During public ceremonies his food is always organised and brought to him by a highly respected and trusted senior counsellor and not by a woman. Most chiefs in the Eastern Cape are held in high esteem among their subjects. These subjects generally procure the services of an *imbongi* (9/10) whose main task is to sing his praises wherever the chief goes to perform public duties. The expertise and the extent to which such a praise singer delivers his oratory in praise of such a chief, has the effect of marshalling more respect for him and of elevating him to almost a status of a god. By and large, every member of the community is expected to pay respect to a chief.

#### 4.2 Places

In the far distant past, the traditional Xhosa society maintained a traditional practice of keeping certain places as shrines i.e. places to be revered where certain sections of the population in a society were not allowed to visit or even come nearer them. If they found it difficult to avoid them, they were under some obligation to show reverence by offering prayers aimed at appeasing the ancestors whose indignation might be provoked.

*Boobaw' omkhulu nani bookhokho, zihlonipheki zamancentsa  
omtyanti wethu, naku sizibona sithe bhakada phakathi kwamadlaka  
ahloniphekileyo. Senziwe lizulu elizongomayo. Ngelethu besithatha  
iimpambuko ezingumlayo. Siyaxolisa kuni bandyu abakhulu  
abahloniphekileyo.*

(Great fathers and great grandfathers, you honourable men of our marriage home, we found ourselves caught up amidst these highly

honourable graves. The flashes of lightning and deafening thunder bolts created such a commotion that we found ourselves here. We thought we were taking short cuts. We humbly apologise to you great Sires).

Alternatively some act of reverence was performed so as to avoid repercussions which might result from such violations. Examples of well known places were graves of ancestors and chiefs, sections of certain rivers and retirement or sleeping places for heads of families. Although the times have now advanced from prehistoric, indigenous to modern times, yet there is still a large section of indigenous societies which persist with some of these practices.

#### 4.2.1 Graves

Before the advent of Christianity and the so called western civilisation, people of the Eastern Cape did not have cemeteries run in the Western style. They buried their dead in different places according to their statuses in society. The majority of the common people were buried inside the home gardens or very near places of residence or in clusters of graves which hardly qualified as cemeteries. But heads of families who subsequently became ancestors of that particular family unit were buried on the gate posts of cattle kraals.

Since there were no commercial coffins used, a head of the family was wrapped in an animal skin and placed in a special chamber carved on the side of the grave. He would not necessarily lie prostrate as is normally the case today but would be made to rest in a sitting position. Around him lay his tools such as an axe, spear, stick, hoe and other items such as containers and pots. Alongside these, would be seeds of various kinds such as mealies, pumpkins, beans, sorghum, different kinds of herbs, tobacco and matches. The idea was that when he reached the world beyond his grave, he would get up, go for his hunting spree, cook his prey and start on his agricultural activities as soon as possible without worrying those who had gone before him. All this was done to show the man the respect he deserved.



In some places special plots were assigned for chiefs while the paramount chiefs were buried in secluded and reserved places on the mountain sides. As times have advanced, the western style of using coffins and cemeteries was copied and subsequently many areas in the Transkei and Ciskei demarcated spots which were regarded as graveyards. They were not quite run like the urban cemeteries which are generally cleaned, fenced, organised and have tombstones dominating the scenery.

#### **4.2.1.1 Graves of ancestors**

As already indicated above, family heads being buried on the cattle kraal posts, were given a special kind of funeral where only men and very close relatives were allowed near the grave. Women were expected to stay farther away. The *abendi* (1/2) in particular were instead expected to wear their hlonipha attire and to refrain from visiting the area near the grave. When the family was undergoing a crisis, senior men of that particular family unit paid their respect on behalf of the family by visiting the grave with the aim of talking to the ancestor and appealing to him for help and guidance.

#### **4.2.1.2 Graves of chiefs, paramount chiefs and other prominent personalities**

It was common practice for junior chiefs to be buried inside the premises like heads of families but where there were cemeteries their bodies were also laid to rest with the other members of the community but on separate plots demarcated for men of royal status. But paramount chiefs or kings were buried away in special secluded places which were not open to the general public but to them only. An example of this can be seen at a place called Bumbane in Transkei where all the Thembu chiefs such as Mthikrakra, Ngangelizwe, Dalindyebo and Sampu were buried. It is this practice that sparked off controversy and a measurable amount of Thembu dispute one day when their king, Paramount Chief Sabatha Dalindyebo who had died in exile during the reign of Paramount Chief K.D. Matanzima, was buried in a paupers' area consisting

largely of women's graves. Pressure was brought to bear on the new Military Government then headed by Bantubonke Holomisa and Sabata was subsequently reburied in 1989 in the proper plot alongside his father, Sampu. Again it is interesting to note that during the reburial preparations, all women were kept away from the Paramount Chief's two graves.

An example of the tradition of mountain burial which is still being practised in the Eastern Cape even at this point in time is that of the Paramount Chief Sandile's family which resides at the Mngqesha Great Place near King William's Town. All the Paramount Chiefs from this house are buried on the mountain side in a similar fashion to that of Lesotho kings who are buried at Thaba Bosiu.

During the burial a small side chamber is hewn out of the living rock on the mountain side and the casket is sealed after a certain ritual has been performed. In all these cases no women are allowed to attend the actual burial or to come near the grave of the king or paramount chief be it in a royal acre or mountain side. Invariably this is done to honour the executive chief and to give him the maximum respect in terms of the demands of the custom of the nation.

In an indigenous society like that of the Eastern Cape, the graves of the paramount chiefs or kings are regarded as shrines and their sanctity may not be profaned by allowing women to come near them.

In Western Tembuland, according to Mahlubi Mbandazayo, one of the researcher's informants from Butterworth, a place known as MacKay's Nek which lies between Lady Frere and Queenstown and which is called in Xhosa *iintaba zikaNonesi*, named after Chief Ngubengcuka's wife Nonesi, is reserved as a burial place for Western Tembuland Chiefs. It is where for example, Chief Ngubengcuka was buried.

There is no evidence to show that all chiefs and paramount chiefs in Transkei are

buried on the mountain side. Most of the well known chiefs are buried inside their Great Places in acres reserved for them. For example the Pondoland Paramount chiefs Nelson and Botha Sigcau from Qaukeni and Paramount chief Victor Poto and his son, Tutor Nyangilizwe Ndamase of Nyandeni were buried in their Great Places. Chief Jojo of Maxesibeni was also buried at Lubaleko Great Place while Chief Makaula of KwaBhaca (Mt Frere) was buried at Lugangeni Great Place. Mvuzo, Mhlobo and Mthethuvumile Matanzima were also buried in a royal acre near Nogate Township, Qamata.

Certain personalities who enjoy social eminence in their communities by virtue of their riches, their contribution to religious activities, their expertise in their faith healing powers and many other prominent qualities are accorded a special reverence by being buried in private and secluded places. Such an example may be found in the person of late Khotso Sethuntsa of Lusikisiki in Transkei whose grave was said to have been concealed in one of his numerous buildings.

#### 4.2.2 *Inkundla*

Every traditional home in the Eastern Cape was characterised by having an open space between the rondavels or other dwelling structures and the cattle and stock kraals which were usually built facing the front of the dwelling structures. This open space was normally used for home gatherings such as meetings, wedding parties, circumcision parties, and many others. Men usually occupied the inside of the cattle kraal or the immediate front and outside section of the kraals in times of traditional and social gatherings but women stayed further away from the cattle kraal posts where the head of the family was usually buried.

As an aspect of *hlonipha*, *oomakoti* (1/2a) i.e. the newly weds are not at all allowed to go through the *inkundla* (9/10) or use the section in front of the dwelling structures. They use the *ukucweza* (15) practice alluded to in 2.2.4.10. Soga

(1937:68) maintains that the *inkundla* is also used for other purposes including the traditional wedding practices. When he narrates some of the things done during such traditional wedding episodes, he writes as follows:

*Mhla ngomdudo emveni kokubonwa kwentombi, zophuma iintombi endlwini yoduli phaya zize zikhusiwe zide zibe senkundleni apha, zidedelwe ke zibhinge izidabane zazo zamawula. Yothi qabavu umkhonto ewuphetheyo iwubinze exhantini lasekunene, ithi gwiqi tshoni kwakwezinye iseyigqunywa ibuyela kwakulaa ndlu yoduli.*

(On the day of the traditional wedding party dance, after the would-be bride has been seen, all the other women accompanying her come out of the wedding party rondavel, and, under cover they congregate at the *inkundla* wearing around their waists, *izidabane* (7/8) i.e. skins of oribi or duiker used as a mantle at the wedding feast. The bride will come forward carrying a spear which she casts at the cattle kraal post on the right hand side. She leaves it there and joins the other group, and after being covered, the whole group returns to their hut).

It will be noticed that the element of *hlonipha* pervades in the entire ritual for all the women have their heads and bodies covered. In the past *inkundla* was also used as a place for serving summons traditionally known as *injombe yakomkhulu*. This was a spear which was cast and left standing at the *inkundla* by a messenger from the chief's place. When the family head saw it, he took it out and carried it to the Great Place where he learnt why he was summonsed. Another instance was when the daughter of a chief was seen by a prince who subsequently wished to marry her. The suitor sent a messenger to cast a spear at the *inkundla* of the Great Place and then made a follow up. According to Soga (1937 : 66):

*Phambi kokuba kuthethwe ngomsitho, usontombi ubekhangela umfo nokuba ngumfana amthandayo amthumele umkhonto - indlela yokuphimisa ke leyo. Womangaliswa kukuthatyathwa kwawo xa aliwayo, ubuyiselwe kwakuye yena mniniwo.*

(Before the question of marriage was discussed, the girl's father looked for a favourite young man whom he liked and he cast a spear at his home. That was a way of proposing marriage for his daughter. He became shocked when finally that spear was pulled out and

returned to him, an indication that he had been rejected).

This shows the extent to which an *inkundla* was held in high esteem in a traditional society.

#### 4.2.3 Rivers

To many people in the Eastern Cape, rivers are just nothing more than a geographical phenomenon where water flows down from a higher mountain source to the sea but to some people rivers preserve a certain magic which calls for cause to *hlonipha* them in one respect or another.

It has been a common practice for women to drop their dresses lowest and to adjust their head gear lower in *hlonipha* fashion before crossing certain rivers in the Eastern Cape. This was done to *hlonipha* the ancestors of people or chiefs who once upon a time drowned in these rivers. Some of these victims still have their graves alongside them. The belief was that people who had died by drowning were not buried at home but had their graves alongside the river. This practice does not necessarily affect chiefs only. Any victim of accidental drowning is buried near the river. A more recent example is an incident where in October 1993 a group of about thirteen people were swept away by a current while crossing a low bridge on a commercial vehicle at Bawa River in the district of Butterworth. The majority of these were buried near the bridge under the auspices of the then Transkei Government (Bongela 1998:54).

Besides these occasional incidents, the Xhosa have a strong belief that some big rivers which have huge river pools known as *iziziba* (7/ 8) are dwelling places for what are known as *Abantu bomlambo* (the River People). These River People according to Elliot (1970:97) are there down under the water where their homes are. The place where they sleep even though it is under the water is dry. Their home is a big place; they have in it their herds of goats and cattle, their dogs, and their fowls and, in fact everything that the Xhosa themselves have on earth.

When a living person's animal is drowned and is never seen again, then it has been taken by the People of the River. But at the same time the People of the River's own animals also breed and multiply and at night they come out on the grass lands above to eat.

Of much significance is that when a person is said to have been drowned in a death of this kind the Xhosa do not mourn because it is an honour to be chosen by the River People and though the person is drowned 'he or she is not drowned'. It is believed that thereafter he or she is trained by the folk below as a witch doctor or diviner of the most powerful kind and will be sent back to his or her home when the time is right to practise. Such a diviner 'knows everything' and it is not possible to 'hide anything from him'.

If on the other hand someone drowns and his body is washed up, the explanation is that death was an accident. The People did not call him, so they have sent him back. That therefore goes to explain the presence of such graves along the river.

Maxhoba Ngqangashe, one of the researcher's informants from Ngqeleni, Transkei, confirmed the presence of the People of the River by explaining that in her area there is a group of people known as *amadlel' emlanjeni* (people who feast along the river) who observe a practice of going to camp near the river once a year with a view to performing certain rituals pertaining to the People of the River. This group is composed of the Gaba clan who also call themselves *amaNgqosini*, *abantu bomlambo* (not those underneath), and also the Tshezi clan who call themselves *amaTenza*. The third are a Ngcithane clan.

On the day of the ritual, the group ( who are either combined or who work individually) spends the night on the river bank where they perform certain rituals purported to appease and show respect to the People of the River and to make certain requests from them being led by *imilondekhaya* belonging to these families. The

following day a huge beast is slaughtered. Cans of traditional beer and a large number of raw meat parts are dropped carefully into the river pool after speeches marked by respect and humility, are made.

*Mathongo akwaMolo, zikrwalaxu zakwaMlungwana, kwaKhoboka, kwaGxagxa, maLawu angooMlambo, ngembeko enkulu sithi yamkelani ezi zipho zivela kolu sapfo lwenu lwakwaMolo.*

(You ancestors of the Molo clan, you great men of the Mlungwana, Khoboka, Gxagxa house, you honourable people of mixed blood from the Mlambo house, with great humility we offer you these humble gifts from your family above).

Like a miracle they float until they reach a certain spot in the pool and they slowly disappear below. These are sent as gifts to the People from whom they ask for their benevolence. The People reciprocate by sending back, after some time, some of the meat portions already cooked. This, in a way, is to show their own appreciation of this ritual which is done in their honour. It must be noted however that all the members of *amadlel' emlanjeni* are dressed in traditional garb as a sign of respect to the People. The mats on which they sit and sleep during the performance of the ritual are made of animal skins.

Elliot (1970:98) further reveals that his informant, Lolombela, gave him a clear picture of the People of the River though among his clan on the coast, they are known as 'People of the Sea'. In fact Cove Rock (known as Gompo) near where Lolombela lives is said to be the home of the *chiefs* of the under water people. According to Elliot (1970:99).

Among other things, an expectant mother must never go near the place because she upsets the People. If for any reason she has to go there, then as she approaches the Rock she must call out loudly to the People to ask their pardon and to explain why she has to go to the Rock. Then they will excuse her but if she does not do this, she will fall sick.

Her call would be something like this:

*Bantu abakhulu basemzini omkhulu, komkhulu kwikhaya lakuGompo, andimelewe kukubeka mcondo wam apha kuba andiyonto mna kubungangamsha benu. Ndicela uxolo ngokunyathela apha kule ndawo yenu zihlwele nani zilo nezikrwalaxu zomlambo. Ndize kufuna iyeza lokunyanga umntwana wam ogulayo.*

(Great People from the Great Place and the great Gompo home! I am not supposed to set my foot here because I am nothing compared to your stature. I tender my apology for treading in this restricted area which is your domain you multitudes and dignitaries of this great river. I have come to collect a special herb to save my sick child).

According to Elliot, (1970:99)

Another taboo is Xhosa magic medicine. It must never under any circumstances be taken near the People's home because they have their own much stronger medicines, and if someone brings his medicines to the place, there will be a clash of magic influences and the people of the earth will get hurt. To observe these restrictions is to show great respect to the People of the River who are otherwise regarded as ancestors of many Xhosa people.

#### 4.2.4 Sleeping and retirement places for heads of families

According to Maxhoba, the sleeping and retirement place for the head of the family is normally the left hand side of the biggest rondavel chosen for the head of the family in any traditional homestead. This rondavel is used by the head of the family known as *umninimzi* (1/2) (owner of the home) and his wife *umnikazimzi* only. It is where he sleeps, he rests, he retires, at any time of the day. His wife normally sleeps on the right hand side. Because this left side is reserved for and used by him only, the family knows it as *icala likatata* (father's side). Children are also taught to refrain from taking and using any article belonging to the head of the family and which is kept on his side. The entire family is taught to respect and regard this side like a shrine.

It is, like any other traditional rondavel, characterised by a round open spot which is used as a fire place and is therefore called *iziko* (5/6). This *iziko* is normally made in the centre of the rondavel and it is where fire is made for warming the hut and for



cooking food.

When *makoti* (1/2a) is operating around her new home, she is under strict orders to *hlonipha* this reserved and revered side for her father-in-law. There are certain things she is precluded from doing and these are:

- \* To smear her father-in-law's side.
- \* To make his bed or roll up his mattress.
- \* To wash, during laundry time, his underwear. She may wash his shirts, trousers and blankets.
- \* To sweep his side.
- \* To avoid setting her foot on her father-in-law's side.

It is her mother-in-law who does all that needs to be done on this side. If she is not alive, his daughter may assist *makoti* by attending to the side of the head of the family.

Other things she may not do are to dress a mill stone (*ukuqandula*) (15) without being authorised to do so. She may not eat with her mother-in-law from the same dish. All these restrictions are strictly adhered to during *ukuhota* (15) period which may take a couple of months or years depending on the home to which she is married. At the expiry of *ukuhota* she is expected to go home and bring certain fees which, on payment, will allow her to relax the restrictions and live like an ordinary person.

In the olden days coins were accepted but today the price has gone up and varies according to that particular home which is free to prescribe its own fees. For example *makoti* could be expected to bring R10 for being allowed to smear the father-in-law's side, R10 for making up his bed, R10 for sweeping his side. She may pay R10 for washing his clothes. She may also pay R10 for eating with her mother-in-law.

The reality of the situation is that though she has been charged for relaxing these rules, yet there are still certain things which she is never permitted to do like making up his bed, washing his underwear and eating with her mother-in-law.

#### 4.2.5 The deities

According to Nkonki as quoted by Hodgson (1982:66) Qamata's name used never to be mentioned in vain because of the respect people had for him. It was sacred because it was the name of the One who was believed to be the Giver of the blessings, the Protector, the Receiver of offerings and Giver of luck. He was a god in heaven. Because of that the sky was a revered place. Never would a finger be pointed at it. If someone wished to point at something in the sky, he did that by means of index finger or fist.

Hodgson (1982:62) also mentions that many Xhosa regard Qamata and Thixo as designations of their own, but the implosive consonants or 'clicks' indicate their Khoisan origin. This assertion is corroborated by Callaway (1870:64-65); Soga (1931: 150; Theal (1882:19 -20) as quoted by Hodgson. It is not possible to date the time at which these God-names were incorporated into the Xhosa religious belief and practice but the evidence points to Qamata predating Thixo by a considerable period.

The Xhosa claim that the name Qamata is of ancient origin and that Thixo only came into common usage during the 19th Century. This development in tradition would correspond with the socio-cultural experience. The derivation and meaning of the word Qamata is unknown but it could be either of San origin or else a mixture of Khoi and San as there was a considerable blending of beliefs among these people.

The uncertainty about the 'borrowing' of the God name from the Khoisan reflects the speculative nature of the history concerning the Khoisan and amaXhosa during the early part of the Xhosa expansion which could well have extended over a couple of

centuries; whereas Thixo is unquestionably derived from Tsui/Goab, the name of the great national hero of the Khoi who is generally regarded as the Supreme Being. A more intensive interaction between the Xhosa and the Khoi during the latter part of the 18th Century together with missionary influence in adopting Thixo as the name of the Christian God in the early part of the 19th Century, explains why Thixo gradually superceded Qamata in religious usage among the Xhosa people.

According to Herbert (1990 : 304):

It is reasonable to conclude that the process of *hlonipha* itself is the essential part of the explanation for click incorporation in Southern Bantu. There is no way to understand the intensity and restrictedness of Khoisan influence without recourse to some very peculiar aspect of the social contact situation. Specifically, it is argued that the native (i.e. Khoisan) phonological inventories provided Khoi, San and Nguni women with a ready-made and natural source for consonant substitution as required by *hlonipha*. That is in some sense natural that a woman who enjoys a prohibition against uttering the syllables *bo*, *nga*, *ni*, *di*, *ke*, *sa* and so on would look to this alternative phonetic inventory in order to replace Nguni consonants.

According to Biko (1978 : 58):

All people are agreed that Africans are a deeply religious race. In the various forms that are found throughout the Southern part of our continent, there was at least a common basis. We all accepted without any doubt the existence of a God. We had our own community of saints. We believed - and that is consistent with our view of life - that all people who died had a specific place next to God. We felt that a communication with God could only be through these people. We never knew anything about hell - we do not believe that God can create people only to punish them externally after a short period. Another aspect of religious practices was the occasion of worship. Again we did not believe that religion could be featured as a separate part of our existence on earth. It was manifested in our daily lives. We thanked and revered God through our ancestors before we drank beer, married, worked, slept, fought and took our journeys etc. Neither did we see it logical to have particular building in which all worship would be conducted. We believed that God was always in communication

with us and therefore merited attention everywhere and anywhere.

It is therefore no surprise to hear people showing their respect to God by praying for things they need and by thanking Him for things He has done for them. His name, like Qamata, is also not mentioned in vain.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

The respect given to reputed people in an indigenous society is an old practice that, from time immemorial, has helped to restore and maintain the social, cultural and political order without using any force of law. Like many other European countries which preserved their historical monuments and their heritage resources for their future posterity, the keeping and recognition of certain cultural places such as graves of distinguished people, *inkundla*, certain rivers, deities, and retirement places for heads of families as shrines, was in line with the practices of foreign countries which have preserved their heritage resources in the form of monuments, memorials, sites, buildings and features which can be considered to be historical, cultural and scientific.

With the problem of the erosion of some of the Black heritage resources as a result of the Apartheid policies of the past which focused their attention only on Whites, there was indeed a failure of those charged with the conservation of heritage resources to meaningfully involve the majority of the population in South Africa including the Eastern Cape. Hence some of the aspects discussed in Chapter 4 and which involve People and Places and many other aspects discussed in this study cannot, today, be easily identifiable because those charged with the conservation of heritage resources failed to link cultural conservation meaningfully to housing, tourism, education and other priorities.

## CHAPTER 5

### FORMS OF ATTIRE

#### 5.1 Introduction

In order to discuss the different forms of attire for Xhosa communities living in the Eastern Cape, and their impact on the concept of *hlonipha*, one has to look first at the traditional forms of attire worn by indigenous societies during the period before the arrival of Christianity and western civilisation into South Africa. Because trade in western fabrics had not found its way amidst traditional societies in this country, that is before European settlement during the seventeenth century, traditionalists were content with the use of animal skins for cover and body protection.

The arrival of European races from major European countries brought, inter alia, the colonial policy and trade in cotton fabrics and other materials. This subsequently made it easy for people to adapt their traditional life style to the use of fabric which was more readily available than the use of softened skins and hides from animals which were running out of supply because of depletion and hunting rules introduced by the then White Colonial Governments.

Levitas (1984: 35) a South African Researcher and writer on South African tribal life alludes to the concept of clothing, ornamental and bead work by saying:

Unless one has actually spent time living among people who still adhere to a tribal way of life, one will probably be under the impression that tribesmen are people who wear little if any clothing at all. It may come therefore as a surprise to learn of the importance attached to clothing among tribal people. Thus in order to understand the dress of an indigenous society, one should look at the meaning or value that the wearer attaches to his clothing rather than retain one's own culturally biased perception of dress. Clothes often acquire symbolic values especially when they are associated with certain religious, social or ceremonial occasions.

Levitas (1984:7) further emphasises that it is generally true to say that "today the tribal life style is rapidly disappearing due to growth of western influence." The forces that have motivated change in people's attire and life style due to the dynamics of time, have somewhat compelled the researcher of this study to expose the forms of attire intended for discussion in this chapter in three phases namely:

- \* the purely indigenous
- \* the semi indigenous
- \* the modern

However the modern forms of attire will also be briefly discussed in Chapter 8.1 which deals with transitional *hlonipha* socially. This is where a drastic change in the form of attire which has been used for centuries will be highlighted in order to show the element of sophistry which has superseded all forms of traditional practices during these modern times. However be that as it may, it is no ill talk to say that in the Eastern Cape, despite the impact of western civilisation and Christian influence, there are areas in many districts which are still traditional in nature, outlook and practice. To name a few, Nosisa Tshetu, one of the researcher's informants mentioned the following examples in Willowvale, Centane and parts of East London district: Gosani, Dadamba, Ngxutyana, Kumbethe, Thuthurha, Chebe, Mooiplaas, Qwelerha, Tsholomnqa, MacLean Town etc.

## **5.2 The males from purely indigenous period**

### **5.2.1 *Amaqaba* (Red blanket men)**

The term *iqaba* (5/6) has been used to refer to Xhosa tribesmen (and women) who are also referred to as Red Blanket People by Elliot (1987:2). This tag emanates from the intensity of the colour in their blankets varying from clan to clan and from tribe to tribe. The dye traditionally used was red ochre, but today this is being supplemented

with chemical dyes.

Ochre is a type of earth which when soaked in water has a tendency of dying any material. Its colour varies from pale yellow to reddish brown and is easily available in most regions of the Eastern Cape particularly Transkei. Red ochre (*imbola*) (9/10) which is a popular dye amongst the traditional folk was used to dye blankets, skirts known as *izikhakha* (7/8) or *imibhaco* (3/4), head scarves, *iincebeta* (9/10) (aprons) and other items of clothing.

It was mixed with lard to make a paste where blankets and other items of clothing were dipped to make them thick and water proof. Luvuyo Lucwaba, one of the researcher's informants maintains that the red ochre which is regarded as the best and the most genuine, is available in the Qumbu district and in particular the Mpondomise area at a village called Mngqungu which is adjacent to Sulenkama. According to him some of the clothing items assume new names after they have been dipped. For example *ingcawa* (9/10) blanket is called *notolo* (1/2a) after the dipping.

#### 5.2.1.1 Boys

Xhosa traditional boys had no formal clothing on their bodies except a series of bead work worn on their heads, around the neck and around the waist. These beads according to Xhosa customs were made for them by their girl friends. Those who did not wear beads wore a piece of red or black *bhayi* (small cotton or skin blanket) around their waist and sometimes wore a head-gear in the form of skin gear or black woollen hat. There were no formal shirts and trousers as it is the case with the next stage of social development known as the stage of *amagoba-dyasi* (5/6). In place of underpants boys wore a cubular structure made of animal skin in which the penis was inserted. This was called *isidla* (7/8). It had a tail-like appearance called *undyilo* (1/2a). This was a form of design with long leather frills stretching as far as the ankles for swanky purposes.

The little *bhayi* blankets worn around the waist were also used for another purpose such as a protection design known as *iqulo* (5/6) used during stick fights and games such as *ukucweya* (15). At the same time they were used as *hlonipha* items when boys had to appear formally before a gathering which included women, respectable people and law court situations.

For body covering and sleeping purposes boys used a brown blanket with two white stripes. This was called *falteni* (1/2a) and it was dipped in *imbola*. In the Tsolo and Qumbu districts the same blanket was called *ugush' umnqayi* (1/2a). These blankets were generally worn anywhere and at any time of the day. In the Qumbu district boys also wore leg tails known as *amatshali* (5/6) while the Xhosa and Fingo boys wore *amaseyibhokhwe* (5/6) on their legs. These were made of sheep skins. Everywhere boys always carried two sticks, one for parrying opponents and the other for striking during stick fights.

#### 5.2.1 2 Men

According to Nontozintle Mdingi, one of the researcher's informants, traditional men differed very little in attire from traditional boys. They either wore a dressed scarf on their heads or a round string of beads sown together. This was called *umqhele* (3/4).

Around the waist, a man wore a long small *mbhaco-type* blanket made to look like a skirt which stretched or dropped to the vicinity of his ankles. This skirt was usually decorated with beads and buttons and these decorations were made by either their wives or girl friends called *amadikrazi* (5/6) in the Pondo area. It was common for men to carry bags called *iinxili* (9/10) which were made of either cotton or goat skins. These goat skin bags were common in the King William's Town area. The making of these bags according to Elliot (1987) requires great skill and patience as the whole skin is taken from the carcass intact. Thereafter it is cured at the river, without removing the hair. It is then turned inside out, the ends tied off and the finished



product decorated.

Apart from its value as ornament, the bag is sometimes used to carry such essentials as home grown tobacco known as *uqolwana* (1/2a) or *undanyandanya* or *uphantsi kwesibaya* and a pocket knife. A man's pipe called *uzalipholile* (1/2a) because of its long stem, is also thrown into this bag. This bag may carry other important items such as *itshongo* (5/6) (dried mealie powder popularly used when travelling during the traditional era), and other little personal items.

Because there were no underpants before, men used as a cover a short cubular skin structure called *ingxiba* (9/10) which was used to cover and *hlonipha* the front part of the penis which, because it had been circumcised, was meant never to be seen by uncircumcised boys and other members of the general public.

For complete cover men also used blankets which they wore at any time of the day when they were relaxing or attending social gatherings. The blanket which was commonly used for travelling was a red one with white lines or stripes towards the edges. It was called *intsiyela* (9/10) and was always carried on one shoulder. The next one which was used for sleeping purposes was a hairy type with red and black spots. It was known as *isabhalala* (7/8) or in the other areas such as Pondoland, *intakamlilo* (9/10). This blanket was also used by the head of the family for attending ceremonial occasions. It was regarded as a symbol of *hlonipha* and status together with another white one with black stripe known as *ingcawa* (9/10) which when worn gave the wearer a semblance of dignity and reverence.

These blankets could all be used together at will during important occasions but the bottom one was always *intsiyela* and the top one *ingcawa* or *isabhalala* depending on the taste of the wearer at the time. A man carried only one stick and not two like the boys.

### 5.2.2 *Amagoba-dyasi* (People of the semi-traditional period)

This stage presupposes the period of change and social development marked by industrialisation and migratory labour system in South Africa. Both men and boys were largely recruited to the mining centres, the industrial centres and farming areas of South Africa to provide labour to industrialists, commercial entrepreneurs in the urban areas and to farming communities through the Labour Recruitment Agencies.

Apartheid the facts (1956 : 11) prepared by International Defence and Aid Fund Research, Information and Publications Department reflects that by the second decade of the twentieth century the basic features of the migrant labour system had been established. The conditions under which these recruits worked in these centres demanded that they use western working attire such as overalls, shirts, trousers, jackets, overcoats, helmets and shoes which would enable them to work easily and to adjust themselves properly for the labour situation and weather conditions. At the end of their contracts they bought domestic items manufactured in urban areas and among these were also female clothes which they bought for their wives, girl friends, sisters and children.

The term *amagoba-dyasi* was used by the traditionalists to refer to the working element which had brought this new style of clothing and which no more clung to the traditional form of attire. To transform from traditional era to a stage of accepting the western form of attire was a sign of yielding to the inevitable pressure exerted by the overwhelming influence of western civilisation which by virtue of its powerful forces was bent on destroying and in some case replacing the traditional Xhosa culture.

Both boys and men at this stage were compelled by circumstances to use such items as shirts, trousers, jackets, and overcoats. The traditional head gear was replaced by caps and hats and formal underwears replaced *isidla* (7/8) and *ingxiba* (9/10) traditional innovations.

#### 5.2.2.1 Mode of wearing to signify *hlonipha*: (Modern tradition)

##### (a) A hat

A man was expected to wear a hat wherever he went. Any variety was acceptable but when he went out as an *unozakuzaku* (1/2a) he was expected to wear a formal hat. *Nozakuzaku* was a special messenger who was sent on an errand to negotiate *ilobola* (9/10) for somebody. The *krwala* group and boys did not feature as messengers here. The wearing of a hat was a sign of respect for the future-in-laws *abakhozi* (1/2). This hat had to be worn throughout the negotiations. Failure to do so made the defaulter liable for the payment of a small fine.

##### (b) An overcoat

Besides its ordinary usage, an overcoat was compulsorily worn when men acted as *oonozakuzaku* (1/2a) as reflected above. There was usually no consideration for hot weather. An overcoat was also regarded as an item of *hlonipha* and dignity.

##### (c) A Jacket

A man was expected to wear a jacket when attending social occasions such as meetings, religious gatherings, church services, funeral services, and other public gatherings. The same also applied to men acting as *oonozakuzaku*.

#### 5.2.2.2 Use of beads to signify *hlonipha*

In a traditional society all occasions connected with the reverence of ancestors were honoured by the wearing of bead regalia by both men and women from both the purely indigenous and semi-indigenous levels of society. Even during this modern stage of social development there are still traces of men and women who make use of

bead items to honour such occasions. These occasions which assumed the nature of traditional worship or *unqulo* (11) included the *ukukhapha* (15) ceremony, *ukubuyiswa* (15) and *ukuhlanjwa komzi* which have already been alluded to in 3.2.1 to 3.2.4.

Soga (1937: 29) explains *unqulo* as a traditional religion where there is worshipping of ancestral spirits and ancestors who have the power to kill the unfaithful and bless the faithful.

*Mayela nonqulo bekukhonzwa oomishologu, kunqulwa iminyanya, izinto apha kuthiwa kuyadityanwa nazo zabe zinamandla okubulala abanganyanisekile kwanokuthamsangelisa abasukuba bekholekile ekunquleni kwabo.*

(With regard to ancestor worship, ancestral spirits which had power to kill those who were not faithful to them and to bless those who believed in them, were worshipped).

Men were required to honour and show their respect to the ancestors by wearing the following bead items.

\* *Umqhele* (9/10)

This is a head ring made of black and white beads. It is bordered with blue beads which are associated with ancestors. It takes the place of a hat which is associated with dignity and respect.

\* *Isidanga* (7/8)

This is a collection of blue beads in large single strings which when grouped together form a large loose ring which is hung over the neck and allowed to flow down the front over the stomach. This ring is worn by men only on very important occasions such as the ones mentioned above. It is also a *hlonipha* bead item.

\* **Other bead items:**

These include *ulwimi lwengwe* - (a leopard's tongue) and *uphalaza* (1/2a) which is also worn round the neck. It must be noted that besides *unqulo* this bead regalia which includes other series as well is worn as a sign of identification and reverence for any other particular occasion such as *umngqumngqo*, *umdudo*, *intlombe* (Xhosa dances and occasions), *umngquzo wentonjane*, *uhubhe wamaTshawe* (Phondo ceremonies). In all these occasions *abantu bagaxela iintsimbi* (people wear their bead regalia in full).

Levitas (1984: 36-37) when commenting on this matter of beads says:

Where beads are widely used, the pattern and colours show tremendous variation. In the days of the old before trade was started with Europe and China, beads were made from natural products such as ostrich eggshells and from an enormous variety of seeds and the peels of dried vegetables. Trade opened up a whole new assortment of beads initially out of glass and later plastic and offered the skilled craftsmen undreamed of opportunities to make intricate patterns with bright strong colours. Clothing and beadwork convey important messages.

By and large, as beads were generally meant for decoration, love symbols, religious symbols, and items of beauty, they also played a significant role in the *hlonipha* custom and practice.

### 5.3 **Females from the purely indigenous society**

These are divided into *Amaqabakazi* (Red blanket women) and *Amagqiyane* ( see 2.2.3.1) In addition to the information presented on 2.2.3.1, the boys' girls generally known as *amagqiyane* (5/6) or *iintombi zamakhwenkwe* usually wear almost nothing on their upper bodies. They generally have their breasts exposed but they wear bead necklaces and have their legs and forearms tightly encased in beads and their upper

arms in massed brass bangles especially girls from the Gcaleka Region. In keeping with their lowly status within the tribe as young girls their head coverings are very simple. But what is common with them is that according to Elliot (1987:16), they wear their head gear as a mark of respect to their men's folk.

The short skirts which they wear are made of cotton fabric known as *ibhayi* (5/6). This is a development from the skin stage already alluded to. These skirts may be dyed in red ochre. They are decorated with buttons and beads like *izikhakha* (7/8).

Traditional girls use no panties but a loin design made of a string round the waist with a series of short loose strings or frills which fall in front and which are designed to cover the pubic area. This is known as *inkciyo* (9/10).

By tradition a tribe is identified by the colour of its women's skirts in the entire Eastern Cape but it is inevitable that tones will vary because individual women dye their own clothes. An experienced observer is able to identify each group by the general style of dress.

Girls of a family usually provide most of the bead work. Apart from helping their mothers create pieces for their fathers, they make beadwork for their brothers and boy friends and for their own use as well. In return they are permitted to borrow them back on occasion and show them off to full advantage. Fingo girls and women in general are noted for their mother-of pearl buttons. Other Xhosa speakers use these as well, but none as lavishly as the Fingo. The deep brown red ochre dye is also distinctly associated with the Fingo people. (See Elliot (1987: 19):

#### 5.3.1 *Iintombi zabafana* (Young men's age group)

The information on 2.2.3.2. regarding behaviour patterns and *hlonipha* practices for this group has already been given in details but the difference between *amagqiyane*

and this group is that their skirts also called *imibhaco* are slightly longer than those of *amagqiyane* but not as long as those of married women. They normally wrap their upper bodies with a *bhayi* often dyed in *imbola* (9/10) but will still have their breasts exposed to indicate to *amasoka* (5/6) (bachelors) that they are eligible for marriage. But when they are engaged they tend to plait their hair long and redden it with ochre so that it screens their eyes, the idea being to avoid looking their betrothed in the eyes as this would be regarded as being presumptuous according to the *hlonipha* custom. This is a start for a much more serious *hlonipha* practice known as *ukugungxa* (15) ( the wearing of the head dress over the eyes during the *hota* period for *makoti*). This lot also makes use of beads, rings and brass bangles and use *inkciyo* as underwear.

### 5.3.2 *Abatshakazi/ oomakoti* (The newly wedded)

The red blanket newly wedded women and their behaviour and *hlonipha* practices are not different from those described on 2.2.3.3 and 2.2.4 but their attire remains distinct for them to be easily identifiable so that no young man may assault their marriage dignity by proposing love to them. Their head dress is generally black in colour and is worn over the eyes to represent payment of respect to the bridegroom and father-in-law and other senior and respectable members of the family.

A *makoti's ibhayi* (small blanket) is designed to be long and slightly heavy and is always tied together with a pin or knot below the chin. A special cover known as *ixakatho* (5/ 6) is worn over the shoulder on top of the *bhayi* to indicate that she is a *makoti*. Her *mbhaco's* length reaches the ankles and no part of the leg is exposed. The arms are also concealed. She wears an apron on top of *umbhaco* ( 3/4) in the same manner as older women wear their *iincebeta* (9/ 10) over *imibhaco* (3/ 4).

Xhosa and Fingo *makotis* tend to paint their faces red with *imbola* (9/10) as a *hlonipha* mark in the same way as *abakhwetha* (1/ 2) paint their faces and bodies with white

ochre called *ingceke* (9/10). The idea is to be completely identifiable in terms of the *hlonipha* custom. They are also allowed to decorate their attire with beadwork mixed with buttons starting from the headdress to the skirts.

A newly wedded woman must show humility as a sign of *hlonipha* particularly to her father-inlaw. Her status remains greatly honoured by family members as long as she sticks to the *hlonipha* rules under which she has to operate until her *hota* period expires after several months or years.

As time goes by, her *ixakatho* (5/6) is gradually shifted from top to the waist in stages. At the first stage she covers both shoulders and at the second one she covers her breasts or uses it for tying the baby (*ukubeleka umntwana*) and at the last one she brings it down to cover only the waist also as a sign of *hlonipha*. When a *makoti* has her first baby she puts on a special bead necklace to denote that she is having a baby.

### 5.3.3 *Abafazi bamaqaba* (Older traditional women)

This group covers all the women from middle age to *amaxhegwazana* (5/6) (very old women). They are distinct by the attire they wear which differs considerably from that of the groups described above. Their headdress is distinguished by its huge size because of the re-inforcement and piling together of different items that are intended to make it big like a canopy of some sort. The dressing and style of this headdress differs from person to person. There are various names given to it. The Gcaleka women in the Centane district call theirs *isikhubusi* (7/8) but the others from the Fingo area call theirs *isitafu* (7/8). In the Tsolo and Qumbu areas it is known as *unombhaholo* (1/2a). This headdress is worn as a sign of *hlonipha* for women and is worn everywhere at any time of the day. No Xhosa married woman is allowed to go bear-headed in public.

Every woman wears a long *umbhaco* or *isikhakha* (skirt) which is made of heavy fabric



and may be decorated with lines and patterns of coloured cotton and beads. It has a black binding known as *ilenti* (9/10). It is designed in such a way that no one can see through it. Women always carry an *ibhayi* which covers the upper body including the breasts. Their breasts are never exposed. The covering *bhayi* may be embroidered with black binding and may also be decorated with several lines of coloured beadwork.

The next item a woman puts over the breasts to stretch down over the skirt is an apron called *incebeta* (9/10) whose main and specific function is to cover the breasts. The second *bhayi* used is for carrying a child on the back. It is characteristic of *qaba* women to carry bags called *iinxili* (9/10) on their shoulders so as to carry their long pipes known as *umbheka-phesheya* (3/4), their home grown tobacco and other things. These bags are also decorated with beads and buttons.

Beads also play an important role in securing the status of a woman. Most are worn round the neck and allowed to flow down over *incebeta* and *umbhaco*. These are known as *iziyaca* (7/8). The arms are also decorated with rubber and brass rings known as *iingqombo* and *iiwatsha* (9/10) while legs are decorated with copper rings known as *imiliza* (3/4) which are also worn by girls and men.

#### 5.3.4 *Amagqobhoka* (Semi-traditional females)

The term *amagqobhoka* (5/6) is generally used to describe the semi traditional females as against *amagoba-dyasi* (5/6) which was used to describe semi- traditional men. As indicated in 5.1.2 the traditional attire in men was affected by industrialisation and migratory labour system in South Africa. When the men returned from the mines and other industrial areas of the greater South Africa they brought home modern items of clothing for their wives, girl friends and daughters. Besides these, most were sold in local shops. Again because of the influence and spread of Christianity throughout the Eastern Cape as in other Provinces, all the Christian converts subsequently "washed

off" their *imbola* and took to the wearing of the western items and the absorption of, albeit on a very limited scale, the western style of living.

It was clear therefore that the western civilisation had begun to infringe on traditional culture of women. The traditionalists who resisted the Western and Christian influences, labelled those who had yielded to it as *amagqobhoka* (5/6) meaning Christian converts. As men also got influenced by Christian evangelism the term became all inclusive. But for the purposes of this thesis it will be used to refer to women only so as to distinguish them from men.

Although *amagqiyane* and *iintombi zamadoda* went for the new form of clothing, they still stuck to their identity in terms of short and long skirts respectively. As a new innovation they now wore dresses, blouses shoes, berets and hats of various colours to replace their traditional outlook.

#### 5.3.5 *Abatshakazi*

The newly weds in this section were distinguished by the use of different items of clothing which were designed to keep their identity as *oomakoti*. On her head a *makoti* wore a form of silk fabric which was also black in colour but soft and more sophisticated than the one usually worn by a traditional *makoti*. It was called *iseyidukhwe* or *ikheshemiya* (9/10). During her *hota* period she also wore it over the eyes to *hlonipha* her father-in-law and other senior members of the family as usual.

She also wore a complete dress made of German Print which was normally blue in colour and which covered the ankles. This dress was known as *ijalimani* (5/6). Instead of using a *bhayi*, she now used *ixakatho* (5/6) which was a light shawl made of cotton and wool and which was decorated with different colours similar to those of a rug. The method of wearing *ixakatho* (5/6) was almost the same as that used by

traditional *makotis* described in 5.2.1.3. except that in stage two the *ixakatho* was tied under the armpit of one arm in order to allow for free movement of arms to enable her to work freely and easily. It was tied in such a way that it would still cover the breasts. On the third stage she took it off altogether and replaced it with a scarf or a *nomemeza* (a white cloth in the case of Pondo women) which was tied round the waist as also a sign of *hlonipha*. This implied that she had now been promoted to the level of *umfazana* (1/2).

Over her dress she wore a long apron generally known as *ifaskoti* (9/10). All her long dresses were designed to have long sleeves to cover the arms which might not be exposed particularly during the first stages of her *hota* period.

#### 5.3.6 *Abafazi abadala namaxhegwazana* (Older women)

Older women, like the newly weds, keep to long dresses which reach the ankles. This tradition remains unchanged. These may be full dresses or skirts but as a sign of *hlonipha* and a way of maintaining their dignity, these dresses remain long so that the legs should always remain concealed. The fabrics used vary according to the taste of the wearer.

Underneath the dress is a very thick kind of petticoat known as *noqhoni* or *nomtidili* (1/2a). It is usually made of a flannel material for purposes of providing warmth. But the greatest aim is to provide sufficient obscurity so that nobody can see through the material.

Another item of clothing worn is the blouse which must strictly have long sleeves in order to conceal the arms. At no stage can a woman of this level go in public with exposed arms as society would frown upon the act and regard it as a violation of accepted cultural standards.

The traditional type of headdress explained in 5.2.1.4 at this stage, is abandoned and an ordinary head scarf known as *iqhiya* (9/10) is used instead. Any colour may be chosen. It must be understood that even at this stage of cultural development the *hlonipha* practice still prevails and that no married woman may ever go bear-headed.

The *ixakatho* which was used by *abatshakazi* is no longer used by this group. Instead they use a kind of a thick shawl known as *ityali* (9/10). When they attend important ceremonies and social gatherings, they wear it as a symbol of *hlonipha* just as *abafazana* wear a kind of light shawl known as *ilema* (9/10).

Just like the traditional women put on *incebeta* (9/10) on top of *isikhakha* (7/8) the semi-traditional women wear *ifaskoti* (9/10) on top of the dress.

## 5.4 Chiefs

### 5.4.1 *Ezamaqaba* (Purely traditional chiefs)

Traditional chiefs did not dress differently from their subjects. They kept the traditional pattern of the times. As it was mentioned in the introductory remarks in this chapter that traditional societies wore animal skins before the arrival of western civilisation and Christianity in this country, Soga (1937:43) confirms the use of animal skins as a traditional attire.

*Bekusombathwa iminweba yeenyamakazi ngabanumzana,  
zizidwangube neenkosi.*

(Royal blankets made of animal skins were, in the past, worn by very important and distinguished personalities and chiefs).

The skins specially used particularly by chiefs were those of antelopes, leopards and lions. The leopard skin was the most popular probably because it was much easier to procure than that of a lion which was for instance difficult to get because of its

viciousness and extreme bravery. Anybody who had killed a leopard would take its skin to the Great Place and donate it to the chief whereupon he would be rewarded with an ox.

The procedure for electing incumbents for chieftainship in the distant past did not depend on the system of automatic ascendancy by virtue of royal birth as it is the case nowadays. The chief, according to Luvuyo Lucwaba, one of the researcher's informants, was elected from a group of young men who had been short listed because of their good background such as coming from rich and well respected families, of having good moral virtues, and enjoying a certain measure of respectability in the community. The incumbents had to be well known for their high intellectual capabilities and physical prowess besides a lot of other attributes which made them outstanding personalities in their communities.

To prove their bravery, they were given a dangerous assignment of hunting down a most vicious and ruthless animal which stayed in the deep pools (*iziziba*) (7/8) of large and well known rivers such as the Great Kei, the Great Fish River, uMzimvubu and many others. This animal which was mainly their target was the size of a large and full grown leopard and it was called *inabulele* (9/10).

When they got to the river they taunted and coaxed it to come out by singing, beating drums and making loud noises. When it came out only one man at a time was allowed to fight with it. The one who managed to kill it was the likely candidate for the position of a chief. After skinning the animal, the skin would be tendered soft and taken to the Great Place. The act would receive great publicity and the entire nation would be invited to the Great Place where the induction of the man who had killed *inabulele* (9/10) would be made in a ceremony to mark his ascendancy to chieftainship.

The skin would be made a chief's ceremonial blanket called *ummweba* (3/4) which was

only worn by chiefs and kings. Other skins used were those of the leopards, lions and antelopes which were forest animals. On the head he would wear a bead ring called *umqhele* (3/4) and on top of it he would put on a home made hat known as *isidlokolo* (7/8) which was also made of one of the above mentioned animal skins. Around the neck he would wear bead regalia made of such bead items as *isidanga*, *uphalaza*, *ulwimi lwengwe* and other types.

Around the waist he would wear a loin cloth made of animal skin called *isibheshu* (7/8). Underneath he would wear the usual *ingxiba*. Note that all the skins he wore were one of or all of the animals mentioned above to distinguish him from the common tribesmen. On his right hand he would carry a knobkerrie (*umsimbithi*) (3/4) made from mahogany wood and in his left hand a spear and a shield. The kerrie would sometimes be bound with bead rings to make it colourful.

Of paramount importance in the life of a chief was that he was bound to display his regalia whenever he appeared in public to perform his official duties and to dignify all ceremonies conducted on behalf of other chiefs and important dignitaries. By and large this was a form of paying *hlonipha* to the nation as a whole.

#### 5.4.2 *Ezamagoba-dyasi* (Chiefs of the semi-traditional period)

The penetration of western civilisation and Missionary influence into the South African tribal life, did not leave the traditional chieftainship impervious and unaffected by the forces of change even in their traditional attire. As the change of situation has been indicated in 5.1.2, chiefs also began to make use of such items of western civilisation as trousers, shirts, jackets and coats. They also had the option of using blankets such as *ingcawa* and *isabhalala*.

Fabric manufacturers later made replicas of the royal blankets bearing pictures of the renowned and revered animals described in 5.3.1 using fabric imitations. This development made it easy for the chiefs to use these imitation blankets in the absence

of the real skins which had gradually gone out of circulation mainly because of the extinction of most animals and also because of the moratorium placed on the killing of wild game by the proclamations promulgated by the laws on wild game preservation during the era of the then White Colonial Governments.

## 5.5 Conclusion

It came as no surprise therefore to learn of the transformation of the attire of the indigenous people including men, women, children, chiefs, their places of residence, and also their way of life because of the impact of western civilisation, education, and Christian influence. Be that as it may, the *hlonipha* practice in some certain areas is still being upheld by both the chiefs and their subjects particularly in the purely indigenous and semi-indigenous societies in the Eastern Cape.

## END NOTE

The information was supplied by:

1. Nontozintle Mdingi  
Thuthurha  
CENTANE
2. Nosisa Tshethu  
Ciko  
WILLOWVALE
3. Luvuyo Lucwaba  
Mahlungulu  
QUMBU



## CHAPTER 6

### SYMBOLIC *HLONIPHA*

#### 6.1 Introduction

Before discussing this chapter in detail, the researcher has deemed it proper and appropriate first to define the concept of *symbolism* which, in this study, is associated with the *hlonipha* practice which is the focal point of this study. Secondly it will be considered how the two are mutually interrelated.

The symbol, according to the New Standard Encyclopaedia (Vol. 14 : 962):

Is something that represents something else. It may be an inscribed form (a plus sign) a pictorial sign (a coat of arms), an object (a trophy), a living creature (a bird, an animal), a sound, a common salute or a gesture (a hand shake). A symbol may be called an emblem (a flag), an insignia, (a sergeant's stripes). In visual symbols, meanings may be conveyed by colour (a red stop light). Language itself consists of symbols --sounds that represent ideas and, in the case of the written language markings that represent sounds, words or ideas.

*Isihlonipho* as a language as well, is symbolic in essence. Besides the encyclopaedia definition, Turner (1967 : 19) has this to say about symbolism:

A symbol is a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. The symbols I observed in the field were empirically objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures and special units in a ritual situation.

From the definition given by these two authorities quoted above, it goes without saying therefore that the relationship that exists between the people such as *makoti*, the children of the head of the family and other people who may find themselves involved in this kind of *hlonipha*, and the objects specifically belonging to *umninimzi*

(1/2a), makes us conclude that such relationship is symbolic, especially when we consider that the respect of such objects can be paid in the actual absence of the head of the family.

The implication here is that this practice carries some element of obligation or compulsion and that the people involved need not necessarily wait until the head of the family is physically present before they *hlonipha* his belongings. Even in his death the intensity of the reverence may be as great as if he is physically alive. It should be pointed out that the act of *hlonipha* does not end with action only but it also involves the language used.

That is why Myburgh (1981 : 134) when discussing symbols representing spirits has this to say about the Venda symbolic *hlonipha*.

A black female goat is representative of the spirit of maternal ancestor, and objects that belonged to the ancestors such as axes, hoes, cloth, old horns, copper ingots, beads etc are treated with awe and used in ritual as if they represented the persons to whom they belonged.

This brings us to the conclusion that the belongings of the head of the family in a Xhosa society are given maximum respect during his life time and also after his death. That shows how serious people are with regard to this symbolic *hlonipha* custom.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to discuss those artefacts that, during the traditional era, were respected during the life time of the head of the family; those that were buried with him, the mourning observance, and those articles that were respected even after his death. The position of *makoti* with regard to her change of status and her adherence to the *hlonipha* of the side of her father-in-law's dwelling together with the items left behind after death, will be alluded to as *isihlonipho*.

## 6.2 Paying respect to objects used by the family head during his life time

The respect of *ukuhlonipha* does not only end with the individual. It also extends to his belongings and all other phenomena associated with him. This is a demonstration of the high esteem with which he is held by his people and so by society.

### 6.2.1 Eating and drinking utensils

It has been a tradition among the Xhosa people to accord maximum respect to the head of the family by upholding and maintaining avoidance of the usage of all his eating and drinking utensils by some members of his family. The groups which were specifically debarred from doing so were his daughter-in-law commonly known as *makoti*, his children and people from outside his family. These objects were his dish which was specifically earmarked for him and which was used for containing his food such as *umngqusho* (3/4) (mealies and beans), *umvubo* (3/4) (smashed boiled mealies and sour milk mixed), meat, and other traditional foods such as *isophu* (9/10), *umthwane* (3/4), *umxhaxha* (3/4), *uqhumatana* (1/2a), *umkhupha* (3/4), *umqa* (3/4), *igqubhuza* (5/6). These were varieties of foods made from mealies, beans, sorghum and pumpkin. This dish was kept in a special place and could not be used for any other purpose without the permission of the wife of the family head.

*Makoti* and the children could only wash it but not use it. Other revered utensils were his spoons, *uthiniko* (11) (a special spoon made of horn for eating *umvubo*), cups, mugs, plates, *ingcaza* (9/10) (beer drinking traditional container made of clay). This *ngcaza* could also be a can (*untshulantshula*) (1/2a) (slightly bigger in size) known as *uphantsi kwebhedi* (1/2a) (under the bed). The head of the family was personally at liberty to use some of these utensils such as *ingcaza* with his colleagues but could not share them with the members of his family mentioned above and some of the junior members of his family or relatives. This practice emanated from the traditional period before the arrival of the Whites and other foreign races in South Africa, and has

spilled over to the modern era where some families still uphold this tradition although in a modified form.

### 6.2.2 Bedding

Bedding for a family head in the traditional era was composed of a blanket, a reed mat or an animal skin mat known as *ugaga* (11/10). But as times advanced, mattresses and beds were introduced. It has been mentioned in 4.2.4 that a *makoti* was not allowed to set her foot on the side of the hut reserved for the head of the family. In the same vein she was precluded from making up his bed, let alone using his sleeping items for personal use. The children were also debarred from making use of his blankets, mats, mattress or bed even when he was absent for very long periods. The blankets and mats were rolled up and kept in a safe place and could only be used by their owner when he returned or his wife could use them in exceptional cases when there were too many people who had come and slept there during a certain occasion.

### 6.2.3 Working implements and tools

It was a common phenomenon in a traditional set up for *umninimzi* (1/2a) to have his own working implements and tools which he used in the everyday running of his home. Tools commonly used by him consisted of an axe which he used for chopping wood in preparation for making sheep pens and cattle kraals and for chopping off any unwanted trees and growth in his premises; a digging tool known as *ulugxa* (11/10) which had been sharpened to cut through the soil easily. This was mainly used to make holes for fitting in poles needed to support fencing of kraals and the yard. Sometimes this was used to make a wall made of logs of wood for a dwelling structure. Other structures also made of wood and old iron were pig stys, chicken pens, and *amadladla* (11/10) i.e. cribs for holding maize still on the cob.

Sometimes such a tool was used for digging herbs if the head of the family had an

inclination for use of herbs. It had to be kept safe and could not be lent to anybody without the owner's authority and no one was allowed to use it. It had become a common practice for most tribesmen to indulge in agricultural practice as a means of livelihood. Men did ploughing, cultivation, and hoeing. A head of the family had individual ownership of such implements as hoes, ploughs, cultivators and spades. None of these could be used by anybody without having proper authority from him except perhaps his wife who could issue such an authority in his absence in cases where work had to be done at home by members of the family. Be that as it may, *makoti* was totally debarred from using all tools belonging to her father-in-law. Such tools could also not be lent out to people outside the home without the owner's permission.

The pocket knife which played a practical part in the running of the home was also revered if it belonged to the head of the family. Its function consisted mainly of cutting meat during the slaughtering of animals; of shaping sticks, making hoe and axe handles, of making skeys (*izikeyi*- 7/8) for yokes and of doing many other necessary and important functions.

The practice followed by most heads of families in avoiding the use of their tools by junior members of their families, was to buy in duplicate those items they could afford to buy in order to allow their families the use of these duplicate items thereby giving them no reason to want to make use of his own personal tools. In this way the family was given enough scope to show reverence to these reserved tools.

#### 6.2.4 Defence weapons

As has already been mentioned in 2.2.2. (d) above, it was an accepted practice for any man to have and to carry a stick. This stick was always regarded as a symbol of peace and was never meant as a weapon for aggression. But during unprecedented attacks, it could be used as a defence weapon to ward off the enemy, the barking and biting

dogs, dangerous snakes and for driving stock. More than that in African culture a stick gave a man his dignity. The head of the family's stick therefore had to be respected by his children and by the women folk particularly *makoti*. She could not touch it, let alone walk over it. The same prohibition as has already been indicated in 2.2.3 also applied to other women. This stick had to be kept or hidden under the mat of the head of the family when not in use.

Another revered weapon belonging to him was his private spear. This was used on two occasions. The first one was when it was used to pierce oxen which were being slaughtered for home and ritual use. Each family had a special man known as *intlabi* (9/10) ( piercer) who used such a spear during slaughtering. It might not necessarily be the head of the family himself. It was a common practice for any household to have its own spear as a tradition. Since this private spear was kept inside the hut of *umninimzi* (1/2a) on the inside part of the roof for easy access, he could easily use it to defend his family in times of attacks and theft of the family property within the premises.

There was also another spear which went along with a shield. This was kept somewhere on the premises and it could be used during war times, and local skirmishes. Both spears had to be respected in the same way as other items.

The third weapon was the head of the family's pocket knife. Its function has already been explained in 6.1.3. In cases of attacks he could use it as a defence weapon but its function was more of a general usage than of an offensive.

#### 6.2.5 Entertainment items

The head of the family reserved his right to entertain himself in his leisure time like any other person in the community. One of the most popular forms of personal entertainment was smoking. He had his own *inxili* (9/10) which he used for keeping

his odd items such as his pipe *uzalipholile* (1/2a) or *unerhu* (1/2a). These were the names for his long pipe and short one respectively. These went along with his special blend of home grown tobacco known as *uqohwana* (1/2a), *undanyandanya* (1/2a) or *uphantsi kwesibaya*. From these blends he could easily donate *ingxawa* (9/10) (just enough tobacco to fill a pipe) to a friend or visitor.

Like anybody's purse, *inxili* belonging to *umninimzi* could not be touched by anybody when it was left at home by its owner. It was regarded as private property. Women could only touch it officially when they did some bead decorations on it. This allowance was a taboo to his daughter-in-law. As a revered item it could only be touched by his wife.

#### 6.2.6 Personal possessions

Heads of families were sometimes distinguished by the types of hats they wore. The common one *mninimzi* used was a woollen one called *isankwane* (7/8) which he used to cover his head on cold nights and cold days. He also wore it when attending local meetings and when he walked leisurely around his locality. This hat was popular among Xhosa tribesmen and was always donated by in-laws during *ukwambesa* (15) ceremony. This was issued out to the head of the family as a gift when a new *makoti* was in the process of joining her new family as *umendi*. For these reasons it was a respected item and no other member of the family was allowed to use it. Besides being donated, he could still buy it for himself. *Makoti* could only wash it after a formal meeting had been conducted to relax some of the *hlonipha* restrictions placed upon her.

Another kind of hat was the formal western type for those heads of families who had become sophisticated. It got the same respect as *isankwane* (7/8) and could not be used by anybody except after the death of its owner. Most tribesmen used horses as means of transport. That was mostly before other means of transport such as bicycles,

motor cycles and motor cars were available. Most heads of families owned horses. They bought saddles and bridles for their horses. Such saddles and bridles were treated and revered in the same manner as the other items enumerated above. A saddle had to be kept in a special place and could not be lent out to any outsider even in the absence of the owner. His children were also not allowed to use it after his death before a meeting of the family and relatives was held to decide on the use of his property.

Other items of clothing such as trousers, jackets and overcoats were also taboo to his children and could only be used after his death if the family and close relatives so decided. Old articles of clothing were usually burnt.

#### **6.2.7 Chair and sitting space**

Before the arrival of the modern times when modern furniture was made available, heads of families used to have their reserved places around the fire places, near the cattle kraals, and any favourite spot within their premises. *Mninimzi* either sat down on the ground or on his mats or on a stump of wood to improvise for a chair. Later short benches and chairs were introduced. All these improvised seats and spaces were given maximum respect by the members of the family and could under no circumstances be used as they were always reserved for the head. Only after the mourning period was over could a decision for the occupation of such spaces and use of such items be made.

The modern period has brought about some modifications which have given birth to special types of chairs known as lazy-boys meant for heads of families in many homes. At table the place of the head of family is distinguished by having a special chair which has a different design from that of the rest of the chairs to indicate that the chair is meant for the head of the family.



### 6.3 After the death of the family head

On the death of the head of the family the situation in a traditional society differed from that obtaining today. He was buried with some of the items enumerated in 6.1. This was a practice followed until the 20th Century.

Basil Holt (1969: 258) confirms this in his analysis of the Thonga customs. He claims that the person's more intimate personal possessions (pipe, sticks) are broken in pieces and thrown into the grave. In the case of clothing, buttons are first removed.

Junod (1969: 140) as quoted by Holt says that the reason the Thonga do not allow buttons, iron, brass etc in the grave, is because these things outlast the corpse and so may cause harm to the deceased or to people of the deceased's homestead. Also they may bury with the dead person a quantity of seed (*imbewu*) (9/10) of maize, millet, pumpkin and other things.

The Thonga burial practice was similar to that of the Xhosa in the sense that the body of the head of the family was covered in his own blanket known as *isabhalala* and most of his possessions such as his mat, (*ukhuko*) (11/10) or (*ugaga*) (11/10), pipe, *inxili*, stick, spear, axe, *ulugxa*, *isankwane*, tobacco and some seeds were put next to his corpse. The idea was that when he woke up on the other side of the world to face a new life he should not bother people there by borrowing things on his arrival. He should be able to defend himself if necessary. Again he should be able to indulge in agricultural practice for his survival.

Since he was buried within the premises and next to the kraal posts, he should always watch his home and his stock at all times.

### 6.3.1 Removal of *uzilo*

After the death of a person, it was a general practice in the Eastern Cape traditional society to observe a mourning period known as *uzilo* (3/4). Some people used the other similar terms, *izila* or *inzila* to describe the same thing. To pay respect to the head of the family, the mourning was honoured by the slaughtering of an ox on his behalf. Soga (1937: 124) confirms this when he says:

*Le nto ibisenziwa kumninimzi yedwa, ingeyiyo noko yona inkosikazi kwanabantwana bomfi.*

(This was a gesture for the head of the family only, and was not meant for his wife and children).

*Uzilo* was also shown by the shaving off of the hair from the people's heads after the burial. Soga (1937) says:

*Izandla ziyahlanjwa ngamanzi emveni kokukhova ukungcwatywa., kuze kulandele ukuchetywa kweemwele kubantu nabantwana bekhaya kunye namaxhego namaxhegokazi nabendileyo nabasemisebenzini, bonke kufuneka bechetyiwe.*

(After the funeral hands were washed with water. Then followed the shaving of heads. This was done to the children, to old men and women, to the married and to those who were at work. In other words this injunction applied to everybody here at home).

The mourning period took a full year and at the expiry of this period the mourning observance was lifted and steps were taken to consider belongings for the head of the family left behind.

### 6.3.2 Disposal of articles belonging to the deceased

The articles left behind by the head of the family such as his spoon, his dish, his overcoat, his formal hat, his pocket knife, his hoe, his spade, his saddle and bridle and

his horse were not used for a period of a year until the *uzilo* period was over.

All close relatives of *umninimzi* were called together to congregate at the home of the head of the family for a meeting to discuss what was to be done with the items listed above. They were divided mainly among the brothers of the deceased and not among his children. His children would be considered only when his estate was discussed. The estate normally encompassed moveable property such as cattle, sheep and goats and also dwelling structures.

In this meeting emphasis was again laid on the need to respect those divided items so that the owner should not feel offended at their being carelessly handled.

*Ize ingabi zizinto zokudlala izinto zomfi. Kunyanzelekile ukuba mazixatyiswe njengoko umninizo ebezixabisile esaphila.*

(The items you have received should be valued and revered in the same manner as they were revered when the deceased was still alive).

Those would be some of the words of advice coming from the members of the meeting to the recipients.

### 6.3.3 The position of *makoti*

According to Maxhoba Ngqangashe, the position of *makoti* was ameliorated with regard to the restrictions based on the symbolic *hlonipha* only when she was promoted to the stage of *umfazana*. As already indicated in 2.2.3.4. this stage was reached after a couple of months or years of service depending on the particular family to which she was married. This had nothing to do with the expiry of *uzilo* period for *umninimzi* and other members of the family as indicated above.

When the time for her promotion came, negotiations between the members of the family regarding need for her promotion took place. She was then told to go to her

maiden home to inform her parents about her in-laws's decision to promote her to the next stage. Her parents subsequently organised a party of men and women who would accompany her back to her marriage home (*emzini*). They would carry gifts and money for their in-laws as if she was arriving here for the first time. Both parties would work together highlighting the performance of *makoti* during her *hota* period. If both parties were satisfied, that would be proof that the intention to promote her was genuine and necessary.

In addition to the relaxation of the restrictions highlighted in 2.2.3.4., she would now be allowed to cross over to her father-in-law's side and be able to sweep and smear the floor, daub the wall and white wash it. But still she would not be allowed to stay on this side even after the father-in-law had died. She would not be allowed to touch and make use of those items which the family decided to retrieve from the list enumerated in 6.2.1. She was still obliged to *hlonipha* them

#### 6.4 Conclusion

Though it has been expressed in most chapters in this thesis that the arrival of western civilisation and other forces has eroded some of the cultural traits and norms, yet symbolic *hlonipha* is still being practised on a large scale by many families in the Eastern Cape. After the death of a person members of the families do come together after the funeral to discuss ways of disposing the property of the deceased irrespective of what his or her status is.

However exceptions do occur when the deceased has willed his or her property to a person or people of his or her own choice. It is gratifying to note that the element of *hlonipha* still prevails when consideration of the heavy items of *mninimzi's* property is made. There may be items that are not sold or distributed to the members of the family but are inherited by the eldest son or daughter or any member of *mninimzi's* choice.

## **END NOTE:**

The information in this chapter was partly supplied by the following informants:

1.     Maxhoba Ngqangashe  
       Dumasi  
       NGQELENI
2.     Luvuyo Lucwaba  
       Mahlungulu  
       QUMBU
3.     Mzwandile Ntuli  
       Ndlunkulu  
       TSOMO

## CHAPTER 7

### DRINKS AND MEDICINES

#### 7.1 Introduction

Before delving into the aspect of Xhosa beer as an instrument of *hlonipha* among the traditional Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape, one needs to define first its ingredients and then discuss its use as a social aspect, the method of brewing it, and finally the prevailing *hlonipha* element inherent during the drinking sessions. After these sub sections have been fully discussed, one will realise that Xhosa beer from the outset was, by its traditional nature not regarded purely as food for entertainment only, but its use was an important aspect of African culture for it also involved behaviour patterns and recognition of ancestors and had a tremendous impact on *isihlonipho*.

##### 7.1.1 Definition

Since many authorities on African culture and traditional literature in particular have agreed in common that traditional literature or folklore has suffered lack of proper documentation as a result of its oral nature, it is proper to assume that beer drinking has been part of African culture and tradition and has been done from time immemorial by all black races which have inhabited the African continent. The Nguni group to which the Xhosa speaking peoples belong, has presumably inherited this cultural tradition and practice from the Negroid races which have occupied Central Africa for many centuries. They brought it down with them when they settled in the Cape specifically in the Ndlambe and the Gcaleka Regions. It apparently survived because the Xhosa were largely pastoral and agricultural farmers.

Because it was such a well respected and valued kind of drink among Xhosas, Xhosa beer assumed many names some of which were euphemistic in nature. Up to this day it is still being known as *intombi kaLudiza*, *umabil' ebanda*, *umqombothi*, *idiphu* and

*ukutya kwamadoda*. None among my interviewees has satisfactorily explained why it assumed the name of *ukutya kwamadoda* (food for men) as if it was a drink for men only. Yet traditionally women also partook of it on a social and ritual bases. What made Xhosa beer so enjoyable and popular as a national drink was the skill with which it was made and the time it took to brew it.

### 7.1.2 Its use as a social aspect

In a traditional society, there are various reasons why Xhosa beer is brewed and used. These reasons automatically assist in giving names or references to each occasion of beer drinking. Xhosa people, by nature, appreciate the sense of knowing on each occasion why they are invited to drink. There must be a reason underlying the invitation. Such a reason is publicly announced at the commencement of the drinking session. This takes us to its use as a social aspect which may be analysed in the following order.

#### 7.1.2.1 *Utywala bomninimzi* (Beer for the head of the family)

It was a common practice in a traditional society for the house mistress commonly known as *umnikazimzi* (1/2a) to brew some beer in small quantity for her husband known as *umninimzi* (1/2a) i.e. the head of the family. She would brew just enough to fill a small barrel (*ifatyi*-9/10) known as *uthojana* (1/2a)

Her husband could ask one or two friends or relatives to join him during his drinking time. If he liked he might drink it alone with his family. He regarded what his wife had done for him as a great honour or a sign of respect for him. This beer was transferred from *uthojana* (1/2a) into a traditional drinking can known as *ingcaza* (9/10) or tin can called *untshulantshula* (1/2a) or *utshevelane* (1/2a) and was kept under *mninimzi's* bed for easy access. This assumed the name of *uphantsi kwebhedi* (the beer under the bed).

Almost every traditional homestead occasionally brewed its own beer. As a result it was common for men to pay social visits to one another. In that way social communication, a sense of respect, love, friendship and fellowship, all these were greatly enhanced to such an extent that such visits between men were quite common.

#### 7.1.2.2. *Utywala bomzi* (beer drink of the home)

The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa (Vol. 3, Q-Z : 1989) has a similar version of the type explained in 7.1.2.1. In its exposition, it claims that beer drink of the home is a customary rite in which beer is brewed on a large scale in order to maintain the pleasant atmosphere of the home and to seek the blessing of the ancestors. Because it pleases the ancestors to see people milling about and spitting in the homestead ( a customary habit when men smoke their pipes at a beer drink), they shower blessings on the home. In this rite no blood is spilt. The beer is drunk after an old man has explained the reason for the beer drink. As is the custom, this beer is brewed by the females born of the home.

#### 7.1.2.3. *Utywala bemicimbi* (Beer for social occasions)

This kind of beer is brewed for social occasions such as *imigidi* (3/4) ( boys' initiation parties), wedding parties, *intonjane* (9/10) and many other big occasions. This is a collective effort of all *abendi* (1/2a) from the homes of relatives and friends. Because it is prepared for many people, this labour arrangement is highly necessary as preparations could start with the collection of fuel, pots, barrels and water. If there is no water tank, water is generally fetched from a nearby stream with buckets and dry wood is collected from the wood in bundles which are carried on the heads by women.

Beer is made to fill big barrels known as *upitoli* (1/2a), *umodo* (1/2a), *iqakamba* (5/6) and *ubhokoda* (1/2a). These different names for the same containers are used in different districts such as Centane, Tsolo, Qumbu and Butterworth in the Eastern



Cape. This voluminous quantity of beer is sometimes known as *imithayi* (3/4). During drinking sessions it is served according to wards which are under headmen or sub-headmen. In the beer drinking milieu, people from these wards are known as *izizwe* (7/8) by *injoli* (9/10).

#### 7.1.2.4 *Utywala beminyanya* (Beer meant for appeasement of ancestors)

It happens that a member of the family dreams meeting his ancestors if he knows them or strange people if these are unknown to him. The dreams would depend on what the ancestors demand. They usually send messages reminding the family head to brew some beer for them or to slaughter an animal on their behalf. Ofcourse they may not say this directly but may imply it in the message or their action.

Sometimes they appear complaining, angry or indifferent because of some certain family omission pertaining to them. In that case it becomes imperative to take steps to appease them by brewing some beer on their behalf. This beer is normally brewed by *iintombi zekhaya* i.e. women born of the home only without *abendi*. However during the brewing process and the drinking session, all women are required to *hlonipha* the ancestors by wearing all the *hlonipha* attire. The same injunction applies to men who also wear their bead regalia when drinking starts after a series of speeches emulating, revering and appeasing the ancestors. Such speeches often end up with piles of requests for their benevolence:

*Ukwenjenje ke mawethu nani zindwalutho zakokwethu, kukugqithisa eli gogogo elithe lenziwa likhaya eli kumadoda amakhulu, iminyanya yasekhaya apha ukutsho oko. Ligogogo lokuhlonipha la maxhego asizeleyo, ukuwakhumbula, ukuwawonga nokuwabulela ngezinto ezintle athe asenzela zona phakathi kwalo mzi. Sithi phambili kuni zinyanya zakokwethu ngeli galelo. Siphilile nje nini: sibahle nje nini. Ngeso senzo sibonile ukuba nathi masinihloniphe. Siyanicela ukuba nisaluse, nisikhusele, nisiphe yonke into esiyinqwenelayo nesiycelayo.*

(By doing this, good people and honourable relatives, we are attempting to dedicate this beer drum made by this home to our great

men, the ancestors of this home. This is a symbol of paying respect and of showing *isihlonipho* to these old respectable sires. With it we remember them, we honour them and we thank them for the good things they have done for us at this home. We say forward to you for this gesture. That we are so healthy, we owe it to you. That we have such fine features, it is because of you. For such action we have decided also to hand to you this gift. In a similar vein, we ask for your care and protection, and we request you to fulfil our wishes and obligations).

A special quantity of liquor is reserved for *imilowo* (3/4) (relatives) in a container known as *untshulantshula* (1/2a). This is known as *umthunzi* (3/4). This is intended to be consumed by close relatives only at the end of the occasion. The *iintsipho* (9/10) ie the sediment left over during the filtering time (*xa kuhluzwa*) is finally thrown over the dry wood or elsewhere in the cattle kraal on the last day after further straining to get *ivanya* (9/10), (the beer imitation), has been done.

Beer for ancestors is also brewed when any member of the family decides to offer it to them as a gracious act of appreciation to thank them for things they have done for him, This is dearly known as *ukupha izinyanya*. Many people do this to ask for their favour, to secure their marriages, their jobs, their safety and their general welfare. The belief is that if this kind of beer is brewed occasionally or on a regular basis, the general welfare of the ancestors is indeed secured.

#### 7.1.2.5. *Utywala bezibhembe* (Beer for customary *mbeleko*)

One of the well known customs which were honoured after the birth of a child in an indigenous society was the *mbeleko* ritual. Here a goat (or a sheep) was slaughtered on behalf of the child. This was in essence a form of introducing the child to its ancestors. This was performed a few days or months after the child was born. But some families waited for years before this was done.

If the child was too small to eat his portion of the meat, then his mother ate it on his

behalf. This was usually a piece of meat called *inguba* (9/10) which was cut above the right shoulder of the animal. It was roasted on fire and given to the child to eat. This was termed *ukushwama* (15). The skin would be made tender and dressed to prepare it as a blanket for carrying the child on the back. It was called *imbeleko* (9/10). Besides the meat Xhosa beer was brewed and it was drunk on the same day the meat was eaten. When it was introduced to people it was referred to as *utywala bezibhembe* (beer for *mbeleko*). The word *izibhembe* (7/8) was used in a different connotation to mean all food eaten by the mother of the small baby, *umdlezana* (1/2). In essence this beer was meant to thank ancestors for increasing the progeny of the family.

#### 7.1.2.6 *Utywala bokubuya kweenkabi emasimini* (Beer for the return of the oxen from the lands)

According to the Greater Dictionary of Xhosa Vol. 3, this beer was brewed as a token of gratitude to those who helped with the reaping of mealies, sorghum, beans, pumpkins, and any other agricultural yield. Reaping was a big task which needed community assistance. The Xhosa people being communal in nature, were always ready to give a hand free of charge when asked to do so. They would be thanked with beer. The occasion was quite informal and private.

#### 7.1.2.7 **The brewing of Xhosa beer**

The slotting in of this sub section into this chapter is aimed at illustrating that the *hlonipha* element is all-pervasive even in the preparation stage of the actual brewing of beer. As different occasions of beer drinking have been reflected above, the people responsible for the brewing are sometimes required to wear their *hlonipha* attire as in the case of brewing of beer for ancestors. Even in the other cases all the married womenfolk such as *makoti*, *mfazana* and older women such as *mnikazimzi* are not allowed to tackle the brewing of beer without dressing 'properly' i.e. conforming to

the standard dressing requirements for a traditional wife.

According to the Greater Dictionary of Xhosa Volume 3 Addendum 36, edited by Pahl et al, the first step in the brewing of beer is to prepare malt. This is done by moistening a quantity of sorghum or mealies, covering it and placing it in a warm place to sprout. This malt, *inkoduso* (9/10), will serve as a yeast for fermentation. Meanwhile the women and girls grind sorghum, maize or wheat coarsely. This is known as *ukugraya* (15). The coarse granular meal is moistened and left overnight to be ground fine the next day. This is known as *ukucola* (15) The resultant dough (*intlama*) (9/10) is placed in a tub and left covered in a hassian bag overnight.

The following day a thin porridge is cooked using the dough. A small quantity of this is left to cool and is then poured into a pot or tub where it is mixed with malt to ferment quickly to form *isilumiso* (7/8) i.e. yeast, some of which is then used to hasten the fermentation of a small quantity of beer. This is known as *intluzelo* (9/10) which is drunk by the head of the household and his friends or any other person who happens to be in the vicinity at the time of straining.

On the day set aside for the purpose, the rest of the porridge is poured into a tub or tubs and mixed with the remainder of *isilumiso* (7/8) which acts as a yeast. Before this yeast is poured into the tub in which it is to cause fermentation, half of the remaining malt known as *imithombo yangaphantsi* (bottom malt) is poured into the bottom of the tub and the whole mixture is stirred thoroughly. Then the other half of the malt *imithombo yangaphezulu*, (top malt) is poured into the top of the mixture which is again stirred, then covered with a sack and left to ferment. The rate of fermentation depends on the amount of yeast added and the prevailing temperature; normally it takes about 24 hours.

When it is ready, the beer is strained and is ready for use. Before the straining takes place on a large scale, a tin dish/can known as *ibhekile* (9/10) is filled with the

unstrained beer and given to anybody to taste and drink. This quantity is known as *amashiqa* (5/6) and is intended to determine whether the flavour is good enough for the people. Those asked to drink this may resort to their own methods of straining it if they wish to do so.

For a bigger party the beer is kept in a big barrel commonly known as *upitoli* (1/2a) or *umodo* (1/2a), or *iqakamba* (5/6), or *ubhokodo* (1/2a) according to certain districts. If it is a small party smaller barrels such as *ubhojana* (1/2a) and *uthobhana* (1/2a) are used. In these containers, beer is left to ferment overnight before being drunk.

#### 7.1.2.8      **The prevailing *hlonipha* element during the drinking session.**

During the drinking session men and older women usually drink inside a hut. Young men, *abafana* (1/2) and *amakrwala* (5/6) drink inside theirs. If the party is very big, drinking usually takes place outside in the open air inside or outside the cattle kraal. Uncircumcised boys are given their share which they drink together. Sometimes women are allocated their own share particularly if their numbers are high. They may drink in their own hut.

What is fascinating about this drinking arrangement according to age and sex, is that the method of sitting or grouping is what counts in order to ensure that *hlonipha* ethics are adhered to. In the old men's drinking rondavel, the very old men sit next to the entrance and younger old men follow until the youngest catches the tail. If women are also accommodated in the same room, the very old ones take the first position after the last man and the line thins down according to age.

The tin dish or *ibhekile* (9/10) which is usually the *untshulantshula* (1/2a) size (bigger one) usually starts at the first position of the oldest man sitting next to the entrance after a few drops of beer have been deliberately allowed to fall on the ground. This is done to allow the ancestors also to participate symbolically in the drinking. Giving

them to 'drink' first is a *hlonipha* act which has to be abided by in all drinking occasions when *umqombothi* (3/4) and distilled liquor are used. The next part of the ritual is for the *injoli* (9/10) to take the first small gulp or sip of beer before giving it to the first man to drink. This is known as *ukungcamla* (15) or *ukususa ubuthi* (to take away poison if any). The *bhekile* then filters down the line until it reaches the last man. Or else another one is fetched if the line is too long.

While the men are concentrating on *untshulantshula*, women are given theirs which may be a smaller size known as *utshevulane*. The *injoli* must make sure that the first person is the oldest woman. The consideration of the aged first is a rule that must never be flouted in any traditional drinking party, for it is meant to give respect to the most senior citizens of the community and the younger ones must be attended to last. The same procedure is followed in the case of *abafana*. Women who drink in the same room with men sometimes get extra privilege by being called to take a sip or two in the line of men by their husbands, boy friends, friends and relatives. This is called *ukurhatyuliswa* (15).

Each one rises and sits in front of the offerer and accepts the gesture with respect, appreciation and humility. In the drinking session for men only, there are three important cans compulsorily reserved for the last three rounds. One is called *ingxotha* (9/10) which means the host has come to the time of driving his patrons away. In clearer terms this is a warning that the beer is getting finished. The next one after *ingxotha* (9/10) is *umthatha-nduku* (3/4) which means they must take their sticks and go as this is the last one for general drinking. He leaves only one *bhekile* which is called *ingqokogho* (9/10). No one is entitled to drink from this *bhekile* except *amaxhego* (5/6) (very old men). It is customary in all traditional drinking parties to reserve the last quantity of beer as a sign of respect to the aged.

#### 7.1.2.9      **Distilled liquor**

When the White races invaded the continent of Africa and started colonizing most of the countries in the Continent including South Africa, they brought with them trade items from Europe and America. One of these was a form of distilled liquor which had been packaged in bottles, tins and barrels and sold to the White inhabitants of South Africa and later to the Black peoples. With the advancement of times, this product was manufactured locally and ever since, it has become an important and valued commodity for the people. Like the African beer, it is also derived from agricultural products. The difference is that before it is ready for consumption it has to undergo some process of distillation before it becomes a consummable item.

According to The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 4 (1768-1771:129), the raw material used for a distilled liquor is a natural sugar or a starchy substance that may be easily converted into a sugar. Grapes are a principal raw material used for the production of distilled liquor, producing brandy. Peaches, apples, and many other fruits are used according to local availability. The most common vegetables used are sugar cane, and sugar beets, which produce rum. Corn is most widely used grain. Rye, rice and barley grains are also used. Distilled liquors made from grain are usually called whiskys.

The distillation process is based on the different boiling points of water (212 degrees F (100 degrees C) and alcohol (173 degrees F (78,5 degrees C)). The alcohol vapours that arise while fermentation liquid boils are trapped and recondensed to create a liquid of much greater alcoholic strength. The resultant distillate is matured, often for several years before it is packaged and sold.

The system of serving it to a traditional party in an African context is similar to the method of serving Xhosa beer explained above. The slight difference lies in the fact that the *injoli* uses one tot glass to serve the entire group of men or women sitting

per the arrangement described above. When the *injoli* reaches the bottom of the bottle, he leaves a few tots for what is generally known as *iqwela* (5/6). By conventional laws, these few tots go to the eldest *xhego* (old man) and cannot be consumed by any other younger man. This is another form of showing respect to age. Younger men who overstep their limits in this respect are brought to book by being asked to buy a full bottle and hand it to these senior citizens as a form of punishment.

Red liquor such as brandy and whisky is a very popular drink for traditional gatherings but white spirits like gin is associated with ancestors. This is regarded as a *hlonipha* item for them. It is usually offered to them during libation. When they have accepted the offer, they may reciprocate by appearing in the form of a totem for that particular family. People will know that they have to *hlonipha* the totem as well.

## **7.2 Special herbs used to honour chiefs and ancestors**

### **7.2.1 Definition**

According to Kropf (1951) medicine (*iyeza* b/n 5/6) in the wildest sense of the term includes not only the curative (which is the usual kind) and preventative (as that taken to enable a person to eat diseased meat with impunity) but also the concoctions which are used as charms in witchcraft.

On the other hand, The Dictionary of Xhosa Volume 3, defines traditional Xhosa medicines as being made from the leaves, roots, bark or seeds of medicinal plants or from parts of the bodies of certain animals, e.g dried flesh, fat, certain organs, horn and skin. They may be prepared as an infusion, decoction, powder, paste or ointment. They may be chewed, taken as a liquid, rubbed into incisions, smeared on the body, used as a body wash (lavation) or as a gargle, administered as an enema, inhaled or used as a fumigant, carried on one's person or left at strategic places with a view to warding off evil or harming a victim.



Medicines are also used when sacrifices are made to the spirits and when a neophyte is being inducted into divination. They also serve to imbue a person with certain qualities that will give him charisma, power, influence, vitality and good fortune, render him invulnerable to all kinds of physical and mental harm and make him acceptable to certain individuals or to society.

#### **7.2.2 The position of a chief in an indigenous society**

Among the indigenous people of Southern Africa and in the Eastern Cape in particular, authority is vested on the chief or king who is the executive head and ruler over his tribe. According to Myburg (1981: 80) his position is hereditary on the principle of male patrilineal descent. As a rule he cannot be deposed. He must be recognised by all sections of his community. He alone has power to, inter alia, order national ceremonies, convene national assemblies and call up regiments for communal labour

He must be recognised in all administrative matters such as immigration and emigration, allocation of residential and agricultural land, initiation and revenue. He presides over all cases of disputes and criminal acts, and is generally responsible for the general welfare of his people. He is expected to effect his rule over his people upon democratic principles. For effective rule and security he needs some form of protection and immunity from evil forces that are bent on destroying him and of diminishing his authority. This brings us to the question of the use of medicines to preserve his dignity, his influence, his charisma, his respect by all his subjects during his term of office.

#### **7.2.3 Effective use of medicines to secure his position as a chief and to maintain his dignity**

According to Dr. W.N. Kota, a registered homeopath, the most commonly used herb

to secure general immunity against evil forces of witchcraft is *ubulawu* (14) There are two kinds of this herb which are easily obtainable in most areas of natural vegetation in the Eastern Cape. These are *ubulawu obumhlophe* (white herb) named *unkom' entaba* and *unozitholana*, and the red one known as *ubulawu obubomvu* named *umfaz' onengxolo* or *umfaz' othethayo*. Roots of both forms are crushed and thrown into some container full of cold water. The stirring method known as *ukuphehla* (15) is used and a white froth rises. The liquid is used for washing the entire body and the froth may be sipped and swallowed. The effect of this is to ward off evil spirits and to maintain one's dignity and respect amongst people in general. A language of *ukuphehla* is used and it signifies *isihlonipho*. If the person performing the *ukuphehla* ritual is a Bhele, he uses mostly *iziduko zamaBhele* to illustrate *isihlonipho* as he stirs the medicine.

*Nina zinyanya zamaBhele akoMbikazi, asicoco sinuk' intsundwane. Nina zihlwele zakwaLanga, oonontanda kuphakanyiswa, maBhele aseLenge. Ampundwana zinga zingangiwa. Ngale bhekile yobu bulawu sibonisa imbeko nentlonelo kuni xa sithetha nani sizandlala kuni mabandla kaKokozela njengafu lemvula. Sicela ukuphila kuni nina badl' isikhwebu sakwaMkhwekazi sakwaNoqabulo. Dedisani ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya. Nina abangasawudliyo umbilini wenkomo kuba nisdla oweniyamakazi. Fikani nize nechiza lempilo mabandla esibhene sentombi kaMlotywa.*

(In summarising the passage one needs to point out that the performer appeals to the Bhele ancestors using their clan names for good health, good life and prosperity. Great emphasis in this approach is placed on the need to *hlonipha* the ancestors using the medicine as a medium).

Most people in high administrative, religious, and political positions, tend to use any of those forms of *ubulawu* (14) to secure their leadership positions. Chiefs who have to constantly face large audiences, perform public ceremonies and official duties on a regular basis, are advised by their medical traditional doctors to use a form of medicine known as *isindiyandiya* (7/8) so as to make them respectable to their subjects. The dosage is usually not made strong for fear of making the chief too fearful and unapproachable.

Roots, barks and leaves of the herb are used. The roots and barks are crushed and thrown into the bath of a chief. He may use this tinted bath on a daily basis particularly in times of dispute, tough administration and political crisis. Another dosage may be used for brimming over *ukugabha* (15), and for body steaming *ukufutha* (15).

Sometimes when he presides over tribal cases, he may add a bit of *isindiya* (7/8) to his tobacco *ngxawa* (9/10) and smoke it so that he should always keep his dignity and respect. People must always listen to what he says and they should under no circumstances look down upon him.

According to Dr. Kota, besides the chiefs, other people such as ministers of religion, faith healers, politicians and other influential people also use this kind of herb to maintain their dignity, respect, charisma and influence as well.

In addition to the use of *ubulawu* explained by Dr. Kota, Mdyogolo, a herbalist who runs a herbal chemist, claims that chiefs also use an ointment made from the mixture of animal fat derived from the following animals: the elephant, the crocodile, the tiger, the leopard, the lion, *thikoloshe*, *inkanyamba*, *iphuma limile*, and *isotha-mlilo* to make the chief fearful and brave. He should always be able to face his adversaries with fortitude and to stick to his policy and system of administration without fear.

For *ukuhlonitshwa* (15) (respect), he may use another ointment made from the following herbs, *umlahleni selefile*, *silepha*, *mayisake*, and *umdlebe*. The main objective for using these medicines is that he should be respected and always given a hearing as a ruler and administrator.

#### **7.2.4 Special herbs used when venerating and communicating with ancestors**

It has been mentioned earlier in this thesis (3.2) that Xhosa indigenous people have, from time immemorial, been culturally associated with ancestors and have, by their

religious activities, laid a great emphasis on the importance and value of ancestors in their lives. Though they are spirits, they appear in their lives in the form of dreams and are able to communicate with them in various ways.

Use of special medicines to communicate with ancestors has, in most cases, been made by *amagqirha* (diviners) who have extra magical and divine powers to create a medium for direct communication with the ancestral spirits of many people who approach them because of their physical and spiritual problems. But even ordinary people may also make use of herbs as a medium to communicate with them.

Dr. Kota in our interview, quoted a few herbs which are used to facilitate spiritual communication with ancestors. During the operation an atmosphere of communication is created by the use of medicines and verbal messages can be sent to them after an invocation such as, for example:

*Bantu abakhulu! Zindwalutho zakokwethu!  
Zinxiba mxhaka zakwaGwanini, zinyanya  
ZakwaSbewu, kwaSalakulandelwa, kwaMiya!*

(Ye honourable People! Great Sires of our House!  
Ye Great Dignitaries of the *Gwanini* House!  
Ye Honourable Ancestors of the Sibewu, the  
*Salakulandelwa* and the *Miya* clan!)

This grand invocation is usually followed by the crucial message and request the caller wishes to transmit to his ancestors. In order to create this communicative atmosphere, Dr Kota emphasised that the use of ancestral medicines is important in facilitating and accelerating response from them. These medicines are *ungqingandlela*, *isilawu sezinyanya* (a *silawu* herb for ancestors). This may be used when there are occasions such as *ukukhapha* (15) and *ukubuyisa umninimzi* (the sending off and the bringing back of the spirit of the head of the family- see 3.3.1 and 3.3.2) Other occasions are *ukuhlanjwa komzi* (cleansing of the home) and making prayer aimed at procuring a stable health, prosperous life, solution of problems and conflicts, expression of

gratitude and many other wishes.

Other herbs which are associated with ancestral worship are *umgobandlovu*, *undlela zimhlophe*, and *ungcana*. All these mentioned herbs are used for the washing of the body and *ukuphehla* (stirring to invoke). According to Kota, *impepho* is also a good medicine for creating a communicative ancestral atmosphere . It is burnt out and the smoke acts as a medium of communication with them. It is alleged that their response is quick when communication is made directly by *amagqirha* because of their special training known as *ukuthwasa* (15).

All these medicines are also regarded as *hlonipha* medicines. Ancestors in these herbal media, expect their patrons to talk to them in humble tones and to show a great deal of respect. The position of *isihlonipho* is clear in all these rituals in that without applying the principle of *hlonipha* when making use of any of these medicines, such medicines may fail to have the desired effect. Ancestors demand respect whenever communication is being made with them through these medicines.

## CHAPTER 8

### TRANSITION IN *HLONIPHA*

#### 8.1 Introduction

As the concept of *hlonipha* is, by and large, a cultural feature, it is contained and embedded in a wide range of traditional practices performed by large communities throughout the continent of Africa. The South African Black communities in general are also known to have been staunch believers in and ardent practitioners of *amasiko* (6) also known as living heritages far before the arrival of the White man in Africa.

Such living heritages include, inter alia, *amasiko* practices such as *uhwaluko* (circumcision), *intonjane* (post puberty ritual for girls), *unqulo lwezinyanya* (ancestor worship), *ukulobola* (payment of dowry), *ukubuyisa abangasekhoyo* (remembrance of the dead), *ukungena* (marrying one's brother's wife after his death), *ukuthwasa* (divine transformation), and many more in which the *hlonipha* element prevails.

With the advent of the arrival in South Africa of White missionaries from Europe, the impact of western civilisation on the culture of the indigenous societies, the political transformation from traditional to apartheid system which was characterised by policies of racial division, the cultural heritage which was the pivot of the social life of the indigenous societies of the Eastern Cape and the Greater South Africa, seems to have lost its grip on the cultural lives of these Black communities because of this influence of Christianity and western civilisation.

Because South Africa in general and the Eastern Cape in particular could not escape the vicious assault on their living heritages by these Christian influences plus the domination of their indigenous cultures by the western culture, most of the Black customary practices have been abandoned and some are facing extinction.

Although the major theme of my discussion in this project centres mainly around the

Eastern Cape, yet the greater part of the discussion of the economic system as an element of transition within the aspect of *hlonipha* among the indigenous societies, emanates from the activities of the big industrial centres of the Republic of South Africa. It will be noted that such centres are fed, to a large extent, by the migratory labour system from former Transkei, Ciskei and other parts of South Africa.

These migrants have either remained and formed part of the township population of such big industrial centres or have gone back to their indigenous homes bringing with them changes in their life style which have affected their indigenous customary practices including *hlonipha*. The effect of such changes will be discussed in the following sequence in order to illustrate how each aspect has had a profound effect and a resounding impact on the nature, existence and preservation of *hlonipha* among the amaXhosa national unit.

## 8.2 Socially

Paragraph (1.2.2.9.1) of this study reflects that when *hlonipha* ethics and practices were still strictly adhered to, it was common to identify a *makoti* by the *hlonipha* attire she wore, which was a long maxi *mbhaco* and which touched the ankles. Use of *ixakatho* as a shawl and a black head scarf which almost covered her eyes were *hlonipha* items which were worn during *ukuhota* period. But because of the advancement of times which were characterised by the advent of western civilisation and the arrival and spread of Christianity, such attire and such indigenous practices, including use of *hlonipha* language, have gradually disappeared in most areas in the Eastern Cape. Instead, the large majority of modern women of today no longer stick to tradition and custom. Their attire is largely determined by what the modern fashion offers: short dresses and skirts; lack of head gear; imitation of European style of dressing. Such style presents, inter alia, use of short and long pants by women. These modifications in both men and women illustrate a massive affectation and transition

of *hlonipha* traditional practices which were associated with traditional attire in indigenous societies of *amaXhosa*.

### 8.3 Religiously

From the period of the mass exodus and dispersal of Black communities from the centre of Africa about the 10th Century to about 1799 when the first Missionary, Dr. Van der Kemp, established a mission station in Ciskei during the reign of King Ngqika, all the indigenous Black peoples had lived a full traditional life where *amasiko*, language and other traditional aspects of folklore had thrived in their fullest perspective.

The first Christian convert, Ntsikana, son of Gabha, prophesied about enormous changes in traditional, political, social and economic life of the indigenous people as a result of their contact with the missionaries and other White colonists who had brought 'western civilisation' into South Africa. As more missionaries from different denominations flocked into the Cape to do evangelical work, there were all the signs that Ntsikana's dream had become a reality. Although the missionaries had achieved some noticeable and remarkable progress among the Blacks in the fields of education and Christian evangelism, yet their traditional life style, customs and traditions suffered a great deal as a result of this contact.

There was a tendency for the missionaries to arrogantly misconstrue the validity and authenticity of the traditional practices of the indigenous people, including religion, as blatant paganism. Since their main purpose in invading Africa was to spread the Christian religion, they subsequently looked down upon and undermined the integrity, dignity and faith of those communities which clung to their own religion and customary practices. To them Qamata, the Supreme God of *amaXhosa*, and Mveli-Ngqangi of *amaZulu* were just demi-gods who were less in importance than Christ their own God.



They described *amasiko* and traditional practices as perpetual indulgence in heathen practices and superstition. They insinuated that those who continued to stick to their traditional form of life were raw and impervious to the advances of civilisation and Christian influence. Magubane (1998:108) reflects this missionary tendency by mentioning that "the missionaries objected to initiation, and it became rare during colonial years except among the Tlokoa in the mountains."

From the days of such missionaries as the Brownlees, the Rosses, the Appleyards and the Bennies, the Black traditionalists were referred to as *kaffirs* meaning infidels or non-believers in what they termed the orthodox Christian faith. The term '*kaffir*' later assumed a derogative, pejorative and political connotation used by the anti-Black South African White racists to refer to any South African Black irrespective of religious affiliations.

As a result of this vindictive attitude and narrow mindedness on the part of the White missionaries, a lot of damage was done to the sanctity of *amasiko*. Because these Missionaries were the patrons of education for Blacks, they "held to ransom" those who wished to be educated. People had to either accept Christian religion and the education offered and discard their traditional practices and beliefs or forfeit education. S.E.K Mqhayi, the well known Xhosa poet laureate, in his biography 'UMqhayi waseNtabozuko' does indicate that when he was still a student at the Lovedale Missionary Institution, he had to sneak out at one time and go to Centane in Transkei to secretly have his circumcision ritual performed in order to avoid being noticed by the Lovedale authorities who would have, no doubt, expelled him immediately on learning that he had abided by this customary practice. However, when the information leaked out, he was subsequently suspended.

Jordan's *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* manuscript at first could not be accepted by Lovedale Press Missionary Publishers because it was said to have abundance of Mpondomise traditional practices and *amasiko* with totems adversely affecting the

lives of the two Lovedale trained main characters, Zwelinzima and Thembeke. According to them, the novel, by highlighting the power of the ancestors whose wrath destroyed both Zwelinzima and Thembeke together with their son Zululiyazongoma, was Jordan's ploy to allow Christianity to be vanquished by the 'evil and dark forces' of *amasiko* which to them were no more than mere superstition. This manuscript was apparently stalled for a very long time and it was thanks to the persistence of the author that the forced alterations to the manuscript were not effected.

By and large, the majority of *amasiko* such as *intonjane* (post puberty ritual for girls), *isiko lokwaluka* (circumcision), *isiko lokuhlola* (women's sexual inspection custom), *imbeleko* (introduction of a child to his ancestors), *ukushwama* (first taste of the new harvest), *umtshato wesiNtu* (traditional marriage) *isihlonipho* and many others, were watered down, down trodden, changed or even rendered extinct as many more people yielded to the Missionary pressure and accepted education, western civilisation and Christianity as their new form of religion and new way of life.

Shepherd (1955 : 177-178) commenting on the impact of western civilisation on the culture of the Blacks has this to say:

The African has felt and dreamed, laboured and aspired, danced in extacy and sunk to the depths of despair. He has seen western civilisation come crashing into his primitive life, changing in ways of which his forefathers had no imagination. But when Christian Missionary teacher with his evangelism and his western style education came onto the scene, the traditional life style changed.

Jafta (1987 : 12), in her inaugural address, confirms this in analysing the role played by some Xhosa authors in their creative writing. She says:

The second generation discovered that though Christianity was good, it was clouded with indocrination against traditional African religion and culture which were equated with backwardness and savagery.

Satyo *et al* (1993 : 50) also mention the negative attitude adopted by missionaries towards literary contributions made by Xhosa poets particularly if they delved into traditional practices which were not acceptable to them:

*Mayicace le nto ezingqondweni zenu ukuba aba befundisi babengafuni kuzamkela izinto ezininzi ezazisenziwa ngamaXhosa. Babesithi amaXhosa ngabahedeni abathengisa ngeentombi zabo emadodeni. Babegxeka benyelisa nantoni na enxulumene namasiko akwaNtu. Iinjongo zabeFundisi kaloku yayikukucima yonke into eyenziwe ngumXhosa, ukuze bafake eyabo inkqubo ezingqondweni zabantu.*

(Let it be clear in your minds that Missionaries were not prepared to accept anything done by amaXhosa. They argued that Xhosa people were heathens who sold their daughters to men. They were criticising and undermining everything associated with Black customary practices. They aimed largely at eradicating all that the Xhosa people had achieved and preserved in their culture, so as to introduce their own religious programme in their minds).

Mabusela, in W.M. Kwetana's anthology *Awesetwa 3* (1990:48), in his poem "Isibuko" alludes to the unique religious and cultural practices of the indigenous people which have remained intact until the arrival of western civilisation in South Africa.

*Menye menye langa lasengqondweni,  
Lenye lenye babalek' ubumnyama,  
Ntak' emaphikw' eyakhwelwa nguSazi,  
Efun' ukuz' eyipheth' iNkqubela kwelaPhesheya,  
Kub' esith' amaXhos' alibele zizikhakha namandyilo,  
Alibele kukumqul' izinyany' esitya namadini.  
Wathi kant' umf' omkhulu waya kusibuthel' imihlola  
Nokw' engazi.*

*Liyintoni n' lizwe namhlanje?  
Yayaphi n' ntlonipho mlisela wakowethu?  
Uph' uSazi simbambe simngcuthe?  
Waya kusiwanqel' uburhalarhume ,  
Unyan' ukwritsh' uyise,  
Intomb' ikham' unina.*

(Here came in Knowledge flashing like a mental sun.  
Out went Ignorance flushed out through a flashing light.  
In came the giant bird with wide wings carrying Sazi

The white man who wanted to bring western civilisation  
From Europe because here (in South Africa), thought he  
The Xhosa people were spending their time lavishing in traditional  
Attire. They lazed around worshipping ancestors and indulging in  
Traditional religious rites.  
Only to find that Sazi had come to pollute the  
Black society with undesirable surprises unwittingly.

How does our country look like today?  
What happened to *hlonipha*, you young people?  
Where is Sazi? We want to catch and torture him.  
He brought us moral degradation and violence.  
Here the son throttles his father.  
The daughter strangles her mother.)

According to Mabusela, Sazi represents the white man who came from Europe travelling in an aeroplane supposedly carrying with him western civilisation and Christianity. He brought it into this country and without consulting its indigenous people he acted under the pretext that he was civilising the Xhosa nation which he thought was living in darkness and savagery. His traditions, culture and religion which thrived in ancestor worship were regarded as idolatry.

The forcible introduction of western civilisation and merciless eradication of the traditional religion of the indigenous people had a profound effect of distabilsing their culture. Communities or groups or individuals that retained their traditional practicies and living heritages, kept together. They knew what to do in times of joy, peace and happiness or consternation and turmoil.

When, for example, prosperity in the form of good harvest thrived, the chief or king used to call together all his subjects to a feast called *ukushwama* where each farmer would be expected to bring samples of the fresh harvest such as mealies, pumpkins, melons, potatoes, beans, sweet potatoes and other items. These would be cooked, roasted and eaten amidst a spirit of happiness, joy, respect, love and harmony as people tasted their new harvest. This fostered good human relations and an element of *hlonipha* between the people and their chief. The chief and his councillors would

make speeches encouraging farmers to continue with their good work; the other people to assist with farming activities such as hoeing, cultivation and ploughing. They would also thank their Supreme God, Qamata for his generosity and benevolence. They would ask for more affluence when need arose. What was wrong with this form of religiously inclined activity?

Again during times of drought, starvation, hunger and deprivation, the chief would summon all his subjects in his area to a secluded spot on top of a hill or mountain where he would communicate with his ancestor kings just as the Oracle at Delphi was a shrine for Greek gods. Only men and women would accompany the chief to the mountain. They would dress in their traditional regalia and would sing traditional songs of praises to the kings and their Supreme God.

Here the chief would address all the ancestors of the great kings of the entire nation. For example if the occasion was taking place anywhere in the Gcaleka Region, the convocation would address great kings such as Gcaleka, Khauta, Hintsa, Sarhili, Ngangomhlaba, Zwelidumile etc. The presiding chief would ask the ancestor kings to approach Qamata and explain the plight of the nation. Then all the lesser chiefs down to the headmen would also make their own speeches supporting the presiding chief. Then gifts would be offered. Rain doctors would also be given their chance to perform their own rituals and *iimbongi* (praise singers) would also mimic their chief using words of poetry pleading with the ancestor kings to help alleviate the plight of the people by praying for rain. According to Mabusela, it was therefore ludicrous for a foreign nation to undermine the traditional and authentic religion of another.

According to him, the condemnation of the Xhosa living heritage by the White man and its replacement by the Christian religion thereof, was tantamount to the pollution of the Black society with a culture which was totally foreign to the people:

*Wathi kant' umf' omkhulu waya kusithathela  
Imihlola nokw' engazi.*

(He inadvertently brought into the culture and  
Traditional life of the people undesirable surprises unwittingly).

However the objection raised by the people when their traditional religion was trampled upon by the agents of White civilisation can be summarised in the words of Jordan's character, Ngxabane who has always had some great concern and misgivings about the abandonment of the people's living heritages because of the interference of the western civilisation. He vociferously states that the killing by Thembeke (who represents the civilised section of the population) of the Majola totem snake (which represents the Mpondomise traditional culture) meant the destruction of the entire nation (Jordan 1940 :173).

*Ayisosihelegu esi. Isihelegu ndiyasazi. Le nto ingaphaya kwesihelegu.  
Kungasuka kuthiwe sisiqalekiso, kukufa, yimbubho yesizwe.*

(This is not a catastrophe. I know catastrophe. This is beyond catastrophe. One could say this is a curse, death and destruction of a nation.)

Mtuzi, in his inaugural address (1990 : 9), confirms the sentiments expressed by Mabusela on this issue of the invasion of Black culture by White civilisation. He says:

The cultural cold war has long been in process. Whites tried in vain for several centuries to change Black Africa to a Great Britain, thousands of kilometres from the main model. They destroyed our culture, despised our colour, language, religion, and everything that originated from Africa. Schools and churches served as centres of total transformation.

MacDonald (1990 : 32) as quoted by Mtuzi, expressed the same view so articulately:

When the western civilisation joined forces with colonialism, it participated not only in a political event, but also in a cultural and economic one. When the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa were colonised they were not only drawn into new systems of social and economic transformation but also were drawn into cultural and ideological transformation.

The *hlonipha* language and practice which have been embedded in the culture of the

indigenous people from time immemorial, have indeed suffered the battering and assault from the new foreign western culture. This is why today one can hardly notice their existence and survival. Examples of this lack are the traditional *ukuhota* practice and women's language of *hlonipha* which have either undergone a massive transition or have been rendered extinct particularly in the urban areas .

#### 8.4 Economically

It has been reflected in 1.2.2.7.2 that before the arrival of the White man into the South African scenario, subsistence economy mainly centred around agriculture which was the basic form of subsistence for all indigenous peoples of the Eastern Cape. The *hlonipha* language used in relation to agricultural activities and implements thrived well under the traditional way of life but with the economic changes that were brought by the advancement in times and the industrial revolution, a remarkable transition was experienced in almost all the living heritages including *hlonipha*. The effects of industrialisation on the traditional life and practices will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

Peres (1981 : 33) reflects on the economic life of *AmaXhosa* before the advent of colonialism by stating that:

Commodity production and trade were relatively undeveloped and were usually undertaken to supplement rather than to replace the normal pursuits of the homestead head.... Even though most of the production took place within the homestead, the homestead was unable to guarantee its own production in isolation from the chiefdom as a whole.

Hence many families resorted to seeking work out in urban areas during the period of the industrial revolution and expansion.

#### 8.4.1 The effect of industrial development on the culture of the indigenous people

When South Africa became an industrial country with industrial growth points focussed mostly on urban areas, a large number of migrant workers were drawn from rural areas of South Africa including the Eastern Cape, to work in the mines, farms and cities. Because it was imperative for them to reside near their places of work, urban townships of the Eastern Cape such as Mdantsane, Duncan Village, Ziphunzana, Kwazakhele, Zwide, Zwelitsha, Ngangelizwe, Ikhwezi, Msobomvu, and many others throughout the rest of South Africa such as Soweto, Kalafong, Gugulethu, Nyanga, Mlazi etc. were born.

With the passage of time and further intensive industrial and political development, these workers settled as families on a permanent basis despite the dictates of the prevailing segregation laws which regarded them as temporary sojourners. Most of the families lost contact with their rural background and emerged as urbanites with a new outlook on life. They no more practised *amasiko* rituals because of the totally different urban conditions such as the congested settlement areas, the mixture of different tribal communities, the multi-cultural atmosphere, the lack of organised political system such as chieftainship, the diminished ancestral worship, the disappearance of *hlonipha* language and other traditional practices.

Venter (1977 : 37) confirms the above assertion by stating that:

Half way through the 19th Century, it became obvious that the White man had come to stay. Tribes such as Tsonga, Sotho and Venda, Zulus and Xhosa, were forced to accept that fact. Then in 1886, the straggling ridge of the Witwatersrand yielded gold. The fortune seekers came. Germans, Englishmen, and Americans. Soon the boom town of Johannesburg was to sprawl here. Black labour became the cheapest factor of gold production and the most important. They came from everywhere, dark men with proud shoulders, sharing golden dreams with their employers. They wore cheap trousers, shirts



and floppy hats bought from Jewish traders. They were from many tribes and spoke a babel of languages, and from the confusion of languages sprang a lingua franca called *fanakalo*. At first most of the black labourers on the gold fields were migrant labourers. Compounds were built for the migrants. Later houses were built. While the housing scheme progressed at a snail's pace, the black exodus from rural areas continued: the lure of the city lights was like a flame to a moth.

Josette Cole, (1987 : 4) writing on "Crossroads" in which she is discussing the Politics of Reform and Repression 1976-1986 has this to say:

Only a century before the emergence of Crossroads, the majority of the African population in Southern Africa, lived in independent chiefdoms. The mineral discoveries of the late nineteenth century, and the industrial revolution which accompanied them profoundly transformed the lives of all South Africa's inhabitants. As the country became more and more linked to international capitalist network, new strategies of labour control developed.

That accounts for the large number of Blacks, also from the Eastern Cape, who had flocked to the large cities of South Africa for the larger part of the 20th Century to form the large Black population found in the South African urban areas. The *fanakalo* language mentioned by Venter above, came as a result of the staying together in sprawling townships of different ethnic groups who had to communicate by either resorting to the usage of bits of English, or Afrikaans together with the concoction of African languages.

Bongela (1992 :18) puts it clearly when he says:

In larger urban areas, the miscegenation and mixing of racial groups has necessitated the use of English or Afrikaans for the purpose of communication. Those speakers who are not proficient in the use of English or Afrikaans or both, resort to the use of a hybridised form of English or Afrikaans mixed with bits of African languages. This is popularly known as "Tsotsi Taal".

Gugushe (1970 : 215) cited by Bongela (1984 : 20) confirms the above assertion in

the following words.:

But in larger densely populated urban centres, the mixing of languages is so pronounced that it is not unusual for young people in particular to use words and expressions from another language deliberately when conversing among themselves.

This is indeed true of the transformation and transition of the culture of the indigenous population of the Eastern Cape as a result of industrialisation. This industrialisation saw many Xhosa migrant labourers leave their rural homes to stay temporarily and /or permanently in urban areas thereby getting exposed to many other ethnic groups, hence they found it difficult to retain their original culture.

Biko (1978 : 60) in his comment on the subject of colonisation and deculturalisation of the Blacks, says:

Whenever colonisation sets in with dominant culture, it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastard culture that can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed by the dominant culture. This is what has happened to the African culture. It is called a sub-culture purely because the African people in the urban complexes are mimicking the White man rather unashamedly.

By and large the Xhosa indigenous society seems to have lost the grip of its own indigenous language, their *hlonipha* language and its traditional life style. *Hlonipha* ethics and practices, however, seem to have undergone a massive transition because of the impact of industrialisation, western civilisation and culture as personified by Whites and their influence.

Considering that the situation alluded to in the paragraphs above is an on going process, it is unlikely that the speakers of Xhosa (including *hlonipha*) who are exposed to the mixture of languages can ever speak their own language perfectly without exhibiting the influence of one or other of the languages which they are forced to speak in an environment laden with economic factors. Even in most rural societies

it is not easy these days to come across communities whose language is not altogether affected by other languages as labour migration in South Africa has become the order of the day. See Bongela (1979 : 79):

*Heyi wena! Manje uyagoloza mfana ne! Phela sowucamang' ukuthi uzothola lo tshelete mahala? Dink jy jy is baai slim? Sit hom neer mfana: ons nog gaan speel"..... Hela, wena ntsizwa, manje ukhulum' ubumfumfu ne! Kea hae net nou met die chelete ntwana; angisoyinika muntu lapha en weer angisoyithela pansi; dis myne boys.*

(Hey you! You are so daring, aren't you? You think you are going to get this cash for nothing? Do you think you are clever? Put it down, we are still going to play..... Damn you young man, you talk nonsense! I am going home with this cash, sonny. I won't give it to anybody here and again I shall not put it down. It's mine, boys).

The extract reflects a mixture of Zulu, Sesotho, Xhosa and Afrikaans. This then accounts for the fact that the indigenous *hlonipha* language is fast disappearing and that the indigenous culture has reached a stage of transformation and transition and probably within the next millennium or so it will have partly been submerged below the deluge of technology and other aspects of industrialisation and social advancement.

According to Herbert (1990 : 307),

Urbanisation and its consequent weakening of tribal tradition also contributes to the decline of *hlonipha*. Finlayson (1984) as quoted by Herbert examined *hlonipha* among Xhosa women in Cape Town. She found a "pretence" of practising *hlonipha*-that is random words of *hlonipha* were used, but there was no conscious avoidance of syllables occurring in the husband's family's name. Only a small "core" vocabulary was used, which was composed of words known and generally recognised as *hlonipha* vocabulary.

However, at the present moment not all has been lost. Because of the strong influence of some of these living heritages such as *ulwaluko*, *ukuthwasa*, *ukubuyisa* and others,

the majority of the Xhosa families still clings to these traditional practices and still performs these rituals in both the rural and urban environments albeit in an atmosphere of transition. For example in the case of *ukulobola*, money is used in place of or in addition to animals. In the absence of traditional beer, bottled liquor is used as a substitute during the *lobola* negotiations. The *ukuhota* custom and the *hlonipha* language appear to have disappeared and the *hlonipha* attire of the past has been replaced by modern attire which bears very little or no resemblance to that of the past.

## 8.5 Politically

### 8.5.1 Xhosa kings

The information on the privileges, rights and respect accorded to the king who is higher in status than a paramount chief will be discussed in this phase. The apex of Xhosa political and social organisation is the king who is the head of the lineage and also a political figure head in a traditional political system. Soga (1937:13) illustrates the lineage of Xhosa traditional kings as follows:

Xhosa  
Malangana  
Nkosiyamntu

---

Cirha

Jwarha

Tshawe

Ngcwangu

Sikhomo

Togu

Ngconde

Tshiwo

Phalo

---

Gcaleka	Rharhabe
Khauta	Mlawu
Hintsa	Ngqika
Sarhili	Sandile
Gwebinkumbi	Gonya
Ngangomhlaba	Faku
Zwelidumile	Archie Velile
Xolilizwe	Maxhobayakhawuleza

According to Peres (1981 : 27-28):

The king as head of the lineage, was responsible for all matters which affected the lineage as a whole, such as the national first fruit ceremony. The other chiefs, his younger brothers, owed him respect and obedience in matters concerning the whole lineage. At marriage feasts the councillor of the king was entitled to the right foreleg. It was beneath the dignity of the king to visit his juniors. They had to come to him.

This they did as an act of respect. Peres (1981 : 30) further explains that

Every year the junior chiefs reaffirmed their loyalty and respect to the king in the first fruit ceremony in which everyone of them awaited the king's word before tasting the harvest. Junior chiefs were also supposed to send him messengers to keep him informed of important events, to consult him and to ask his permission.

According to Peres (1981 : 32), symbolically the king was thought of as a "bull" or "an elephant" whereas commoners were referred to as "dogs" or "black men " meaning *abantu abamnyama* to differentiate their status from that of the king. "Each king had a shadow (*isithunzi*) which sat him above his subjects. He never spoke to them directly, but his words were related through a 'spokesman'." An example of a paramount chief who operated in this way while administering his people was the late Botha Sigcau of the Qaukeni region in Lusikisiki.

The king was saluted by a special praise name e.g. *A! Ndabanduna!* and commoners who accidentally neglected to salute could be beaten. No man could approach the Great Place with the head covered, on pain of a fine. No commoner could raise his hand against a person of blood (*umntu wegazi*) like the chief even when, as sometimes happened, the chief's sons raided his herd or gardens. A king would not drink the milk of his subjects' herds. That was below his dignity. Any person who visited the king had to offer a gift to him or the chief. It could be a sheep, goat or cow. This was done as a sign of paying respect to him.

A commoner was, according to Peres, reminded at his wedding to "duly pay the tribute he owed to the king and to his representative, the chief of the kraal." Thereafter he was supposed to pay an annual contribution of cattle in proportion to his own riches; besides a portion of every beast slaughtered and every granary opened. Peres (1981: 28) states that "certain products of the hunt -- ivory, blue buck skins, eland buffalo breasts, blue crane feathers - had to be handed over to the kings or chiefs."

When a newcomer arrived in a king's or chief's territory, he was asked to pay a fee for the right to settle on his land, an important principle even when the fee itself was waived. Special levies (*amaqola*) were raised for special occasions and emergencies, for instance, the circumcision, inauguration and marriage of a king/chief, or the death of his cattle. When the king and his following toured the country, they expected an ox to be slaughtered in every homestead they visited. Death dues were paid to the chief to compensate him for the loss of his man, and these varied from chief to chief and time to time. A man who declined to pay tribute might have his cattle confiscated and his house plundered.

Most commoners ate meat only in winter and on special occasions, whereas the more powerful chiefs and kings ate meat whenever they liked, and they got the best portions of it. They also received rare skins and delicacies from the hunt. They had more

women and concubines than ordinary men. They had attendants at their disposal.

Peres (1981 : 31) highlights the supremacy of the Xhosa kings by mentioning that:

..... the king was the 'very personification of government, and symbol of national unity. Even the great split which occurred after Rharhabe crossed the Kei, did not entirely divide the Xhosa nation, for, the Gcaleka kings continued to assert their superiority over all Xhosa chiefs'. 'Chieftainship' said Botomane as quoted by Peres 'was allocated from this great side of Phalo, Hintsa and Gcaleka. It cannot stand without them because it originated with them. Apart from Ngqika, none of the Rharhabe chiefs ever challenged this claim. They continued to consult the king in peace and in war. The shooting and mutilation of King Hintsa for example was a national calamity even to those who had rejected his order to participate in the war. Long after the creation of the British Kaffraria had brought Rharhabe chiefs under direct Colonial rule, they continued to look to the king across the Kei.

While all this customary reverence was being paid on a daily basis, and while the kings and chiefs were still enjoying such privileges, time brought such great changes as shown in 8.1 and 8.2. British colonial rule which disturbed the peace and tranquility of the traditional life of the Xhosa people, continuing migration to urban cities and segmentation as shown in 8.2, led to an increase in geographical and genealogical distance and this considerably diminished the personal understanding and co-operation which were necessary to make up for structural deficiencies. Faced with new circumstances, like the European presence, the Xhosa political system, with no abstract norms as guidelines, no precedents to follow and no traditions of unconditional obedience to the king, was confounded. Consequently, the *hlonipha* which was a feature of the traditional culture, underwent some measurable form of global transition and was reduced to absolute minimum.

#### 8.5.2 The Homeland system

Another element responsible for reducing the *hlonipha* syndrome which was highly prevalent during the time of the traditional kings and chiefs who had lived and ruled

from the 16th to the 20th centuries, was the creation, by the South African Nationalist Government after 1948, of the homeland system which was a further political development in the lives of the Black people in the Eastern Cape. The emergence of homeland leaders with a new political outlook tended to shift the *hlonipha* practice and tradition from the traditional kings and chiefs to the new homeland leaders during the dispensation of the Nationalist Government's Bantustan or homeland policy.

After the 1948 general elections which saw the Nationalist Party gaining control of political power in South Africa, according to Carter *et al*, (1967 : 39),

..... in 1951 the essentials of the Bantustan policy designed to bolster, invigorate and recreate separate tribal institutions and loyalties were embodied in the Bantu Authorities Act. The Act provided for replacing other advisory and partly elected councils by tribally based authorities. These tribal authorities were to be composed of a chief and advisors who were appointed by the Government. Above and derived from this base was a hierarchy of authorities at the district (in Transkei only), regional, and territorial levels. Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd who was the Prime Minister from September 1958, until his assassination in September 1966, was the foremost ideologist of so called positive apartheid or separate development, as well as the leading policy maker of the so called petty or restrictive apartheid. His Government's "great vision" which he set forth in introducing the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Bill, was new only in the degree of his emphasis on African homelands.

The 1959 Bantu Self Government Act also recognised eight "national units" and provided for White Commissioners-General to serve as liaison between the Government and these units. Thus Transkei and Ciskei in the Eastern Cape became part of the Homeland system. Both Bantustans opted for first, self governments and later independence. Prominent homeland leaders in the Eastern Cape who co-operated with the Nationalist Government in promoting the separate development and Bantustan policy were Paramount Chief Kaizer Daliwonga Matanzima for Transkei and Chief Lennox Wongama Sebe for Ciskei. The political supremacy of both leaders had, by and large, the effect of relegating the status of the traditional kings to the



background.

One classic example of this anomaly is that of King Sabatha Dalindyebo the King of the Tembus who was, according to Optima (1975 : 210):

Senior to K.D. Matanzima because he inherited the paramountcy of the main house of the Mtiraras and thereby headship of the greater Tembu tribe (the Emigrant Tembuland are so called because Matanzima's ancestor Mtirara left greater Tembuland for the north western area generations ago and founded a separate paramountcy).

According to The Information Division of the Transkei Department of Foreign Affairs and Information (1986 : 14):

Emigrant Tembuland is an area in the western portion of the Transkei in the neighbourhood of Queenstown and Lady Frere. The Emigrant Tembu tribe originally fell under the authority of the Paramount Chief of the Tembus, but in later years of the last century, they trekked away from Tembuland under the leadership of the Matanzima family and established their own paramountcy. On October 1966 Tembus gathered at Southerville in the St Mark's district to celebrate Chief Kaizer Daliwonga Matanzima's elevation to the paramountcy of Tembuland.

This elevation however did not traditionally make his status superior to that of Sabatha Dalindyebo who remained ipso facto the king of the Tembus by virtue of his royal position. During the reign of K.D. Matanzima an unprecedented altercation occurred between Paramount Chief K.D. Matanzima and King Sabatha Dalindyebo in the Transkei Parliament and Matanzima took Sabatha to court on charges of insulting his dignity as the State President of Transkei. This was an unusual occurrence in the traditional history of the Xhosa nation where a head of a nation was taken to court. His case was tried in 1980 in the Port St John's Supreme Court with Justice G.S.A. Munnik presiding. Sabatha was found guilty and fined R700 or eighteen months in prison.

The case was further referred by the Transkei Cabinet to the Dalindyebo Tribal

Authority which failed to see anything wrong in him as a king and an administrator. In 1987, running away from the wrath of the Transkei Government which was then led by Paramount Chief K.D. Matanzima, Sabatha fled to Zambia where he joined the African National Congress in exile. He remained there until he died. Matanzima agreed to have him buried in his home country. His funeral which was strictly controlled by him was regarded as a less dignified one and it did not, according to popular opinion, befit the status of Sabatha who was the king. He was buried amongst paupers and women as per instructions from the State President of Transkei.

When the Transkei Government was deposed by a military junta led by the then Major General Bantubonke Holomisa, the Tembu nation which had felt aggrieved at the treatment meted out to their king, applied for a reburial of King Sabatha which was granted in September 1989. He was subsequently buried in his rightful place alongside his father Sampu and other Tembu kings. The entire precedent remained a strange phenomenon in the traditional history of the Xhosa nation which had valued the principle of revering traditional royalty and chieftainship. Bongela (1998:58-67) gives details of Sabata's reburial service.

The homeland situation in Transkei, Ciskei and Kwa-Zulu was that the homeland leader wielded more political power and political authority even over traditional kings than was the case before the introduction of the homeland system and this has had the negative effect of reducing the authority of the king, the chief and subsequently the headman. This reduction of authority goes hand in glove with the reduction of *hlonipha* which is a basic norm in a traditional society.

According to Manona (1998 : 49):

..... the passing of the Black Authorities Act in 1951 effected a radical change in local government in the Ciskei and other homeland areas. Up to that time, the policy of the White administration had been to rule Blacks through government appointed headmen who were placed in charge of demarcated 'locations'. The Act shifted the official

administrative focus from headmen and provided for the establishment of so-called Tribal Authorities which in many cases were associated with the chiefdoms which once existed in the former Ciskei (and Transkei).

While headmen still continued to play a key role in location administration, Tribal Authorities were headed by chiefs who were assisted by councillors under a system which sought to revive traditional leadership. This implied chiefly rule and rule through elders. The military *coup d'etat* which took place in March 1990 in the former Ciskei under the leadership of Brigadier Oupa Gqozo toppled the President of Ciskei, Lennox Sebe. Three weeks after this *coup* the Tribal Authority system collapsed in the Ciskei when the leader of the new military government announced that all headmen were to be dismissed. Even though the chiefs were not directly affected by this ruling, a new situation had developed in that the Tribal Authority principle envisaged in the Black Authorities Act and which had given a semblance of respect to the chiefs once again, had been seriously undermined, as the Tribal Authorities effectively could not function without the headmen.

Since these political developments in both homelands, the chiefly traditions were no longer of any major significance to the people living in the Eastern Cape. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the element of *hlonipha* has undergone such a massive transformation and transition. However in an attempt to resuscitate the honour and dignity of the kings and chiefs, the Eastern Cape chairman of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) (Daily Dispatch :15 October 1999) Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana, has appealed to the provincial government to draft a new bill to consolidate former homeland acts governing traditional leaders.

He said the government should come up with a new act to regulate all aspects pertaining to the traditional leadership in the province (of the Eastern Cape) and that all former homeland government acts still in use should be abolished. He said the Eastern Cape Government should create a Traditional Affairs Act in which all aspects pertaining to traditional leadership would be included.

Nonkonyana said the Transkei Territories Act of 1965 which deals with the appointment of headmen, the Transkei Authorities Act of 1965 recognising Tribal Authorities and the Ciskei Administration Act of 1984 were still in use. He said should the government accept Contralesa's proposal regarding the creation of the Traditional Affairs Act, titles of traditional leaders would be set up clearly. Its position regarding traditional leaders' titles was that colonial titles such as paramount chiefs, chiefs and headmen should be nullified as they were contaminated and degraded the status of chieftainship. Nonkonyana (1999) further remarked that "until the Act came into being, people should continue to use these titles. The colonial titles should however ultimately be replaced by vernacular terms such as *ikumkani* (king); *inkosi* (senior chief) *inkosana* (junior chief) and *umphathi welali* (headman)."

### 8.5.3 Transition to Democracy

The diminished *hlonipha* highlighted in 8.3.1 above as a result of Christian and industrial intervention in the traditional lives of the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape, emerged once more during the first era of the homeland system where attention was focused on the homeland leaders.

It is no exaggeration to state that in both the Transkei and Ciskei the homeland leaders, Paramount Chief Kaizer Matanzima and Chief Lennox Sebe who were the pioneers of the homeland system enjoyed a great measure of respect from their people largely because of the positive elements of the homeland policy and practice some of which were the bubbling economy which improved the lives of many people, and lack of restrictions based on the apartheid system which was still being followed in the greater South Africa.

During the days of Transkei and Ciskei independence, economy was characterised by equitable foreign investments where a sizeable number of industries were established in Butterworth, Umtata, East London, Dimbaza and Mdantsane and many other areas

of the Eastern Cape. Among the other developments, the building industry boomed as residential areas around Butterworth, Umtata, Queenstown, Dimbaza, Mdantsane, and other districts were created for the working classes. Residential plots and homes were made available to all citizens of the homelands without any restrictions of the Group Areas Act.

Black entrepreneurs opened businesses throughout the territories without any fear of undue restrictions based on the colour of their skins. Civil service and other professional fields absorbed as many civil servants and professionals as possible with academic and professional qualifications being used as a yardstick for promotions. The new infrastructure in both territories was built on a large scale to accommodate government structures such as parliamentary buildings, departmental buildings, universities, teacher training colleges, schools, prisons and lots of official residential areas. One illustrious example of some incredible development of the time was the building of the new town of Bisho with trading zones, residential areas, Fort Hare University Branch and a hospital, all these fresh from start.

These developments, therefore, were enough to boost the ego of these homeland leaders during the time of their operation. They indeed enjoyed a countrywide and, to a certain extent, a nationwide respect from people who had shown appreciation for their efforts to improve the lot of the Black people. Like all chiefs they both had their salutation codes. Paramount Kaizer Matanzima was greeted as *A! Daliwonga!* and Chief Lennox Sebe as *A! Ngwe yesizwe!* Both had their *iimbongis* (traditional praise singers) who sang their praises whenever they appeared in public to do their official duties.

History tells us that despite this marvellous progress and development, the work of both leaders later suffered set backs under the pressure of democratic and other changes brought about by the dynamic forces of revolution. Humphries and Shubane (1991 : 78) state that:

The December 1987 *coup* in Transkei, the first in the TVBC states led to the accession to power of General Bantu Holomisa. He intervened to rid the country of rampant corruption associated with the Matanzima brothers who had led Transkei to independence.

By so doing, he stole the limelight from the Transkei leaders who were not only chiefs by birth but were also hereditary leaders. Humphries *et al* (1991:79) continue to explain the situation in Transkei.

The increasing tension between his military government and Pretoria led him to seek support from Transkeians to entrench the government. It is against this context that the increasing links with the A.N.C began to manifest themselves. At the internment of Tembu King Sabata Dalindyebo in October 1989, Holomisa raised, for the first time in public, the issue of Transkei incorporation into South Africa.

The Transkei Government would hold a referendum to decide on the future of the territory. Five options had been identified and would be presented to the populace during the referendum. They were, (Transkei Government: 1990) as quoted by Humphries *et al* (1991:79) that:

Transkei should be subject to South Africa at Central Government level and the Cape Province at local government level - which in either event would amount to unification with South Africa. Transkei should be part of South Africa and subject to constitutional structures which would evolve after the impending negotiations had been finalised. Transkei should largely give up its independence to a central government on the understanding that certain governmental functions would be returned to Transkei as a federation of South African states. Transkei should retain its independence but at the same time bestow certain governmental functions on a central government which would constitute a confederation of South African states. Transkei should retain its independence as at that time.

In addition to these proposals, Holomisa continued his campaign for Transkei's incorporation into South Africa by making statements which appealed to the Transkei public and which vilified the idea of sticking to a homeland while the winds of political changes were fast blowing all the apartheid structures out of existence. He said: "All

our symbols of independence carry no significant meaning; the Transkei passport is a document of no consequence. Transkei citizenship has become a symbol of denial, deprivation and further disadvantage (General Bantu Holomisa: *Weekly Mail*, 9 February 1990)."

It was clear to many people that the issue of re-incorporation of Transkei to South Africa, had appealed to their minds and their imaginations and great hopes of a better life under the new South Africa were raised and Holomisa was not only regarded by some as a dynamic and courageous leader but also as a messiah dropped by God to liberate Transkei from the shackles of grand Vewoerdian apartheid. He enjoyed a large following particularly among the youth. Their respect and praise for him was felt and heard at every corner. Only people who had known what it was to live a life of security, happiness and tradition under chieftainship had some reservations about this forcible injection of new blood into their traditional politics.

According to Humphries and Shubane (1991 : 80):

Ciskei's *coup* in March 1990 displaced the administration of Lennox Sebe who had led Ciskei to independence in 1981. This *coup* bore many similarities to those of Transkei: both were led by army officers who were motivated by opposition to corruption; who were not hindered by any intervention from Pretoria; who were opposed to homeland system, at least in their rhetoric, and who seemed to have succeeded in drawing radical opponents of the homeland system into co-operation with their administrations. Brigadier Oupa Gqozo had expressed a desire to see Ciskei re-corporated into South Africa but had not taken effective steps to implement this process. On assuming power, he cultivated close links with the Mass Democratic Movement in the Border region which had to explain his stated preference for the re-incorporation of Ciskei into South Africa.

According to Manona (1998:49), "people generally felt that this development was freeing them from the oppressive government of the former Ciskei under Lennox Sebe." In that way Gqozo temporarily enjoyed respect from the Ciskeians who had regarded Sebe as a dictator. But their love, respect and *hlonipha* were short lived as

he also took after Sebe's dictatorial style not very long after he had started to rule. His popularity waned further after the Bisho massacre of September 1992 which was sparked off by his adamant refusal to recognise the A.N.C.'s moves and methods to prepare the homeland for incorporation into South Africa.

The last episode in this study which saw the shift of the *hlonipha* element from the traditional and homeland leadership to the leaders of the armed struggle against the apartheid ideology in South Africa, came after unbanning in February 1990 of major opposition groups and their free entry into the political system.

This was facilitated by the then State President of the Republic of South Africa, Frederick Willem De Klerk whose efforts in oiling the wheels of the impending democracy culminated in the freeing of one of the most important South African political prisoners, Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela from Victor Verster Prison on 11 February 1990 after being incarcerated in jail for twenty seven years. The popularity of this man took the entire country like a hurricane as he prepared South Africa for a major step towards the first ever general and non-racial elections which would put the country on a road to democracy.

After the historic election of April 27, 1994, he became the first democratically elected Black President of South Africa. During the five year period of his reign, he earned enormous respect not only from the Black and White citizens of the country but also from the rest of the world for his humility, statesmanship, peace initiatives and his unwavering efforts at promoting reconciliation between the Blacks and Whites in South Africa. His humane personality, open heartedness and his affection for children all these attracted and earned the respect of both friend and foe alike. Even after he had retired and given the baton to his younger successor, Thabo Mbheki, his contribution to the welfare of the people of South Africa remained indelible in the minds of many who had known him as a dedicated leader who had sought to liberate his people from the scourge, bonds and shackles of apartheid.



## 8.6 Conclusion

The reflection, in this chapter, of the arrival of western civilisation, Christianity, industrialisation and democracy in South Africa and the impact these forces had on the lives of the indigenous communities in the entire South Africa including the Eastern Cape, has helped in this thesis to show how such communities could not escape the social, economic, religious and political changes. Consequently the culture of *amaXhosa* which had for centuries remained rich, intact and stable, now began to vanish gradually at the mercy of the vanquishing white culture. Biko (1978:60) puts it clearly when he says: "whenever colonialism sets in with dominant culture, it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastard culture that can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed it by the dominant culture." That, therefore, accounts for the disappearance of, inter alia, the *hlonipha* language, *hlonipha* ethics and other cultural traits in most parts of the Eastern Cape.

## CHAPTER 9

### SIGNIFICANCE OF *ULWALUKO*, ITS *HLONIPHA* ELEMENT AND ITS SUBSEQUENT VIOLATION

#### 9.1 Yesterday: Presence of *hlonipha* element

It would be appreciated that culture in any society is in a state of flux. Such is the situation with the elements that constitute it, and hence *hlonipha*. Over the years there has been a marked change in the *hlonipha* custom. The change has been as a result of external forces as well as internal forces within society. It is interesting however, to note how such forces manifested themselves on the *hlonipha* custom as it will be illuminated in the forthcoming discussions.

##### 9.1.1 Status and symbolism

Soga (1937: 88) reflects on the significance of *ulwaluko* (11) and its *hlonipha* element by mentioning the following:

..... *ekothi ke isuthu libe lelenkwenkwe yenkosi, ize xa kungekho yenkosi yalukileyo kuloo nyaka libe lelenkwenkwe yephakathi elikhulu okanye isikhulu esithile esalusayo. Ibiliqhayiya endodeni inkosi eyaluke nayo, loo nto kuthathelwa kuyo ukubalwa iminyaka yomntu, ishiywa eyobuntwana.*

(..... the operational venue for honour, circumcision activities, and proceedings of the ritual was usually given to the son of a chief as first preference. If there was none being circumcised that particular year, then it was given to that of the senior councillor or that of a rich man and prominent figure in the community. A boy regarded as a great honour the opportunity to be circumcised together with a prince or son of a chief or any person of royal blood and this gave all circumcised boys the golden opportunity to count their ages known as *izilimela* (6) starting from the year of their circumcision).

In clearer terms boys, in an indigenous society in the past, had to wait until a chief,

king, rich man or any person of royal blood circumcised his son. The fact that such boys did their ritual with such boys of high honour, gave them some form of reputation, respect, status and importance in society. They were subsequently held in high esteem in society because of this association.

According to Mlungisi Johannes, one of the researcher's informants from Centane district, *ulwaluko* (11) was a form of cultural transition from boyhood to manhood. The infliction of physical pain was merely a symbolical gesture meant to serve as a permanent reminder to a man who had been culturally transformed from one world of boyhood to that of manhood. When the fore skin of a penis called *ijwabi* (5/6) was cut with *umdlanga* (3/4), a traditional assegai used for the operation, the event was symbolised with a sound and pronouncement of '**Hi! Ndiyindoda!**' meaning ('Bravo! I am a man!') which every boy was expected to make as was the tradition. He had to ignore the pain and concentrate on his achievement.

This pronouncement was regarded as a form of victory over a period of boyhood - a period which was conceptualised as being characterised by problems deliberately created as a result of boyish pranks which on most occasions bordered on irresponsibility, negligence and pettiness. Hence a boy was often referred to as a dog which, in Xhosa concept and interpretation was far from being complimentary. The problematic stage of boyhood was being abandoned forever and a new and challenging stage of manhood was now being entered into. This was indeed a great achievement in the life of man. Hence the high respect which was accorded to this stage.

It had therefore to be hailed and celebrated with a high sound of 'Hi!!!' followed by the public pronouncement that now a prominent and significant stage of manhood had finally come in the life of this boy. Any *mklhwetha* (initiate) was therefore expected to pay due respect to this transitional stage of *ubukhwetha* (14) and not to question its demands, discomfort, disadvantages and the suffering it brought but to accept these without any reservations, query or complaint.

The bathing stage commonly known as *ukuhlanjwa kwabakhwetha* came at the end of the *khwetha* period and it also symbolised the washing off of the boyhood stigma which was now not desirable anymore. A new era known as *ubukrwala* (14) followed immediately after the ablution. *Amakrwala* (6) (the brand new young men) were wrapped in new rugs and new clothes ready to receive words of caution and wisdom known as *ukuyalwa* (15) from prominent men of the community. This newness also symbolised their venture into the new world of manhood.

The chasing to the river of *abakhwetha* by *amanqalathi* (6), (boys), on the bathing day, was symbolical of the message that they should leave the boyhood and *khwetha* stages as soon as possible and should not look behind even if their boyhood memories were still ringing in their minds. Those who could not run fast enough were actually beaten by the boys who also seemed to reject them as no more part of their company. When they were washing off *ingceke* (9/10) (white ochre) from their bodies, they were symbolically washing off boyhood, its stigma and its pranks. After being smeared (*ukuthanjiswa*) (15), with some form of ointment or fat by a respectable person chosen by the family or families, they were taken home. None of them was allowed to look back and see the *ithonto* (5/6) (the *khwetha* hut) burning. Doing so would be tantamount to breaking one of the most important rules of the circumcision custom. The act of burning the hut was a final event that symbolised the destruction of anything that associated the new men with their boyhood.

#### 9.1.2 Significance of *isikhwetha* milieu

To probe further into the significance of *ulwaluko* customary practice and its element of *hlonipha* among the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape, one needs to discuss the *isikhwetha* milieu to see its symbolism, its *hlonipha* element and its cultural significance.

#### 9.1.2.1 *Ithonto*

This traditional hut was made of special grass which was packed and thatched on a wooden frame normally by women experts. Men usually built the frame with pliable wooden lengths known as *iimpingelo* (9/10). Of great significance was that the location of this hut was a spot selected by men and was far away from human environment. The boys had to remain veld people during the duration of the *khwetha* period and would not have any direct contact with their families except in times of emergency where they would secretly come closer to their homes by night, stand beneath the cattle kraals and send *amanqalathi* (5/6) (boys) to pass the message/s.

The hut was always warm for it had no windows but just a trap door. Fire also kept it warm. The floor was left rough and unswept and the ashes from the fire ambers were left to accumulate. They were never thrown out. There was no provision for mats or mattresses. Everybody slept on the naked floor. Cooking was done by the boys who also fetched water and fuel. The cooking pot was never washed but merely scraped to keep it ready for the next meal. There was no formal cutlery except improvised wooden spoons called *iingokra* (9/10).

The other *hlonipha* vocabulary used in *isikhwetha* (7/8) is tabulated in the Appendix. As soon as the public had been officially informed of the circumcision, members of the public were expected to clear away from the *khwetha* environment in order to allow them some freedom of independence and privacy. This was one way of respecting the demands of the custom. Strictly no woman was allowed near the *ithonto* (5/6). In the same vein, no *mkhwetha* was allowed to come near, greet or talk to any woman who was generally referred to as *isigqwathi* (7/8). Life in this traditional hut with its exposure to extreme weather conditions and uncomfortable manner of living had to be endured for the entire duration of the *khwetha* period no matter how long it was.

The situation explained above symbolised the rough times and the boys' future lives'

vicissitudes which they could not escape and for which they were being prepared. Despite its uncouthness, society respected this kind of milieu for their children at this stage for it taught them the tough demands of manhood.

#### 9.1.2.2 *Ingceke and its significance*

The visible transition from boyhood to *khwethahood* was characterised by the smearing of the entire body with a white ochre known as *ingceke* (9/10) during the *khwetha* period. The white colour signified purity of heart, thoughts, behaviour, and responsibility which was expected of a fully fledged man. It was painted day and night to serve as constant reminder of this obligation and also as a symbol of *hlonipha*, honour and pledge to the custom. There was a strong belief that *abakhwetha* ancestors who wanted to visit their grandsons would identify them by the white colour of the ochre. It was the responsibility of *ikhankatha* (5/6) to see to it that all the initiates were properly dressed in white ochre all the time in order to remind them of their obligation to *hlonipha* the custom. They covered themselves in white *khwetha* blankets. No other form of attire was allowed.

#### 9.1.2.3 *Diet for abakhwetha*

##### \* **First seven days**

The diet used by *abakhwetha* during the first seven days was a rough, half cooked and unappetising meal prescribed in terms of the circumcision custom. It was an alternation of:

- (i) *Iphukutsha* (5/6): This was a form of ground mealies which were half cooked in water and left to retain their rough character. The food was not mixed with anything and was not meant to be delicious but to serve as a survival meal. It had to be kept semi- dry before being delivered.

- (ii) *Iketse* (9/10): This was a meal of stamped mealies which was also half cooked and was not mixed with beans or any other thing to bring flavour. It had also to be semi-dry.
- (iii) *Iinkobe* (9/10): These were boiled loose mealie grains which were considered to be the most popular form of diet for *umkhwetha*.

No salt was added into this kind of diet. The aim was to assist in keeping the wound of the initiate dry for easy healing. No liquids and fluids were allowed during this period. Violation of this stipulation from *ikhankatha* would land the initiate into serious trouble and disciplinary measures would be taken to punish the offender. If severe thirst was threatening to jeopardise the health of the initiate, the first aid to be applied would be to take a bit of ant heap known as *isiqalane* (7/8) and stir it in little water. Few drops of this muddy fluid would be given to the extremely thirsty initiate just for relief. No smoking was allowed at this stage.

According to the demands of the custom the task of cooking for *umkhwetha* was given only to his sister or his close relative. It had to be a girl. Custom demanded that the cook should not wash during the first seven days of her involvement in the cooking for *umkhwetha*. The belief was that the water she used would interfere with the healing process of the initiate. Xoliswa Bongela confirmed the restriction on washing by the cook. She might use other methods of cleaning herself.

The *umkhwetha's* mother was not allowed to touch the cooking pot, to cook or to touch any of the food meant for the initiate. As soon as her son went to the veld she acquired a new cultural position which was that of *izibazana* (5/6). She had to *hlonipha* it by not shaking hands with people when greeting them until the entire period had expired. Both the cook and *izibazana* did not indulge in any sexual activity particularly during the first seven days of the *khwetha* confinement. All this was in the line of *hlonipha* restrictions.

People who respected the demands of the custom and understood its cultural significance, had to abide by its stipulation no matter how hard it was. The idea was to uphold the tradition at all cost.

**\* After seven days**

To graduate from the first seven day period which was characterised by tough conditions of survival, a small ceremony called *ukojiswa* (15) was performed within the premises of *ithonto*. A sheep or goat was slaughtered to mark the end of this seven day period. It opened another chapter in the life of the initiates. They were now free to move about visiting other initiates. They could now cross rivers and streams and hunt birds and small game. This, of course, could only be done after their wounds showed a remarkable healing process. For safety's sake, they were advised to dip their fingers in the mud before crossing a stream and smear it on the penis and across the chest to prevent what was known as *ukusolwa* (15) in order to avoid getting a rash on the body and infection on the wound.

Good news about their diet was that, as from now, they could drink all forms of liquids and fluids. They could eat any kind of food such as *umvubo* (3/4) (milk and ground mealies or mealie meal), *isophu* (9/10) (boiled mealies and beans), *umqa* (3/4) (mashed pumpkin mixed with ground mealies), *umngqusho* (3/4) (samp and beans), mutton, beef, pork and chicken, fruit and any other edible food. In places where the initiates stayed for very long periods, cows and ewes were provided for milk. They had to keep them with them and returned them when the *khwetha* period had expired.

**9.1.2.4 Medication**

Indigenous *bakhwetha* were treated with traditional herbs called *izichwe* (7/8) which were picked from the veld. Some called *uphantsi komnga* (1/2a) which were picked from the forest and which had big leaves, were said to be the most effective on the



wound because of the grey woollen under cover which provided warmth and fast medical effect. They were laid raw on the wound and tied with strings called *amatyeba* (5/6).

These strings were made out of a goat skin which was tenderised. The healing power of these traditional herbs was great, provided diet and restrictions of the first seven days were strictly adhered to. There was no need for the doctor for a trained *ikhankatha* (5/6) did the supervision and regular change of the leaf herbs. The wound would take about ten days to heal completely provided the initiate kept away from women, liquids, smoking and venereal diseases.

Surprisingly enough this form of traditional medical treatment was the most popular and most respected throughout the Eastern Cape. Men who underwent this kind of traditional operation were the most respected in society, unlike those who, after the coming of western civilisation, used modern medicine and bandages and who were also treated by doctors and trained hospital male nurses.

In a purely traditional environment clinics and hospitals were frowned upon. Boys who were circumcised by doctors and who used bandages were looked down upon and despised by traditional society and their credibility as men was always doubted. For example, the traditional Hlubis and the Sothos in the districts of Matatiele and Mt Fletcher believed very strongly that men had to undergo their circumcision ritual only the traditional way and that they should spend all their long *khwetha* days in the Drakensberg Mountains.

It is only after this exposure to extreme weather conditions and hardships of the mountain would they be recognised and respected as real and genuine men. Rhele Mafunda, one of the researcher's informants who hailed from Matatiele, mentioned that it is not safe for a man who was not circumcised the Sotho way to attend any Sotho circumcision party. He may be grabbed unawares and recircumcised even

against his will. Sotho people believe that some Xhosa men from certain communities have not undergone the proper circumcision ritual if they have not been to the mountain.

#### 9.1.2.5 Period of stay

In the distant past initiates were kept in the veld from a period ranging from three to six months especially if they were not involved in working for a living or attending formal school. During this long period, even though they had healed completely, they were subjected to some kind of informal education. Specialists from their immediate environment and also from outside, were commissioned together with *amakhankatha* (5/6) to do various tasks such as educating the initiates on:

- (i) how to fight;
- (ii) how to hunt big game;
- (iii) how to get a wife and how to look after her;
- (iv) how to solve family disputes;
- (v) how to look after the home and property;
- (vi) how to work for a living;
- (vii) how to get involved in agricultural activities;
- (viii) how to serve community interests;
- (ix) how to respect their families, society and political authority;
- (x) how to do the *khwetha* dance known as *umtshilo* (3/4);
- (xi) how to play traditional sport;
- (xii) how to *hlonipha* first their '*khwethahood*' (*ubukhwetha*) and later their manhood.

Soga (1937 : 88) confirms some of these activities by saying:

*Amakhwenkwe la oba nomzana wawo bucala endle phaya ekunye nekhankatha elo elowafundisa nokutshila. Otshiliswa ke emizini yakoomawawo apha, ade aye kuphosa kumnyaka ozayo. Omana*

*ukukhuphisana ngokudityaniswa nawamanye amacala namahlelo, abe ke amanye ephiwa nezikhali kule mijikelo yawo ngobuntshili bawo.*

(Boys were allowed to have special accommodation out in the veld besides the huts and they were taught dancing by *amakhankatha*. They would do dance competitions at their homes until the following year. Sometimes they competed against other groups of *abakhwetha*. Some got prizes of weapons on these rounds for their expertise as dancers).

#### 9.1.2.6 Moral training

One of the most important functions of *ikhankatha* is to offer moral training to the initiates. Every *mkhwetha* is expected to behave in an exemplary manner all the time and should not display fits of temper among his colleagues and in public. He is taught to control himself and to obey instructions of *ikhankatha* and the rules of the circumcision custom without questioning them. When he is out, he is not supposed to walk along the paths of the public nor to use the public road where he is likely to meet people particularly *izigqwathi* (7/8) (women). Should he find himself in close proximity to women, he is expected to cover himself and shy away.

Public gatherings and social functions are taboo to him. He can privately meet his girl friend during the day but is not allowed to have sex with her. He is expected to respect people and their property. If he wants anything, he is expected to ask for it. Stealing is regarded as a serious crime. Generally he is expected to be a responsible person.

Elliot (1987 : 11) in confirming the above assertion, mentions that:

All the while they are attended by a small boy from their home village and, at intervals, by a senior and respected man, who teaches them how to behave as adults. They learn etiquette, the laws of respect (*hlonipha*) and how to honour their ancestral spirits. The initiation experience is a supremely important part of a Xhosa man's life, and he takes it very seriously).

He is supposed to carry all these teachings to the stage of manhood when he leaves the *khwetha* stage. By and large the *hlonipha* element which was associated with *isikhwetha* was a highly significant phenomenon in the life of a man for it is enforced with a purpose of establishing a most valuable principle which is that of building and moulding him for a permanent place in society. Participation in *ulwaluko* as a ritual is as good as undergoing a course of personal transformation which thrived in the use of language, behaviour patterns, moral and physical training and also endurance as tools of manipulation and training.

#### 9.1.2.7 Language

According to Haviland (1979 : 283):

Language is a systematic code for the communication in symbols of any kind of information. Symbol in our definition means any kind of sound or gesture to which we ourselves have given meaning as standing for something and not one that has a natural biological meaning which we call a sign. Any human language - English, Chinese, Swahili is obviously a means of transmitting information and sharing with others both a cultural and individual experience. Because we tend to take language for granted, it is perhaps not so obvious that language is also a systematic code that enables us to translate our concerns, beliefs and perceptions into symbols that can be decoded and interpreted by others.

On the other hand Myburgh (1981 : 140) defines language as an:

Aspect of culture of which the purpose is communication by a co-ordinated set of orally and vocally produced symbols. Among people with specialised cultures, these may be recorded for perception through the senses by means of writing, Braille and devices such as tapes and discs. It is in words that thought is expressed most clearly, which furnishes the reason why ethnography in the form of vernacular texts can be so effective (Royal Anthropological Institute (1951:49-50) and why language is so important a factor in enculturation and internal innovation.

Owens (1988 : 3) in collaboration with the above authorities also defines language as "a socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule governed combination of those symbols."

Since the theme of this study is on *hlonipha* practices and language among the Xhosa people and in particular *abakhwetha*, our main focus in this chapter is the reflection of the Xhosa *hlonipha* language in relation to the culture of *ulwaluko* of the Xhosa people. This therefore necessitates our approach from a sociolinguistic point of view which, according to Haviland (1974 : 292) is a field that has grown out of both sociology and descriptive linguistics to become an area of separate inquiry. Sociolinguistics is concerned with every aspect of the structure and use of language that has anything to do with society and culture and human behaviour. This is one of the reasons why *abakhwetha* have their special *hlonipha* language. It is a term synonymous with both ethnolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. The field is fascinating and limitless.

The *hlonipha* language is an aspect of Xhosa culture for it is used by sections of the Xhosa society such as *abafazi* (1/2), *abakhwetha* (1/2) and *amagqirha* (5/6) as well. It is not a distinct or dialectal or separate subject from the main Xhosa language which is used to highlight certain cultural demands such as taboo and respect of certain ancestors and certain categories of people.

Throughout the Eastern Cape it has become imperative traditionally for *abakhwetha* to follow a prescribed special vocabulary that is aimed to *hlonipha* certain words for their own use as part of their *khwetha* language and training. Soga (1931:259) has compiled a list of *hlonipha* vocabulary in the language for *isikhwetha* and these can be found also in the Appendix.

#### 9.1.2.8 Overlapping between *isikhwetha* and *isihlonipho sabafazi*

When one studies the core vocabulary for *isihlonipho sabakhwetha* and that of *abafazi* appearing in the Appendix, one will notice that in both lists similar *hlonipha* words are used e.g:

GROUP	HLONIPHA	XHOSA	ENGLISH
ABAFAZI	incentsa	<i>indoda</i>	man
	ikhanka	<i>inja</i>	dog
ABAKHWETHA	incentsa	<i>indoda</i>	man
	ikhanka	<i>inja</i>	dog

The major difference between *hlonipha* words for women and those for *abakhwetha* is that most *hlonipha* words for women are based on avoidance of pronouncing a consonant in a name presumably of the father-in-law. In the case of *abakhwetha* vocabulary the *hlonipha* words show a semantic shift from the original Xhosa words and are not consonant oriented. For example the *hlonipha* word for *imbiza* meaning a pot, is *ibhotwe*. There is virtually no similarity in meaning between the two words except the implication that may occur in the word *ibhotwe* where one could assume that *ibhotwe* (a palace) could be noted for having too many pots.

Although the core vocabulary for *isikhwetha* is expected to reflect common words spoken throughout the whole of the Eastern Cape in view of the fact that speakers are all Xhosa- speaking, yet certain discrepancies appear in the manner of pronunciation of certain words. For example for the term *ukutya* we get two similar *hlonipha* words meaning *to eat* and two similar words meaning *food*.

<b>HLONIPHA</b>	<b>XHOSA</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>
<i>ukungcaka</i>	<i>ukutya</i>	to eat
<i>ukungcefa</i>	<i>ukutya</i>	to eat
<i>isikhafulo</i>	<i>ukutya</i>	food
<i>isikhafu</i>	<i>ukutya</i>	food
<i>umzimela</i>	<i>umkhwetha</i>	<i>khwetha</i> boy
<i>umdzimela</i>	<i>umkhwetha</i>	<i>khwetha</i> boy
<i>isingqwashu</i>	<i>ingubo</i>	<i>khwetha</i> blanket
<i>isidwashu</i>	<i>ingubo</i>	<i>khwetha</i> blanket

The influence of foreign languages can be felt in some words which have been coined from English and Afrikaans e.g:

<b>HLONIPHA</b>	<b>XHOSA</b>	<b>AFRIKAANS</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>
<i>ibheyile</i>	<i>izembe</i>	byl	axe
<i>itshiki</i>	<i>intombi</i>	meisie	chick

It must be noted that as in *izihlonipho zabafazi*, there seems to be an indication that different regions coin different words for the same thing e.g:

For a girl we get two different words such as: *ingema*  
*itshiki*

For food we get two different words such as: *isikhafulo*  
*isikhafu*

For a *khwetha* boy we get three different words such as: *umzimela*  
*umdzimela*  
*imbelu*

For a boy, we get two different words such as:	<i>inqalathi</i> <i>ityhagi</i>
For a fowl, we get two different words such as:	<i>isibhabham</i> <i>impaphele</i>
For a dog, we get two different words such as:	<i>ikhanka</i> <i>ibhengezha</i>

## 9.2 Today: Subsequent violation

The sub-title 'today' conceptualises the modern period which is characterised by the effects of industrialisation which has given birth to the modern form of living in both urban and rural settlements of the Province of the Eastern Cape and other areas of South Africa.

On a broader perspective the arrival of Christianity, western civilisation and industrialisation mentioned in Chapter 8, has had a profound but negative effect on the traditional circumcision custom which has been discussed in 9.1 above. The custom though it is still being practised today as a way of life as in the past, is suffering a lot of battering and assault from the effects of western civilisation and its powerful influence. There is also a new form of political and social philosophy known as *democracy* which has been recently introduced in the greater South Africa after the entire country gained its political independence in 1994.

One of the pillars of democracy is the recognition of human rights for children, men and women. The implications of these rights have had a negative effect on the integrity and sanctity of the living heritages such as *ulwaluko*. It has brought a new cultural perspective into the lives of people. Consequently, most people find it difficult to stick to the original demands of their traditional culture. The *hlonipha* element which was once the pride the nation and the basic element of *ulwaluko*, has today undergone some drastic transformation or has been abandoned by some people as a cultural trait. This is a lamentable situation for its abandonment is now leading the entire nation



towards a bleak future with no cultural ethics, discipline, respect and traditional cultural integrity.

#### **9.2.1 The negative effect of democracy on *ulwaluko***

The advent of full democracy in South Africa has not been without disadvantages. In the first place, it is a Western concept that has been adopted by a country that has for a long period not been democratic. It will be appreciated that traditional Xhosa people had looked with skepticism at how the so called western influences had adversely affected their lives. With democracy (not properly understood by all) coming in, one would expect confusion to prevail.

##### **(a) Women's rights**

Since, in the traditional culture, women were generally left out and were not consulted or considered by men when participating in cultural aspects such as *ulwaluko*, *ukulobola* and others - customs that were culturally handled by men only, the introduction of the concept of the women's rights world wide, seems to have given our Black women some impetus, more power and direct participation in the decision-making processes surrounding their cultural lives and even those situations that were outside their jurisdiction.

With regard to the circumcision custom and its intricacies, it was an accepted practice in the past that all procedures pertaining to circumcision were handled by men only. No woman was involved except in minor cases reflected in 9.1.2.3 (a) above, such as cooking. The boy was expected to report to his father if the time for him to undergo the circumcision ritual had come. His father would call other men, his brothers and relatives to discuss the matter with them. His mother, in most cases would be left out of the discussions at this stage and she would only be informed of the results. She would wait to be told what part she would have to play in the whole procedure.

Because she respected the demands of the custom she would oblige and wait.

According to Kholisile Sanda, one of the researcher's informants from Queenstown, "this traditional procedure has now been blemished by women's insistence on taking up circumcision matters to themselves without being involved by men."

He claims that when their sons report to them (albeit so unofficially) that they want to go for circumcision, the women take this as their democratic right to welcome and accept the report and to act on it. From there they choose the day on which the operation shall take place, where and by whom. Sanda emphasised that whether married or single, they do not involve their husbands or boy friends.

They even go to the extent of prescribing and controlling the traditional diet for *abakhwetha*. Where there are restrictions on the kind of diet they should eat during the first seven days, (see 9.1,2,3 (a)) they simply ignore the procedure claiming that they cannot afford to see their sons being 'tortured' and abused by being given dry, unappetising, half cooked food. As a result of that *abakhwetha* of today drink anything, eat anything and smoke anything during their confinement period of the first seven days. This is viewed with disgust, awe and chagrin by the lovers and respectors of this traditional custom.

Women who, according to Sanda, control all activities even inside the *khwetha* hut, claim that they are exercising their democratic rights as parents of the boys. Even the so-called *ikhankatha* these days is chosen not by a consortium of male relatives as was the case before, but by women with the approval of their sons, the initiates, no matter how ill qualified and inexperienced he may be. Consequently *abakhwetha* of today are not as disciplined and customary law abiding as those of the past. To Sanda therefore, "today's democracy is making a mockery of our beloved custom and its principles."

Other informants interviewed such as Mthuthuzeli Gawula from Tsholomnqa (commonly known as Chalumna) near East London, Reginald Sigabi from Alice, and Sibongile Mcatshelwa from Butterworth, also confirmed what Sanda said, particularly the part about the diet.

Mcatshelwa went further to say that when it rains, mothers of the initiates arrange that their sons be transferred home to avoid the severe weather conditions until the weather clears. Other things happening are that most initiates do not use the prescribed *ingceke* as often as required. They rub shoulders with the members of the public by attending social gatherings wearing overalls. They indulge in sex as they please claiming, in their argument that, 'a woman's semen is the best cure for the wound.'

They smoke any blend of tobacco including dagga even during the first seven days. They no more shy away when they see women. They tend to walk uncovered along the main road where motor cars, other kinds of vehicles and the general public travel. They wear shoes unlike the initiates of the traditional past who walked bare footed as demanded by their cultural training. They are entertained with radios and television sets. In some areas of the Eastern Cape some *khwetha* boys are no longer proficient in the use of *hlonipha* language.

If the restrictions placed yesterday on the would- be man by the indigenous culture were effective in building and moulding such a precious character as the African male for a genuine place in his society, then it is no overstatement to aver that what is culturally happening today is indeed a gross violation of the circumcision custom which is one of the pillars of the African culture. The type of product that will come out of this imitation practice, will no doubt leave much to be desired. The respect of a custom is what makes a man and what builds up a nation .

**(b) Implication of children's rights**

In addition to the above pertinent remarks about the behaviour of *abakhwetha* today, the democratic rights which children enjoy under this era of democracy in South Africa today, have taught them not to accept everything done to them, be it a requirement to follow conventions and tradition or to adhere to the demands of the custom. Since they have learnt to fight for their rights one way or another, they subsequently do not altogether accept the norms of Black culture and its ramifications as did the youth of the past. Where pain and suffering are inflicted under the guise of custom and tradition, they regard these as child abuse.

The element of *hlonipha* according to many informants interviewed, does not seem to exist anymore, for they are not prepared to accept instructions from *ikhankatha* who apparently has no authority over them. Just as there is a hue and cry about general lack of respect by children in many a home, at schools, in many communities, and in all levels of society, so is the same type of behaviour happening in initiation schools such as those of *abakhwetha* today. The observations appearing earlier in this thesis in relation to the unseemly behaviour of the initiates these days indeed reflects that the dignity that was once associated with them in the past is almost gone because of their violation of the rules of *ulwaluko* and the *hlonipha* practice and tradition.

**(c) Concern at the high rate of casualties and fatalities**

There is, in the Eastern Cape today, an incidence of death or sickness of *abakhwetha* which is reported quite often in the printed, audio and audio-visual media. Such reports have given much concern to the general public which desperately seeks a solution.

It is common to see a group or individual initiates going through town during the day to either a doctor or to the clinic or hospital. Their wounds have become septic and

they need some medical treatment. In a clinic or hospital situation the medical treatment is usually offered by both the doctor and /or nurses. They are sometimes admitted and have to remain in hospital for a couple of days. There are different opinions as to what the causes of this health breakdown are.

Reginald Sigabi, one of the Researcher's informants blames both *ingcibi* (9/10) (traditional surgeon) and *ikhankatha* (5/6) (traditional nurse). According to him some traditional surgeons have no experience of the type of work they are supposed to do. The operation is done so clumsily that at times amputation of the penis becomes unavoidable. The traditional nurses of today are also not conversant with their work of handling and looking after the initiates. Dingalethu Nogqala from Gompo, East London (Daily Dispatch 17/11/99) has this to say about the matter:

I am so concerned about the loss of life during the custom, but what disgusts me is the use of the scalpel. Our forefathers used the traditional assegai. I strongly believe most deaths are caused by negligence of the traditional nurses, not the traditional assegai. I want to warn those who use western instruments (including the scalpel) that they are not real men and will never be accepted by us (real men). This custom is the pride of the Xhosa nation.

According to the Daily Dispatch (4th November 1999), this concern at the high number of deaths of initiates at circumcision schools was also highlighted at the summit called by the Western District Council in Port Elizabeth. This summit was attended by King Maxhobayakhawuleza Sandile of the Rharhabe tribe, chiefs, traditional surgeons, traditional nurses and scores of visitors from Eastern Cape villages and townships.

Sandile stressed that the circumcision custom was very important to the Xhosa people but expressed concern at reports of dying boys. He called on the summit to find solutions "to save the nation". He said it would be wise to introduce legislation to guide traditional surgeons and nurses and suggested that chiefs be represented in urban areas to prepare young men for the circumcision ritual. He urged parents and

boys to respect the custom and their chiefs and implored the nation to fight anyone who tried to do away with the custom.

Ideas were shared about the dangers of the custom and clarity was gained on some causes of botched circumcisions. The latest instrument used by traditional surgeons - a scalpel was displayed, while the use of the traditional assegai was criticised. The Director of Health Services, Dr. Mamise Nxiweni from Port Elizabeth urged traditional surgeons and nurses to use the scalpel. A task team was elected to look into the matter.

Zwelethile Mdyogolo, a traditional surgeon (*ingcibi*) from Gobozana, King Williams' town expressed the following during interview:

As an experienced and qualified *ingcibi*, I stand up to dispute some of the allegations and criticisms levelled against traditional surgeons with regard to some of the cases of botched circumcisions referred to above. Speaking for my part, I wish to state that before I started operating as a surgeon, I was visited in my dreams by my ancestors who proposed to offer me the task of operating as *ingcibi* for the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape. They taught me every night in my dreams for three years before they passed me as a qualified surgeon. I have now been operating for twenty- four years without a single sick or death incident. At one stage I once cut fifteen boys at a time using two instruments. Not one died. I am also widely travelled and highly experienced in this job.

When asked to comment on how he maintained his instruments, he explained thus:

I clean my spear by sharpening it regularly on a rough stone using machine oil which has the effect of cleaning rust. Thereafter I wipe it with methylated spirits daily for a full week before I use it. After use, the same process is repeated. I believe all conscientious surgeons who know very well that the fate of our young men depends on their meticulous care, should take extreme care to clean their instruments. The fault, as far as I am concerned, does not lie with experienced traditional surgeons but with traditional nurses and with *abakhwetha* themselves. They must respect all the rules, stipulations and regulations governing the process of circumcision.

### 9.2.2 Recommendations

All the concerned groups seem to think that something has to be done to rectify the situation and to prevent further deaths:

Nogqala (Daily Dispatch 17/11/99) feels that:

The traditional surgeons (*iingcibi*) (9/10) and locals must make sure that the traditional assegai is clean and does not have any rust on it. The traditional nurse must be well mannered and should be a responsible man. A senior male member of the initiate's family must monitor the work of the traditional nurse (*ikhankatha*). The initiates should be guarded against dehydration and should be well nourished. No use of Western medicines during the period of the custom, (everything must be traditional). No boy infected with STD should be sent to the initiation school. The *Xhosa* nation should oppose the use of Western instruments.

Sanda, the researcher's informant, also felt very strongly that "anybody who fails to uphold the principles of the indigenous culture by violating the rules of the circumcision custom which is based on *hlonipha*, is bound to suffer the ills of misfortune. The interference of women in the old indigenous process of the circumcision ritual which has been the stronghold of our traditional culture, is totally unacceptable not only to us as preservers of our rich traditional heritage, but also to our ancestors who frown at such gross violations." To substantiate his argument Sanda further claims that:

- \* The prescription of the traditional diet to run for at least seven days at the beginning of the *khwetha* period was, from the day of its inception not a mistake because it was meant to be an effective way of assisting in the traditional treatment by keeping the wound dry. That is a very crucial method which has been used from time immemorial. Needless to say, it has to be respected as long as the circumcision custom is still existing.
- \* The rules which preclude the initiates from smoking, from salty foods, from sexual contact with women, from liquids and liquor at the initial

stages of the circumcision custom, should be strictly adhered to and respected, for, in the past such rules led to a high degree of success of the ritual. It is no gross exaggeration to say that in the past such sicknesses and deaths were unheard of.

- \* There is no need to run away from traditional instruments such as *umdlanga* (assegai) for, an experienced surgeon is expected to know that he has to keep his instrument very clean by sandpapering it in order to keep the rust and dirt away at all times and to keep it safely concealed in its sheath which is made of animal skin. *Umdlanga* is always washed and wiped before and after use.
- \* Boys who were known to have some venereal or other diseases were not allowed to undergo circumcision particularly in group form.
- \* No surgeon in the past was allowed to perform any operation while under the influence of liquor or drugs. If he took chances and was discovered, he would be beaten severely by men of the community and would not be allowed to operate on boys again.
- \* Of much importance in any traditional custom such as *ulwaluko* is the dire need to *hlonipha* the rules, regulations and stipulations laid down by the custom and to have all the faith in its success as it, like all customs, has the blessings of the ancestors.

### 9.3 Tomorrow

If future events can be judged by what is happening today, it is no figment of the imagination to profess that *hlonipha* tomorrow i.e in the future especially with regard to the living heritages such as *ulwaluko* and other prominent customs, is likely to be an obsolete practice particularly to the new generation that takes very little or no cognisance of many customs today. Unless those who still have a working knowledge of the practice may remain to teach the new generation, there is very little hope that the customary practices which are so badly affected today by the winds of change, will survive their onslaught. Even if the circumcision custom which has survived for many years in the past, lives through future passages of time, without the *hlonipha* element, it will have lost its cultural significance. Many people interviewed have expressed a similar sentiment.



Sanda, commenting on the future of the custom, maintains that:

People will live like animals where there is law of the jungle. The young men who have just come out of circumcision today show no respect. The position will be worse tomorrow. To be a man to them will mean equality with the senior people. That is a sign of disrespect which is contrary to the norms of our culture.

Fumanekile Matutu, one of the researcher's informants from Nadabakazi, Butterworth, feels very strongly that:

If the present incumbents and custodians of the traditional custom are allowed to disappear from the face of the earth together with the knowledge and information on the traditional custom and its basic *hlonipha* element, the entire Xhosa nation will be absolutely doomed. There is absolutely no respect in today's young generation as evidenced by the debuts (*amakrwala*) that come out of circumcision schools and in all levels of society. There is no hope that tomorrow such *hlonipha* will ever be retrieved for the benefit of the nation.

Matutu went on to emphasise that the unethical involvement of women and children in the circumcision custom today without following the proper norms of the custom, is not likely to be minimised, reduced or discontinued tomorrow because of the demands of the present day democracy which has placed no limits to the rights of women and children particularly where a living heritage is involved.

According to Matutu:

- \* *Hlonipha* is fast disappearing today and there is no hope that it will come back tomorrow because of the change of situation where:
- \* Women hen peck and control men at the expense of the custom.
- \* Rights are given to children to do what they like with the customs that control the life and destiny of the Xhosa nation.
- \* Moral weakness is exhibited by men who have allowed the traditional custom to be routed by the short comings of western culture and

western democracy.

- \* There is no doubt that the traditional and proper *khwetha* huts which are at the present moment visible signs of the circumcision custom, will ultimately disappear and will be replaced by modern structures in the same way as western civilisation has established modern dwelling structures and other kinds of infra-structure in both rural and urban areas in place of or in addition to the traditional residential huts.

Jolly Mngwazi , one of the researcher's informants from Chisirha, Peddie, says:

The crime of rape that is becoming a scourge of the nation today, will probably precipitate into an avalanche that will engulf the entire nation because of the abandonment of *hlonipha* by the present day generation. For example rape was not a common phenomenon in the past because there were strict rules of conduct which had to be obeyed as part of our traditional culture. The fact that these rapists assault children and older women today is an indication that morals of the present culture are fast degenerating to such an extent that tomorrow law and order will be things of the past because of the abandonment of *hlonipha*, traditional values and norms of our traditional culture.

Ross Sogoni, one of the researcher's informants from East London, claims that from his observation:

Many kids do want the custom in its traditional perspective. There is therefore no possibility of the circumcision custom being abandoned in the future because of the mistakes of the present day generation such as their running loose all over the country without proper control and discipline. It is indeed a fact that they are doing things that are not in line with the tradition of our culture. It will become necessary therefore to have the custom adapted to suit the needs of the future generation and to avoid the incidence of death without any stigma attached to the young people who will have to be circumcised by male doctors where traditional surgeons have failed. The conditions of the customs should be revisited to avoid the spread of such diseases as AIDS which, at the present moment, is a threat to the safety of the initiates who are being circumcised using traditional methods. If more and more circumcisions become botched, it will be necessary to conduct more research on whether it is still necessary to stick to the traditional methods used in the custom or to adapt it. But one thing

highly essential is the retrieval and retainment of the *hlonipha* custom which is the crucial element in the building of a nation. The chopping and changing of the custom will not bring back *imbeko* (respect) and *ubuntu* (virtue, humanity) which form the basis of our traditional custom. The two traditional elements have to be retained and restored for posterity.

Sogoni also expressed a view that if health experts do not differ with the idea and practice of the traditional first seven day system of the custom, then there will be no need to change the tradition particularly if it does not affect the health of the initiates. He said further that there is also a general feeling from the present day youth that the traditional method for the entire custom is still the best in retaining the dignity of the initiate and his credibility as a man.

To avoid disease and infection, traditional surgeons will, in future, be required to use either one traditional instrument for one initiate or resort to the system of sterilising the instrument before and after use. That kind of adaptation will have to be taken into serious consideration if we take the health of our children as first priority.

The Health MEC for the Eastern Cape, Bevan Goqwana (Daily Dispatch -25/11/99) who is a medical doctor said he supported traditional circumcision because it was a "training centre" for young males which taught young men the value of unity and *ubuntu*.

However the MEC warned that the surgeon who performs the circumcision must be "someone who is well known and experienced in this." He added that parents must also take responsibility for their sons' circumcision and ensure they were healthy.

### 9.3.1 Recommendations

In order to compromise the circumcision custom for the benefit of those societies that will have been completely westernised in the new millennium, PACTAG (1995:9) (the Provincial Arts and Culture Task Group) with its Sub Committee known as Amasiko

Working Group, compiled a report on Amasiko with a view to submitting it to ACTAG'S (Arts and Culture Task Group's) White Paper .

This Sub Committee of PACTAG recommended that some infra-structure in the form of initiation schools could be built on a permanent basis at strategic sites in some urban and rural communities. These would be run by the Department of Health using trained medical and traditional surgeons, male nurses and traditional nurses, and could have special medical supplies based on the traditional herbs and drugs specially prepared for them. Doctors on call would visit these structures when need arose. If midwifery which was also treated in traditional fashion in the past, could be done in modern clinics and hospitals, *uhwaluko* could also be upgraded in style and fashion and still be done in semi-traditional milieu but with upgraded facilities to focus on the health of the initiates.

If people wanted to use the proposed structures but still needed to retain their tradition they could be allowed to do so provided they would not cut out the use of male medical doctors when problems arose. This proposition did not seek to destroy tradition but was meant to contribute towards the solution of the death and sickness problem. All the other requirements of the custom such as the educational part of the custom and the maintainance of the *hlonipha* ethics would remain part of this package.

### 9.3.2 Community efforts

Because of the publicity given to the death and chronic sicknesses of *abakhwetha* some communities have taken steps to meet the crisis. Zama Mpondwana (Daily Dispatch December 11, 1999, ) reports that in the Keiskammahoek area, a success story for the past three years, is continuing this trend.

'A proud Lizo George, the area's circumcision co-ordinator, told the Daily Dispatch

they continued to enjoy a problem free tradition because of co-operative and health conscious communities. There were no admissions of initiates at the local S.S. Gida Hospital during June or July, and so for this reason there were none.' He said:

A number of traditional surgeons here make use of the surgical equipment in the bush and, as far as those who prefer to use their spears, we make sure that they use antiseptics, to clean them properly before proceeding to the next boy.

According to him, statistics in Kieskammahoek showed that the area had serious circumcision problems which led to many admissions at the local hospital in the early 1990's but, through educational programmes and co-operation from stakeholders, great strides had been made.

The S.S. Gida's circumcision health services department had concentrated on pre-circumcision examinations and counselling of boys, regular bush visits by circumcision co-ordinators, educating traditional surgeons and attendants, prompt response to emergency calls and using sterilised equipment such as assegais and gloves, and dressing wounds when necessary. Circumcision co-ordinators in the Keiskammahoek area intervene if "things get out of hand in the bush" and dress the initiates themselves.

The example taken by Kieskammahoek should also be followed by other communities if we want to maintain our circumcision custom with the guaranteed safety for our initiates.

#### 9.4 Conclusion

From what has been revealed in this chapter, it is clear that the circumcision custom was and is still an important cultural event in the life of a Xhosa man as it, according to Mlungisi Johannes, symbolises a "cultural transition from boyhood to manhood." Its significance was measured by its process of excluding the initiate from his community for a considerable length of time to face alone the tough weather and

living conditions on the veld in order to prepare him for the next important stage of development which is that of manhood.

It would appear that this indigenous custom was trouble-free in the past with no records of sicknesses and deaths until the arrival of western civilisation, Christianity and democracy. At this stage, it is hard to know if these had a negative effect on the custom per se, but many people interviewed feel that failure to stick to the original demands of the custom and to abide strictly by the cultural principle of *hlonipha*, not only put the lives of the initiates in jeopardy but also dented the image and credibility of the custom itself.

## CHAPTER 10

### SIGNIFICANCE OF *HLONIPHA* IN A MARRIAGE SITUATION AND THAT OF *AMAGQIRHA*

#### 10.1 Introduction

Normally in a traditional society, a woman would be procured for marriage by paying *lobola*. This was strictly a set of beasts which were a mixture of cows and oxen. A horse complete with its saddle and bridle would sometimes accompany these animals. These were given to the father of the woman as a compromise for the loss of his daughter who would, by arrangement, leave her home to start a new life of marriage at the groom's place.

On the issue of *lobola*, Myburgh (1981 : 99-100) mentions that:

Negotiation most frequently associated with marriage is accompanied by the transfer of marriage goods by the husband's group to that of the wife. The nature and the amount of the goods differ from people to people and are usually commensurate with the prestige and wealth of the parties concerned. The groom and his group who hand over the marriage goods expect a fertile, industrious, obedient wife of irreproachable conduct who will be respectful and perform her duties in marriage. On the other hand the bride and her group who receive the marriage goods expect a husband who is fertile, is capable of caring for his wife, and will perform his duties in marriage.

In an indigenous society before *makoti* started her life in her new home she was placed before a group of her in-laws and relatives who deemed it their responsibility to guide her by using a language of warning commonly known as *ukuyalwa* (15). Among other things mentioned they would say:

*Zazi ke makoti ukuba ukususela namhlanje wendele emaZizini;  
ungumfazi wasemaZizini.*

(You must know that as from today you have got married to a Dlamini/ Zizi clan or family (if the husband is born of a Dlamini or Zizi

clan).

She would from now on be given a new name such as Nohantom, Nowinile, Novungamile, Nomelumzi etc. The emphasis on her getting married to the family or clan, implied that her marriage was not going to be concentrated on her husband only but to the entire family. That was why it became necessary to *hlonipha* all the rules pertaining to her husband, her mother-in-law, her father-in-law, her other in-laws, the children and even the animals. Her starting point would be to undergo the *hota* custom which was a compulsory practice in any indigenous society.

## 10.2 Yesterday

As has been mentioned before, *hlonipha* has changed somewhat because of certain internal and external influences. This paragraph examines the views of certain individuals in respect of such a change.

### 10.2.1 *Ukuhota*

According to Minnie MaDlomo Matoke, one of the researcher's informants from Bhaziya, Umtata, the term '*ukuhota*' is an all embracing cultural word which was associated with a traditional marriage in African society where a newly married woman had to undergo a series of *hlonipha* activities for a period which ranged from at least a month to about three or four months or longer depending on that particular home to which such a woman was married. Such *hota* activities encompassed, inter alia, the following: attire: compulsory domestic chores: *hlonipha* language: reverence of certain places: *ukucweza*: avoidance of certain victuals.

According to Ndoda Maphini from Tsolo, *ukuhota* started from the time a *tsiki* ceremony was performed on behalf of *makoti*. This was when a sheep or goat was slaughtered on behalf of the newly wed after which she was also allowed to taste sour



milk in another little ceremony called *ukutyiswa amasi* (see 2.2.4.4). She was then dressed in a *makoti* attire after she had been kept behind the door. This commonly happened in cases where the bride had been procured through the *thwala* custom. Here the girl was kidnapped and forced to go to her future husband's place irrespective of whether she knew him or not.

(a) **Attire**

As reflected in 5.2.1.3, a newly wedded woman traditionally known as *umtshakazi* (bride) or *umakoti* was required, at the start of her marriage life, to wear a long skirt known as *umbhaco* which reached the ankles. On top of the skirt she wore an apron drape known as *incebetha*. The top body was covered with a small blanket known as *ibhayi lokubhinqela*. Over the shoulder and on top of *ibhayi lokubhinqela*, she wore *ixakatho* a form of a shawl designed to be worn by *makoti* only during her *hota* period. This item was placed on top of all the other items of attire, round the shoulder and was tied together beneath the chin with a giant pin known as *ibhospeliti* (9/10). The head gear of a black scarf designed to cover the head to the level of the eyebrows in front and to the back of the neck at the back, was tied in front with a knot.

Her mother-in-law (*uninazala*) and her sisters-in-law (*amadodakazi*) would always make sure that during her *hota* period, she would stick to this *hlonipha* attire at all times no matter how hot the temperature was and how heavy some of the items were.

(b) **Compulsory domestic chores**

As the indigenous society was purely traditional with no sophisticated luxuries such as hiring of a domestic helper to do the household chores, work such as the cleaning of the home, washing of the laundry, cooking for the family and many others was done by women. When *makoti* joined the family she was expected to do all these domestic duties practically from dawn to late in the evening. These duties included the

following:

**\* Fetching water from a nearby stream**

As most indigenous homes had no water taps or kept no water tanks, water had to be fetched by buckets from nearby streams or springs. *Makoti* had to carry it home to do cooking and other duties. When it got finished she went to the stream again. The process would be repeated as many times as there was a need or whenever her mother-in-law or sisters-in-law demanded. Sometimes a certain quantity would remain overnight. In terms of the *hota* practice as enunciated by her mother-in-law or sisters-in-law, she was not allowed to use that quantity for making the morning tea or coffee. She would be compelled to go to the stream very early before sunrise for, according to her mother-in-law, "*uyihlo-zala nabantu bomzi abanakwenzelwa ikofu ngamanzi aleleyo*" (your father-in-law and people here at home cannot be served with coffee made from water that has slept overnight).

She was not allowed to do any washing or laundry at home. She had to carry all the laundry to the river or stream. She was permitted to wash all the other laundry items except her father-in-law's underwear (in the case of *amagoba-dyasi*).

**\* Maintenance of floors and walls**

Practically the majority of huts in an indigenous environment have mud floors and mud walls. The maintenance of such floors and walls was done by women. The presence of *makoti* meant that all the maintenance tasks were done by her. She had to collect earth, wet it and prepare it for daubing known as *ukurhida* (15) in the case of floors and *ukutyabeka* (15) in the case of walls.

When the floors were dry enough after a couple of days, she was expected to smear them with cow dung. This process was known as *ukusinda* (15). She had to smear

all the floors of the residential structures including the kitchen except the side where her father-in-law slept or reclined. As an act of *hlonipha*, she had to avoid this area which was normally smeared by her mother-in-law, her *mngqungu* (young girl brought over to assist *makoti*) or any other woman qualified to work in this area.

After the walls had dried up, she had to tint them with brightly coloured soil or lime and she had to stick to the colour preference of the home. As one realises, these were cumbersome tasks which needed joint effort, but in most homes these were done by *makoti* alone as a *hlonipha* obligation. A very high temperature was not regarded as an excuse for her to remove some of the heavy items on her body.

#### \* Collection of fuel

The common practice in a traditional society was for women to collect dry wood from the nearby forests for fuel. This was known as *ukutheza* (15). They packed it in front of the huts to make a big bundle known as *igoqo* (5/6). Each time they needed to make fire they used *igoqo*. Building it up took quite some time. To build it some people sometimes organised a group of women who would *theza* in one day. This was known as *ibhoxo* (5/6) where the participants were not paid but thanked verbally and each given a small token called *isithabathaba* (7/8) after enjoying a good meal of meat, *umngqusho* (3/4) and other edibles. In places where there are limited or no bushes and forests, women collect dry cow droppings from the veld and pile them up in the fashion of *igoqo*.

In the case of *makoti* she was not allowed to use the existing *gogo*. She had to make her own. That meant going to the forest almost everyday to collect her own fuel. The process of collection was risky for she had to watch out for snakes, dangerous wild animals, potential rapists and gossip mongers. When she had collected enough wood, she would pack it neatly to make a bundle called *inyanda* (9/10) which she carried on her head balancing it on a round ring of grass known as *inkatha* (9/10).

\* **Other domestic duties**

Besides the above duties, some of her internal duties consisted of *ukuguba* (15) (fine grinding of mealie grains using a traditional milling stone), *ukugraya* (15) (rough breaking of mealie grains on the milling stone to produce rough particles), *ukucola* (15) (production of mealie dough called *intlama* (9/10) on a milling stone). These stages of manual grinding reflected above were observed one after the other when *makoti* was preparing *umqombothi* (3/4) (traditional beer) or making *marhewu* (a mild mealie drink).

Mealie grains were also stamped with clubs on a mortar or stamp block known as *isingqusho* (7/8) to produce samp which, when being prepared for a meal was mixed with beans and vegetables to produce a delicious staple diet known as *umngqusho* (3/4). All these domestic duties were usually performed inside a rondavel which was earmarked as a kitchen.

It was common in a *hota* system to make *makoti* work under very strenuous conditions. For example she would be required to make fire inside the so-called kitchen and do some cooking while she was either grinding or pounding mealies or doing some other odd job. The fire which was sometimes made of dry cow droppings (*amalongwe*) was on an open fire place called *iziko* (5/5) and it tended to produce thick smoke with a burning sensation in the eyes which made the eyes water and itch. This was known as *ungcume* (1) which was uncomfortable. The *hota* regulations did not allow her to work comfortably outside in the fresh air to avoid *ungcume*. Some relatives from other homes asked her to do some work for them and she was obliged under the *hota* practice not to decline these odd requests even though she was so busy.

\* **Agricultural activities**

As early as at the beginning of *ukuhota*, *makoti* was initiated into all forms of agricultural activities. She first played the part of a cook for the workers. When the ploughing spans left for the fields in the early hours of the morning, she also had to start preparing breakfast for the workers. When it was ready she carried it to the fields. She repeated the process during lunch time. During the hoeing season she also joined the team of hoers if there was an alternative cook. She would stand in the scorching heat hoeing without being relieved of the heavy *xakatho*. She also joined the team of reapers during the reaping season.

In all these tough activities, *makoti* was not expected to flinch or complain. All the informants approached regarding *ukuhota* in a traditional society were unanimous in their comments which reflected that most young brides underwent this testing *hota* period with distinction.

(c) ***Ukucweza***

As reflected in 2.2.4.10, *ukucweza* (15) was a *hlonipha* practice which was part of the *hota* custom that had to be obeyed by all the newly weds. A *makoti* during the initial stages of her *hota* period was not allowed to walk in front of the dwelling structures and into the open space known as *inkundla*. The *inkundla* was regarded as a sacred and respectable place for it was not only a spot for family or clan meetings, but also a thoroughfare for ancestors who went through the *inkundla* when entering and leaving the cattle kraal to wander about. The grave of the head of the family was generally placed at the cattle kraal posts in front of *inkundla*.

It was imperative for *makoti* to go behind the dwelling structures in full *hlonipha* attire at all times in order to avoid a collision with the home ancestors until such time that they got used to her presence within their home. This would take at least a month

before she was allowed to walk freely in front. This would subsequently be after a little ceremony which was performed with the aim of relaxing some of the *hota* rules. The relaxation process depended on that particular home and was not subject to any global restrictions.

**(d) Avoidance of certain victuals**

According to MaDlomo Matoke, *ukuhota* regulations stipulated that, despite the observance of ceremonies such as *ukutyiswa kwamasi* and the slaughtering of the *tsiki* goat (see 2.2.4.4) on behalf of the newly wed, *makoti* was not allowed to include the following items in her menu: *amasi* (6) (sour milk) and all its associated meals such as *umvubo* (3/4), milk in porridge, tea/ coffee and others; eggs; chicken; sheep's or goat's head; gravy; liver; the pelvic bone (*usikrotyana*) and its surroundings; until her *hota* period was over. She would then be formally informed of what to eat and what not to eat during the course of her marriage at that home.

**(e) *Hlonipha* language and reverence of certain places**

Ndoda Maphini, one of the researcher's informants, in his explanation of the need to use *hlonipha* language in a traditional marriage, emphasised the role of the mother-in-law and the sister-in-law in teaching the newly wed about the status quo at her new place. First they told her all the places she was not supposed to visit. Places such as the graves of ancestors, graves of chiefs and other prominent personalities, the *inkundla* (9/10), certain rivers where some ancestors live, and sleeping places for heads of families were some of the places she should avoid as an act of *hlonipha*. Secondly, all words related to the names of her in-laws (near and distant) should be avoided. The rest of the words which form the *hlonipha* language are tabulated in the Appendix of this study. The *hlonipha* language is also regarded in toto as part of the *hota* system.

The concept of *isihlonipho* as a language is based on the definition which has been given in Chapter 2 where well known authorities such as Soga, J.H. Kunene, Fromkin and Rodman, Herbert (2.1) have explained in full what they regard as *isihlonipho*.

In addition to these explanations, Finlayson (1984 : 138) postulates that:

After the marriage, the young woman now moves ceremonially from her home to her in-laws. Here she is taught to respect all senior relatives of her husband, especially the male relatives and her mother-in-law. Associated with the concept of respect, there occurs among the Xhosa an institution peculiar to the Nguni and Southern Sotho which concerns the conscious avoidance in the woman's everyday speech, of the syllables occurring in the husband's family's names (Finlayson 1978, 1982). From the time that the woman enters her in-law's home, she may not pronounce words which have any syllable which is part of the names of her father-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law's brothers and sisters and their wives and husbands and extending usually as far as the great grandfather.

Finlayson gives various reasons for this linguistic form of respect, and these are that:

The daughter-in-law should be aware that she has not been born into this particular family. She should also be conscious of her new state, and by respecting her in-laws, even though some of them are deceased, she may be seen to be respecting the ancestors of her new home and thereby in turn, should be respected and protected herself. Most of the instructions regarding her language, would come from the mother-in-law but her sisters-in-law (*amadodakazi*) (9/6) especially the eldest would play an active role in instructing the daughter-in-law. The woman is expected to *hlonipha* throughout her life.

In collusion with Finlayson's exposition of the *hlonipha* custom, Soga (1931:208) explains also that *hlonipha* is usually applied to the custom whereby a married woman is debarred from using the name of her father-in-law - *usondoda* (1/2a) and must avoid all words whose initial syllable of her father-in-law's name; and indeed any word that includes the whole or part of the father-in-law's name. Many examples can be procured from the core vocabulary or list of words appearing in the Appendix.

If, for example, the name of the father-in-law is Mhlahleni, the daughter-in-law will have to avoid the syllable -hla- and may subsequently call *amahlahla* (5/6) *amabiyo* (5/6). She may avoid to pronounce verbs such as *ukuhlahlela* (15), *ukuhluma* (15), *ukuhleka* (15) and may replace these with words like *ukusikelela* (15), *ukumila* (15), and *ukuvuya* (15). Similarly if the name of the father-in-law is *Matye*, words such as *ityuwa*, *ilitye* may become *isawuti* and *iluleko* respectively.

It will be noticed that the core vocabulary shown in the Appendix and which bears samples of words emanating from names of people being venerated, tends to cover the entire sphere of the life of the indigenous people and has even overlapped to the modern era which is characterised by industrialisation and commercialisation.

#### (f) Linguistic analysis

In this paragraph an attempt is made to look at how *isihlonipho* is formulated. It will be noted that language manipulation plays an important role in this circumstance.

#### Categories of *hlonipha* words

##### (i) Substitution of consonants

Having read Finlayson's comments regarding formation of *isihlonipho* vocabulary, the researcher does not find it possible in this chapter to discuss the entire vocabulary appearing in the Appendix because of space limitations. Replacement of a consonant by another consonant has not been noted as this may happen at random and would not apply to the core vocabulary where evidence of the syllable is achieved by the replacement of the whole lexical item e.g.



<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
<i>indyombi</i> (9/10)	<i>intombi</i> (9/10)	a girl
<i>utyirha</i> (1/2a)	<i>ugqirha</i> (1/2a)	a doctor
<i>itsokhwe</i> (9/10)	<i>ibhokhwe</i> (9/10)	a goat
<i>iinkcumbuso</i> (9/10)	<i>iindlebe</i> (9/10)	ears

(ii) **Delition of consonants**

Consonant deletion could happen at random and may not apply to the core vocabulary  
e.g.

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
<i>ndiku-elele</i>	<i>ndikuxelele</i>	I told you
<i>undi-abisile</i>	<i>undixabisile</i>	he values me
<i>uya-ana</i>	<i>uyafana</i>	he resembles me
<i>uku-ondela</i>	<i>ukusondela</i>	to come nearer

iii) **Word replacement**

According to Finlayson (1984:142), disregarding the phonological features, it may be noted that the core vocabulary contains retentions of Starred Common Bantu forms  
e.g.

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
<i>inombe</i> (9/10)	<i>inkomo</i> (9/10)	cow
<i>inkumba</i> (9/10)	<i>indlu</i> (9/10)	house
<i>ingulube</i> (9/10)	<i>ihagu</i> (9/10)	pig

<i>intlumayo</i>	(9/10)	<i>imbotyi</i>	(9/10)	bean
<i>iphoba</i>	(9/10)	<i>intloko</i>	(9/10)	head
<i>ihlongozo</i>	(5/6)	<i>iqanda</i>	(9/10)	egg

(See Guthrie 1970 Comparative Bantu CS No 14022168 and 88) as cited by Finlayson.

(iv) **Semantic shift**

Use of semantic shift is also prevalent in the core vocabulary e.g.

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		ENGLISH
<i>lokwana</i>	(qual)	<i>ncinane</i>	(qual)	small
<i>umqolo</i>	(3/4)	<i>umdeko</i>	(3/4)	eaves
<i>umolulo</i>	(11)	<i>utywala</i>	(14)	beer

(v) **Borrowings from English**

Certain *hlonipha* words appearing in the core vocabulary have been borrowed from either Afrikaans or English or other African languages. Such words bear evidence of the miscegenation of the indigenous culture with foreign culture brought by western civilisation mentioned earlier. Examples of such words are:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		ENGLISH
<i>isatlani</i>	(5/6)	<i>ipolisa</i>	(5/6)	police
<i>isawuti</i>	(9/10)	<i>ityuwa</i>	(9/10)	salt

It should be noted that the *hlonipha* word *isatlani* is a version of the English word

settler . The sociolinguistic implication of the word is that the police were culturally associated with the White settlers who came into South Africa during the colonial era. Other examples are:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>AFRIKAANS</i>
<i>idyekile</i>	<i>ibhekile</i>	beker
<i>idukhwe</i>	<i>iqhiya</i>	doek

Finlayson (1984:143) also quotes the following:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>ZULU</i>	<i>ENGLISH</i>
<i>izambane</i> (5/6)	<i>itapile</i> (9/10)	<i>izambane</i> (9/10)	potato
<i>ukukhuluma</i> (15)	<i>ukuthetha</i> (15)	<i>ukukhuluma</i> (15)	to speak

as borrowings from Zulu. In addition words such as:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	<i>ZULU</i>	<i>AFRIKAANS</i>
<i>ukuphuza</i> (15)	<i>ukusela</i> (15)	<i>ukuphuza</i>	drink
<i>isikapu</i> (7/8)	<i>igusha</i> (9/10)	<i>igusha</i>	skaap

come from Zulu and Afrikaans respectively.

#### (vi) Verbal derivatives

Many verbal derivatives occur in the core vocabulary such as:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	ENGLISH	VERB	MEANING
<i>mpambuko</i>	<i>indlela</i>	road	<i>phambuka</i>	to cross
<i>isibane</i>	<i>ilanga</i>	sun	<i>baneka</i>	to light
<i>intlanganiso</i>	<i>imbizo</i>	meeting	<i>hlangana</i>	to meet
<i>intshiza</i>	<i>imvula</i>	rain	<i>tshiza</i>	to spray
<i>amanyiso</i>	<i>amabele</i>	breasts	<i>anyisa</i>	to suckle

In the lexical core of *hlonipha* some new words have been coined e.g:

<i>HLONIPHA</i>	<i>XHOSA</i>	ENGLISH
<i>umshuqwa</i> (3/4)	<i>umgquba</i> (3/4)	manure
<i>umqolo</i> (3/4)	<i>umdeko</i> (3.4)	the eaves
<i>ethameni</i>	<i>phandle</i>	outside
<i>ingethe</i> (5/6)	<i>ihlathi</i> (5/6)	forest
<i>umoluko</i> (3)	<i>utywala</i> (14)	beer
<i>ukuhuka</i> (15)	<i>ukusenga</i> (15)	to milk
<i>inyakulo</i> (5/6)	<i>icephe</i> (5/6)	spoon

*Umsluqwa* presumably comes from: *ukushuqa/ukuphotholoza/ukuphothula/ukusila* meaning to soften, to loosen, to grind as when manure is being prepared for use as a form of fertilizer.

*Ethameni* could come from *ukuthakamela* which means to bask in the sun. The sun is obviously found outside hence *ethameni* is associated with the outside.

*Umolulo* is coined from *ukoluka* (to stretch) as when a drunken person lies prostrate

*Ukukhuka* could come from the sound the milk makes as it pours forcefully onto the container when the milker presses the teats to squeeze the milk out.

For a head we get two different words such as: *iphoba*  
*ityhontsi*

For a horse we get three different words such as: *itatanqu*  
*ixhesha*  
*iphala*

For a human being we get three different words such as:

- umndyu*
- umnyatheli*
- umncawuki*

For a police officer we get two different words such as: *isatlani*  
*idyilikidi*

For a doek we get two different words such as: *idukhwe*

	<i>isondwana</i>
For <u>smearing</u> we get two different words such as:	<i>ukunameka</i>
	<i>ukukhwica</i>
For a <u>knife</u> we get two different words such as:	<i>igxabelo</i>
	<i>inqamlo</i>
For <u>sugar</u> we get two different words such as:	<i>iwekethe</i>
	<i>intlabathi</i>
For <u>water</u> we get two different words such as:	<i>imvotho</i>
	<i>amayila</i>
For <u>dark/black</u> we get three different words such as:	<i>kunkiphala</i>
	<i>kumkhaca</i>
	<i>imfipha</i>

and many other examples.

The usage of such a different vocabulary for words meaning the same thing could be caused by the fact that some areas are dominated by *amaMfengu* while others are dominated by *amaXhosa*. This variety in the usage of such words is found mainly in the Ciskei and Transkei areas. It is also possible that some areas may use both words for the same thing. This may be caused by the cultural transfer of married women who, when they land at another region, may continue to use their own *hlonipha* vocabulary from their original places.

Maxhoba Ngqangashe the researcher's informant from Ngqeleni, expatiating on this issue of *hlonipha* words differing according to regions or areas mentioned that *isihlonipho* by nature is not a standardised language where it is compulsory to use the same *hlonipha* words everywhere. Besides the words which are based on the avoidance of pronouncing syllables related to fathers-in-law or other in-laws, there are those that are coined by different communities, hence for example in one community, the word *ibetha* may commonly be used while in the next community the word *ikhanka* both meaning a dog may be preferred. Another reason may be

associated with cultural dynamics where people from another region, area or country may move to another area or region thereby bringing artefacts of their own culture into the new region.

A prominent example to be quoted is that of the word sugar which in most indigenous areas is generally called *intlabathi*. A new word, *iwekethe* was coined or brought in during the arrival of White people in different areas of South Africa. Because they were called *abantu abamweke* ( white people) by *hlonipha* speakers, sugar was renamed *iwekethe* because of its white colour and again because it was a White person's artefact.

#### 10.2.2 Cultural significance of the *hlonipha* custom in a marriage situation

On the issue of the significance of the *hlonipha* custom which, in a traditional marriage, is closely bound up or embedded in the *hota* practice, there are various opinions positively expressed in contrast to what Tom (1996:49: 7th Impression) regards, in the following paragraph, as change from the acceptable Xhosa pattern of marrying a woman to a man of her choice (or forced to marry him by the *thwala* custom) and subsequently making her part of this new home, but later ill treats her by showing signs that she does not belong to this home. According to Tom she remains a foreigner who becomes the servant of her mother-in-law and her sisters-in-law. Tom's concept of *ukuhota* and *ukuhlonipha* is expressed in the following words:

*Sithi isiXhosa sesenze le ndima incomeka kangaka yokwenza ihlumelo lendalo, siphambuke ngokudala iimpawu zokubonisa ukuba le ntombi asiyoyasekhay' apha, yeyasemzini kwaye ize ngokiza kusebenzela unina walo mfana yendele kuye, kunye neentombi zakhe. Ezi mpawu siziquka phantsi kwala magama ukuhota nokuhlonipha.*

(The Xhosa culture being such a reputable institution because of the magnificent role it has played in society in accepting a natural addition into the family structure, yet it errs by creating signs which reveal that it does not regard *makoti* as an automatic member of the family but a foreigner who has come to work for the mother of her husband and

her daughters. These signs are encompassed within the context of the words *ukuhota* and *ukuhlonipha*.)

Vuyisile Nombewu, one of the researcher's informants from Mahasana, Beechamwood, Willowvale disagrees totally with Tom's concept of *ukuhota* (15). He claims that traditional marriage as a long standing institution, was never meant to inconvenience or illtreat any person. Even the practice of *ukuhota* which, to a man not conversant with the intricacies of African culture, might appear as a strenuous exercise deliberately imposed on newly weds, yet the philosophy behind the practice was to build and mould a future asset for this home. Nombewu, who had a store of cultural experience because of his advanced age and close association with indigenous practices in his area of domicile, expressed his knowledge thus:

The major objective of subjecting *makoti* to a lot of intensive labour under strenuous conditions during her *hota* period, was to give her a stiff test to find out if she would be suitable for this gigantic task of *ukwenda* (15) (marriage). If her decision was genuine she would pull through with distinction, but if she was not serious about it, she would give up before the expiry of the *hota* period.

As marriage was a long term contract, it needed, according to Nombewu, a mature woman who would be able to face all the problems, the hard work, commitment, and all the responsibilities of a marriage. The training she got out of the *hota* exercises would certainly make her succeed.

The *cweza* practice, the special *hlonipha* language and the types of food she had to avoid, all these were the traditional methods of testing her patience, her capacity to respect, her sense of commitment, her ability to accept instructions, her amenability to changes and her sense of honesty. The in-laws knew beforehand that if she remained pliable throughout the testing period, she would be the best candidate for the position of being married to this home.

The rules which required her to look down and only in front of her during *ukuhota*



and to talk softly and respectfully to her husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law, other relatives, children and even to irritating dogs, were training her to display *imbeko* (respect), *intlonipho* and *patience* which were the essential ingredients for an ideal marriage.

Tom (1996 : 95) writing on *imbeko* (9/10) says:

*Imbeko asiyiyo nanto ukuba yigolide kwaXhosa. Yiyo loo nto umntu ongenayo engabalelwa bantwini. Xa umakoti esafika ekhay' apha, akanakufane enze nje. Kufuneka ebuzile inkqubo. Xa ebabuza uthetha ngosisi nobhuti njalo njalo. Umfazi uyayazi into yokuba umyeni wakhe ngumntu "omkhulu" kunaye. Akanakuyiwisela umthetho indoda yakhe nangayiphi na into ngaphandle kokuyicela eyicebisa, ngapha koko uya kuba lilifa lentonga.*

(Respect is like gold to *amaXhosa*. That is why a person who has no respect is looked down upon by society. When *makoti* is still new to her marriage home, she cannot just do anything she likes. She must ask for the procedure followed here. When she talks to people she addresses them as 'sisi' (sister), 'bhuti' (brother). She knows that her husband will always remain her "senior." She cannot issue instructions to him on anything except to request or advise him. Otherwise she will taste a bit of punishment.)

When she became stubborn and failed to follow the pattern of rules set for her in this home, she was sent home after the mention of the term *maconini* by either the husband or her sisters-in-law (see 7.4).

The *hlonipha* training she obtained through the *hota* practice at the beginning of her marriage made such a well trained *makoti* an asset in this new home. Everybody appreciated her co-operation, her positive attitude, her ability to unite the home, to build it, to keep it clean, and her input in the proper administration of the home.

It is no overstatement, according to the old man Nombewu and a few others approached with regard to the significance of the *hota* training, to mention that as a result of the compulsory *hlonipha* practices which were regarded as norms in a typical

traditional culture, there were no such things as divorces and even after the death of the husband, *makoti* remained to continue building and maintaining her husband's home and looking well after her children.

### 10.3 Today

The industrial development mentioned in 8.3.1 of this study had an impact on changing the lives of indigenous peoples of the Eastern Cape from the period of its commencement during the nineteenth century up to the present. Many of the traditional concepts and practices highlighted in some of the chapters in this research project have been overhauled by the process of time and what has now remained of the Black original culture, as of today, is a society that has few remnants of traditional culture but large quantities of artefacts of westernised culture which is fast pushing the original cultural traditions and norms into the limbo of oblivion. It is a matter of time before traces of indigenous culture in a South African society disappear completely.

Again what is perceptible today is a phenomenal growth in the number of womenfolk who have flocked, in large numbers, into the urban areas after the relaxation, by the former Apartheid Government, of the influx control laws which had sought, inter alia, to control the movement of women from the rural to the urban areas where most of their menfolk had joined industries and other commercial concerns.

The sub-section of this chapter (10.2) will be approached and dealt with from the point of view that reflects the implication of *hlonipha* as revealed by, first, the rural situation, and, secondly by the present urban set up to see if the *hlonipha* principles which have been highlighted in 10.1 are still applicable today. But of greater significance to note is the impact of economic infiltration into the life style of the people.

### 10.3.1 Application of the *hlonipha* principles in the rural areas today

The present African National Congress Government's introduction of the Reconstruction and Development Programme into some of the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, has brought remarkable changes in the living conditions and style of most people. The following basic necessities such as water, fuel, food preparation, language, attire and others which have been discussed under the concept of *ukuhota* in 10.2, have been affected by the introduction of economic development into the lives of people and the subsequent changes that resulted in their life style.

#### \* **Water**

According to Nomaci Qabaka, one of the researcher's informants from Tyhume, Alice:

Where people in some areas had no water facilities except the traditional sources and rain water tanks for storing water for domestic use and agricultural purposes, the Reconstruction and Development Programme has installed water reservoirs where water is led by pipes to convenient points within the residential areas. The major supplier of the water is usually the Municipal network which brings purified water to rural areas as facilitated by the R.D.P. The objective of this Development Scheme is to cover all the rural areas of South Africa.

In the policy framework of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the African National Congress (1994:28-29), it is stated that:

Water is a natural resource and should be made available in a sustainable manner to all South Africans. Today more than 12 million people do not have access to clean drinking water and 12 million people do not have adequate sanitation (toilets and refuse removal). Less than half the rural population has a safe and accessible water supply, and not one person in seven has access to adequate sanitation. Communities have had little say in the provision of water and sanitation and decision making in the water delivery agencies has reflected broader apartheid ideology. Access to water resources is dominated by a privileged minority while the majority of the population enjoy little or no water security.

It is on that score that the Government has been committed to using the R.D.P.'s long term goal as a machinery for providing every South African with accessible water. This, in a way, has affected the *hlonipha* syndrome that has been largely associated with the traditional life activities of the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape.

**\* Fuel**

According to Qabaka, the economic awareness throughout the Province of the Eastern Cape at this point in time has made people open small businesses in some rural areas by selling, amongst other things, bundles of wood for fuel. They sell these along the roads, in their homes and where people can easily access them. Some small businessmen supply homes that have funerals, weddings, traditional parties and any other gathering. They also deliver these to any home that places orders. Buyers who include *makotis* use them for their coal stoves and open fires. Those who can afford to instal electricity as it is now available through the auspices of the R.D.P., buy electric and gas stoves. Other homes which do not yet enjoy the luxuries of purchasing fuel, use oxen to pull *amahlahla* (6) i.e. piles of dry wood cut from the forest trees for fuel. This development has become popular for that group of *makotis* who are no more inclined towards *ukutheza* as a prerequisite for *ukuhota*.

**\* Avoidance of certain victuals**

This part of *ukuhota* which has been discussed in 10.1 has, according to Qabaka, been discontinued in many homes in the rural areas because of the stringent economic constraints. She argues that in the distant past, it was common to see many homes thriving with poultry, a large collection of sheep, goats and cattle. Milk was obtained from cows, mutton from sheep, *tsiki* from goats, and eggs from fowls. She maintains that because of the present day economic constraints, people have deemed it proper and appropriate to follow a policy of sharing whatever they have under such strenuous economic conditions where there are no more fowls, sheep, goats and cattle and again

where money is scarce. If *makotis* have been culturally introduced into their new marriage homes through the *tsiki* ceremonies and *ukutyiswa kwamasi* there is no more need to restrain them from eating certain items because it may be expensive to offer them alternatives.

**\* Preparation of mealies for various uses**

As one of *makoti's* cultural duties was to stamp (*ukungqusha*) and prepare mealies to make samp, today such duties are no longer done as samp is readily available from local shops which are built in every village in the Eastern Cape. Most traditional homes do not have *izingqusho* (7/8) (the stamp-blocks) because there is no longer any use of these. Both the semi-traditional and the modern brides resort to the purchasing of samp. The grinding of mealies on traditional mill stones has also been discontinued in many homes because of the availability of mealie meal and malt which is used as yeast for brewing *Xhosa* beer. The traditional mill stones are not used these days as they were in the past. This has negative implications on the *hota* system of the past.

**\* Ukucweza**

In the semi-traditional and modern societies, this form of *hlonipha* has been altogether discontinued. Nobongile Maphisa, a researcher's informant from Theko Springs, Centane confirms that this kind of *hlonipha* is not common in the rural villages of today because today's *abendi* are not inclined towards the original traditional practices. Mothers-in-law are themselves the products of *amagoba-dyasi* whose knowledge of traditions and customs has been diluted by the forces of western civilisation, industrialisation and Christianity. Most of the *makotis* of today are no longer receptive to the dictates of the traditional customs and *ukuhota* practices because of the influence of modern times which place very little emphasis, if any, on traditions and customs.

\*      **The *hlonipha* language**

Both Qabaka, Maphisa and others have been unanimous in stating that this form of language which was, in the past, one of the pillars of the *hlonipha* culture, has disappeared in the modern societies because of lack of re-inforcement from previous custodians. Another problem, according to the interviewees, is that most of the experts on *hlonipha* language are dead and they have no records left of the language. However there are areas where traces of this language can still be found where people are still clinging to traditional culture. Hodoshe Majikela from Alice quoted Krwakrwa and Melani. Zolisa Ndlumbini from Willowvale quoted Mhala in Idutywa district, Madwaleni in Elliotdale and the following villages in Willowvale: Dadamba, Bhojini, Qwaninga, Chafutweni, Mente, Ludakana and Shixini.

\*      **Respect of ancestors**

The amount of veneration given to the ancestors mentioned in 3.2 affected the newly weds a great deal in the past. It has been shown in 10.1 that one of the aims of *ukuhota* was to pay due respect to the ancestors of the home who resided in the cattle kraal and at *inkundla* (9/10). It was easy to manipulate the newly weds into paying this very important respect by compelling them to comply with the *hota* regulations.

But today Qabaka feels that it is not easy and possible to enforce this kind of *hlonipha* practice for the simple reason that many married couples opt for their own private homes immediately after marriage. There are no mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law to see to it that the present day *makotis* do exactly what the *makotis* of yesterday did by way of showing *hlonipha* to the ancestors. It is only during special occasions such as *ukukhatshwa* (3.2.1), *ukubuyiswa* (3.2.2), and *ukuhlajwa komzi* (3.2.3) which are mostly held at the central home (*kwakhaya-khulu*) that the *makotis* dress in *hlonipha* attire, talk in soft tones to show respect to the ancestors.

Qabaka further revealed that some of these newly weds are breadwinners who spend most of their time at work earning a living. Others who are not actually working, follow their husbands to their places of work. They therefore have no time to be involved in *ukuhota* practices.

**\* Attire**

According to Nobongile Maphisa and the rest of those who were interviewed on this aspect, a *makoti* from the rural areas wears a dress made from German print known as *ijalimani* (5/6). She wears a kind of apron known as *ifaskoti* (9/10) on top of the dress. She ties a towel round her waist and she carries *ixakatho*. On her head she carries a black headgear with a white line. This is known as *ikhetshe miya* (9/10). She may walk barefooted or use shoes if she likes. There are no restrictions. Nkulukazi Gqamane from Theko Kona, Centane confirmed what Nobongile said. What is peculiar is that these women stick to this attire only when they are walking in public. At their own homes they wear what they like with no headgear.

**10.3.2 The position of the urban areas with regard to *hlonipha***

**(a) Infra-structure**

In order to succeed in discussing the question of the *hlonipha* element in the life style of the present day newly weds, one needs to give first a picture of the dwelling structures mostly found in urban areas in order to compare them with the traditional rural infra-structure which facilitated the promotion of *hlonipha*.

As against the number of rondavels which are common in most rural homes, the position in the urban areas differs considerably from that of the rural areas in that families are accommodated and congested in houses ranging from sub-economic units consisting of one room or two rooms to larger sizes of four roomed structures. Five

to eight roomed houses built and owned by the affluent class are also available in both the townships and metropolitan areas.

Informal settlements have sprung up like mushrooms in almost every urban area in the Eastern Cape and in the rest of South Africa. The majority of the owners or occupiers of these urban houses are usually the young men and women who have come to seek work, to do business or to stay permanently. The vast majority of them came from their homelands. Most of these people are young as compared to the old folk found in the rural areas. This implies that some of the young folk acquired these houses after they got married while they were still in the rural areas. Others contracted marriages and were never connected to their rural background. In all these urban residential structures families are grouped together in one house whereas in the rural areas, they are accommodated in all the rondavels, thus making it easy to comply with the *hlonipha* requirements. This is not easy in the urban set up.

**(b) Problems militating against *hlonipha***

Since *ukuhota* discussed in 10.1.1 was the basic and an all inclusive and all embracing element for the much wider *hlonipha* concept, its success depended on the manual labour involved during its process, and the lack of resources which made the process much more difficult. The urban areas are, in this regard, characterised by the availability of the basic necessities of life such as the following:

**\* Water**

This is available inside the household and is used for drinking, cooking, washing and sanitation.



\* **Fuel**

It is the policy of all municipalities to provide electricity to all the residents of the urban areas. Besides electricity, people may buy gas stoves, paraffin stoves and/or coal stoves.

\* **Ablution and cleaning facilities**

These are provided by the use of washing machines, hoovers, polishers, and use of manual labour provided by domestic helpers where such facilities are not available.

\* **Food**

This is bought and stored in pantries, fridges, deep freezers and other cold storage facilities.

\* **Language**

People in the urban areas use their home language and other foreign languages such as other African languages as well as English or Afrikaans. In addition to these, *tsotsitaal* and *fanakalo* (see 8.3.1 ) are spoken to facilitate communication between them. There is absolutely no possibility of the *hlonipha* language being spoken in an urban situation because of the miscegenation of these tribes and races.

(c) **Some other reasons for failure to *hlonipha***

From the exposition of the infra-structural situation reflected above, and the facilities made available to make the life style of the urban areas much easier than that of the rural areas, there are also reasons given by the modern newly weds against the *hlonipha* system.

According to Ndlumbini, one of the researcher's informants from Willowvale:

A *makoti* of today feels that unlike in the past where the mother-in-law was a link between her daughter-in-law and the greater family, the position of the present day *makoti* is different in that she feels completely independent and claims that both she and her husband are a unique family of their own. Therefore nobody has the right to interfere with their lives. In plain terms she rejects domination by either her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law.

He claims further that both education and Christian religion have contributed to the decline of the *hlonipha* ethics today. For example educated women live a sophisticated life in urban areas. They wear fashionable clothes including pants and bikinis which are culturally far from the *hlonipha* requirements.

They are not subjected to ancestor worshipping and veneration and their involvement in Christian religion provides no scope for traditional religion. So if the father-in-law is dead, her belief is that he cannot come back to punish her even if she flouts the *hlonipha* rules. She feels that the parents-in-law and other relatives cannot convince her to stick to traditional *hlonipha* practices because of her educational status. The question of working for a living also becomes a stumbling block to the *hlonipha* practice, for, in a work situation no *hlonipha* is acceptable.

The attire which is supposed to be used by a *makoti* according to Nobongile Maphisa, is the German print (*ijalimani*), black scarf with a white stripe and an apron. Round the waist she should tie a scarf. But because she is in an urban area she does not stick to this attire. She wears dresses and headgear of her own choice, colour and make and she uses all the fashionable clothes of the modern times to the extent that there is little difference in appearance (if any) between her and an unmarried woman who goes bare headed, with short skirts, dresses, trousers and other fashionable attire including shoes.

The implication of this attire is that the *hota* attire is only meant for use during the

period she visits her traditional home. If she is subjected to the *hota* custom she may do just a token of it for perhaps only one week after which she goes back to the urban area again.

Ndlumbini further emphasises that the present day *makotis* do not pay respect to their in-laws in the same or similar manner as the *makotis* of the past and the parents in-law seem to be powerless to enforce their authority on them. There is, according to him, a noticeable shift from the tradition of the past.

Another obstacle mentioned by Ndlumbini is the presence of democracy which has brought the concept of equality between sexes. Because of democratic rights accorded to women today, *hlonipha* rules are difficult to apply, enforce and maintain as women regard domination by men and other females over them as women's abuse. To show that they are serious about the equality of men and women, they, according to him, support the idea of retaining their surnames even if they are married e.g. Mrs Nomaza Mpayipheli-Dumalisile.

Today's women also disapprove of their being given new names such as Nophindile, Nolitha, Nowam etc when they get married. They rather choose to be called by their maiden names in order to show that they also belong to the family to which they have married.

### 10.3.3 Comments

From what has been discussed in 10.2.1 and 10.2.2 regarding the activities of the newly married women of today and their attitude towards *hlonipha* practice which is being contained in *ukuhota*, it has become clear that the *hlonipha* custom which had been the basic foundation for a traditional marriage, is found lacking, reduced, minimised or neglected in today's marriages which have been somewhat affected by the forces of western civilisation, industrialisation and other factors.

#### 10.4 Tomorrow

According to Xoliswa Mvubu, one of the researcher's informants from Butterworth, *hlonipha* is not likely to occur in future because of a multiplicity of negative factors which have been caused by the forces of western civilisation. The imitation of western culture has resulted in newly wedded women calling their husbands by name instead of using the *hlonipha* approach where traditionally a woman calls her husband by a clan name e.g. Mkhwane, Dlamini or using prefix *ubhuti* kaNosisa or *tata* kaSibongile to show respect.

The present day interpretation of democracy to her means that if she uses such terminology of respect towards her husband she will appear as though she is his slave and this is contrary to the requirements of the present day democracy which champions equality between the sexes.

The *hlonipha* towards in-laws does not have a future. Most women, according to Mvubu do not accept their in-laws as their parents and it is unlikely that such a relationship will ever be formed because of the present day situation where in most homes there is bad blood between *makoti* and her mother-in-law. When she talks to her husband she always refers to her mother-in-law as "*umama wakho*" - (your mother) or her father-in-law as "*utata wakho*" - (your father).

A working woman who earns a living in a democratic atmosphere of today and tomorrow is likely to accommodate no *hlonipha* towards her husband, relatives and in-laws because her ability to earn an income makes her independent and equal to any man who also earns a living to support his family. She is not going to be subservient to her husband like a woman who is dependent on her husband who happens to be the only breadwinner.

Education, which is a product of civilisation has, today, reached every corner of the

Eastern Cape even to those areas which are still traditional in outlook. Western civilisation and culture will absorb even those communities which today are still traditional. The school going population will, tomorrow, replace the present traditional population which will dwindle into non-existence. That implies that all such customs as *hlonipha*, will also disappear with the traditionalists. The modern population will not resuscitate such customs as the situation reveals today.

Mvubu feels that the future generation will regard what is now taking place in the field of *hlonipha* as something totally undesirable as they will regard the *hlonipha* practice as a form of injustice perpetrated by men over women.

#### 10.5 *Isihlonipho samagqirha*

*Amagqirha* (Traditional healers) differ markedly from the rest of the groups of people that practice *hlonipha*. Be that as it may, it is interesting to recognize the underlying guiding principle on all these people, i.e. the respect of the ancestors. The language used in addressing various phenomena is also interesting.

##### 10.5.1 Language of divination or ukuvumisa

The common language for *amagqirha* (5/6) is the one related to *icamagu* (5/6) i.e. when a witch doctor commonly known as a diviner is offering a proprietary sacrifice where he/she uses charms to bring about peace. This peace is between himself and his ancestral spirits. This happens when he talks directly to these ancestral spirits on behalf of a victim or patient during divination or *ucamagushelo* (11) after such a patient has approached him for clarity in terms of identifying causes of his physical or spiritual ailments.

Because he depends on the guidance of his ancestral spirits, he appeals or propitiates on behalf of a sick person in order to seek for help, guidance, and advice on the

condition of health of the victim. When he says "Camagu!" to the ancestral spirits, he says "Peace be with you!" as he asks them to pardon him, to be gracious, to be pacified and to give him a chance to address them in order to explain the patient's predicament or health problem.

In other words, this is a way of showing *hlonipha* to them as he cannot talk to them in any other manner except to display humility and respect. *Camagu* is a form of humble invocation. During the time of *ukuhlahluba* (15) i.e. examination by direct contact with ancestral spirits on behalf of the patient or victim, the victim on behalf of whom the *isicamagusho* (7/8) or means of appropitiation is done, also reciprocates by saying "Camagu!". This is also done after the revelation by the diviner of each point regarding the condition or state of health until the whole divination exercise has been completed. "Camagu!" by the victim means "I agree" or "I associate myself with what Mhlekaazi or Diviner is saying." Or else another expression: "*Phosa ngasemva gqirha*" (Throw it behind doctor) is used to show agreement with the diviner's report. Below is a sample of a *mvumisa* passage which reveals the examination in progress.

### XHOSA

(The Diviner belongs to the Mpangele clan and the patient is a Nkala)

**MPANGELE:** *Camagu nina makhosi amahle! Nkomo zikaDlomo, nkomo zikaMpangele! Zihlwele zikaMshicikazi, zikaMvinjwa, maHlubi amahle! Umntwana lo ngokaNkala, kaMphandana, kaThiyane, kaVumisevumile. Ufuna ukuncedwa nini makhosi, zidweshu zakowethu ngenxa yengulo. Siyamcamagushela singabakwaMpangele.. Sicela amakhosi agabule izigcawu, agabule ukwena, adedise ubumnyama kuvele ukukhanya. Ndithetha nani kakuhle na makhosi, zihlwele zakwaDlomo, zinyanya zakowethu?*

When they respond after this colourful invocation, they begin to guide him, telling him what is wrong with the patient and he in turn transmits the information to him.

*SingabakwaDlomo thina sibona intloko ebuhlungu phezu kwamashiyi nethi gqizi kutsho kuvaleke amehlo. Liyatshisa ifokotho ngathi kuza kuqhekeka ukhakhayi lwam kubini ndingumfo wakwaNkala. Andilali kakuhle lihlaba elisuka ecabangeni lithi xhokro ngesilanda ngaphakathi. Lisuka linyuke ngathi yibhola lize kundivingca uvalo ndixakwe nakukuphefumla. (Uthi nqum aphulaphule kumguli)*

**NKALA:** *Phosa ngasemva gqirh' eliyindoda!*

**MPANGELE:** *Ndinento yokuziva ngathi ndithwele into enzima apha emagxeni zitsho neengalo zam zifune ukirwa nokushwabana, izandla zingafuni kubamba. Siyevana na mzi wakwaNkala bo?*

**NKALA:** *Camagu gqirh' eliyindoda!*

**MPANGELE:** *Nithi yintoni na le makhosi yokuthi xa ndichamayo suka kugqatse umchamo de ube ngathi awufuni kuphuma, iinyawo zibe nenkantsi, ndisuke ndifune ukutyhafa apha emzimbeni xa uwonke?*

**NKALA:** *Phosa ngasemva gqirha! Camagu makhosi!*

**MPANGELE:** *Camagu bahlekaz' abahle! Camagu makhos' amakhulu!*

*Njalo njalo.*

### **ENGLISH**

**MPANGELE:** Peace be with you, you Sires of good reputation. You people from the Dlomo and from the Mpangele clan, The Mshicikazi and the Mvinjwa multitudes! Honourable Hlubi ancestors! Your client the present victim here is from the Nkala, Mphandana, Thiyane and Vumisa clan. He wants your help you honourable and renowned men because he is sick. We of the Mpangele house plead with you great and honourable ancestors to pave the way and to obliterate all forms of darkness in favour of light. Do I make myself clear you Dlomo ancestors?

(After their response which may only be heard by the diviner, they begin to guide him and he subsequently transmits the information to the client)

We the Dlomo great men notice a severe headache above the eyebrows with a tendency to have a splitting feeling on the top of the skull. I experience sleepless nights because of a sharp pain in the vicinity of the flank. The pain circulates inside and moves like a ball to the lower cartilaginous part of the breast bone where it causes palpitations. (He pauses and waits for a response from the client).

**NKALA:** So far so good doctor.

**MPANGELE:** Why is it that when I pass water I experience a burning sensation, a nervous feeling on my arms and a weak body?

**NKALA:** That is correct.

**MPANGELE:** Thank you great Sires, thank you honourable people.

And so on).

It should be noted that this dialogue is not quite complete. Secondly the diviner at times uses a first person approach in his exposition of his findings as if he personifies the patient. This is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in the field of divination by most diviners. Even though the divination in this passage is not altogether complete, yet in reality it reaches a point where the ancestral spirits bring a solution through the diviner to the plight of the patient by suggesting steps he should take, the type of potion or medicine he should use. If the complaint emanates from his neglect of his own ancestral spirits, he is duly advised to appease them by either slaughtering an animal or brewing some beer on their behalf.

The language of *amagqirha* (5/6) is also important in interpreting messages of the ancestors who appear in the dreams, visitations and strange appearances of the totems. When ordinary people experience these strange dreams and totem visitations, they normally appeal to *amagqirha* for guidance and clarification. They will then explain everything in clear and precise language and will also be ready to assist in all operations involving totems.

Besides the operating language used during divination, *amagqirha* make use of beads



not only as a means of communicating directly with the ancestral spirits, but also as a vehicle for showing reverence to them particularly in times of divination. The strategy used during the divination process is the spoken language which is used to invoke and to worship their ancestors and the wearing of beads which are themselves taken as items of attire associated with the reverence of ancestors.

Ndoda Maphini, one of the researcher's informants explains aptly that a diviner is never allowed to take messages, send messages, or accept the responsibility of undertaking to do divination work without dressing up properly for the task. This state of readiness is itself a form of symbolic language which is readily understood by the ancestors. They differentiate the diviner from other ordinary people by the type of bead he is wearing. His form of "stethoscope" is:

A two string traditional white bead known as *intsimbi emhlophe* which is a divine instrument coiled around the head and allowed to flow down the face like a veil made of strings known as *isiyaca* (7/8). A second pair of white and blue strings goes round the shoulders down to under armpits (one white ring goes over the right shoulder down under the left armpit and the blue string takes the left shoulder and goes down the right armpit). A third item, the *umbhaco* (3/4) is made of white beads with a black braiding at the bottom. White bead strings are worn around the wrists (one on each arm) and the two white ones are worn round the ankles (one on each leg).

When *amagqirha* are gathered in their dance party, they also wear these beads all over the body when they are in a state of worshipping their ancestors. Their power of communication is said to be extremely high because of their speciality in the art of ancestor worship which is motivated by dance, rhythm and music.

Joan Broster (1981:18) in emphasising the role played by the ancestors in ameliorating the work of *amagqirha* and people in general, mentions that:

The ancestral spirits communicate both with one another and with the living in this world. Wrong behaviour in their descendants shames the

ancestral spirits for it reflects badly on the moral and disciplinary powers. Just as a father is responsible for the good behaviour of his children, so the ancestral spirits must ensure that their families behave in a manner pleasing to God. Hence they have a rigid and despotic code of morality; a code which although it includes misfortune, disease and even death, nevertheless implies love and guardianship. Their discipline is a function of love itself and is regarded as normal parental control.

## 10.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher needs to point out the great significance of the *amagqirha* language on the life experiences of the people. Firstly, it is directed at the *gqirha's* own ancestors whose help and assistance he invokes during divination. He uses an element of *imbeko* which is a replica of *hlonipha*. In a way, *amagqirha* do not deviate from the normal course of *hlonipha* followed by ordinary people in the community. Secondly, *amagqirha* also pay tribute to the ancestors of the people they are dealing with during divination. They use as many *iziduko* as possible to ask for their co-operation in their attempt to solve their clients' health and personal problems.

Sometimes they also assist their clients when they embark upon their rituals for example *ukuguqulwa kwezinyanya* (the appeasement of ancestors). They use their own language to draw the angry ancestors' attention, to comfort them and to appease them. In this way they teach the people to imitate them when dealing with any problem affecting ancestors whom they must always remember to *hlonipha* and emulate. This, therefore, makes the contribution of *amagqirha* to the concept of *hlonipha* a great one.

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSION

From the discussions that have been experienced thus far, it could be surmised that *Isihlonipho among amaXhosa* is more than just a moral practice, it is a philosophy of life. It is a strong component of the Xhosa social fabric. The concept is built around the language of *Hlonipha* which is the epitome of any *hlonipha* custom anywhere in Africa. Therefore, it could be conclusively said that the *hlonipha* practice for many years to come will prevail among the Xhosas.

#### 11.1 Consequences

After studying such aspects as social life, traditional culture, religion and religious shrines and places whose cultural importance was based on the *hlonipha* philosophy; the observance of circumcision custom; the use of *hlonipha* language by *abakhwetha* and newly married women (*oomakoti*); the significance and validity of the *hlonipha* culture during the period before the arrival of western civilisation, industrialisation and spread of Christianity in South Africa; the noticeable cultural transformation up to the time of the advent of democracy and its negative influence after the country had obtained its political independence in 1994, and many others, one is inclined to conclude that , after considering the affectation by change of the cultural aspects reflected in this study, the basic principle of *hlonipha*, which underlies the fundamental tenets of the cultural life of the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape, was indeed a viable and valuable instrument for sustaining and preserving their culture.

Zolisa Ndlumbini who was one amongst many other people asked to comment on the effect of cultural changes on the principle of *hlonipha* in general, has this to say:

The values and norms of the Xhosa society have been substantially

eroded as a result of the dilution and subsequent abandonment of the principle of *hlonipha* which is a strong element of the culture of amaXhosa. The Xhosa people have always nurtured and valued the principle of respecting the old and the aged as reflected in their basic cultural training (see 2.2). It is shocking these days to observe the new generation of children displaying blatant disrespect and arrogance towards seniority and old age. There is, because of the erosion of the *hlonipha* custom today, a great tendency for children not only to reject authority, but also to abuse it. A single incident amongst many may be cited as an example of a case where in the 1980's a certain Mr. Jarha, who was the Principal of Imingcangatelo High School in Gqumahashe, Alice, was stoned to death by his students who rebelled against his authority because he was a strict disciplinarian and he believed in maintaining law, discipline and order.

Such cases as quoted by Ndlumbini were common also among certain teacher organisations which abused certain Departmental officers. For example in the Transkei in 1992 a certain teacher organisation marched to the offices of the then Department of Education and demanded that the then Minister of Education, resign. The chaos which ensued compelled the Department to ask for police intervention.

In another instance a group of Transkei COSAS (Congress for South African Students) boys stormed into the offices of the Director General of the same Department and harassed him for refusing to bow down to the so-called COSA's demands. This action which was, indeed, too ghastly to contemplate, was unprecedented in the history of the education system of that state as it was not commensurate with the norms of African culture for children to harass and harangue a high authority in the Education Department which was composed of officers who were as old if not older than their fathers.

Such a state of affairs has been brought to the notice of the Government of the Eastern Cape. In the Daily Dispatch of February 19, 2000, it came out in the Bisho Legislative Assembly during the debate on education in the Eastern Cape that:

There was clear evidence of a breakdown in discipline at schools by both teachers and learners. Speakers in the Provincial Legislature

warned during the debate on education here. Education standing chairman Sonwabile Mangcotywa, who had visited a number of schools in the Province, spoke of a high absentee rate and a lack of respect for authority.

The political activities in South Africa over the past few years prior to independence and introduction of democracy, have brought a chain of events where young people vociferously, unashamedly and uncontrollably vented their anger and political frustrations on Black adults whom they regarded as collaborators with the then unwanted Nationalist Government by stoning them, torching them, necklacing them, robbing them, vilifying them, ill-treating them, and destroying their property and self esteem. In a normal, cultural and stable society, such ugly actions were never heard of even if differences of opinion existed between the young and the old. This was indeed a blatant and naked violation of the *hlonipha* principle.

The audio-visual, auditory and printed media in South Africa has, for many years, indirectly played a destructive role on the morale of our young people by portraying elements of perverted foreign culture which have been and are still being imitated, emulated and copied by the youth of South Africa including the Eastern Cape. This is done at the expence of *hlonipha* culture. For example the entertainment films screened on television these days play a devastating role of scrapping every semblance of *hlonipha* that is still remaining in African culture.

Andile Maxham, one of the researcher's informants from Alice, commenting on the subject of moral degradation in general, maintains that:

In this modern era *hlonipha* has dwindled to such an extent that it is difficult to note and verify the moral segmentation between the old and the young. The Xhosa society, in particular the indigenous one, has a strong belief in the respect of the adult people by the young because of their wisdom, experience and also knowledge of their indigenous culture. But in this modern society which is devoid of *hlonipha*, all people are presumed equal. The equality principle as embedded in the Constitution of the country seems to militate against the *hlonipha* custom which is also embedded in the AmaXhosa culture as it is

understood and interpreted by the people. This manifests itself in the family relations where the daughters-in-law (*oomolokazana*) do not show any inclination to respect their mothers-in-law (*oonina-zala*). They have a tendency to argue that they cannot take instructions from them because they are married to the same family and the conditions of their marriage are the same. Therefore they say “*size ngeenkomo nabo*” (we both got married through the lobola system.)

According to Maxham, the element of respect in the past was applied to every home in the village, particularly those of the people with certain status. That helped to control crimes such as theft, destruction of property, robbery, rape and many others. To show that respect was a moral obligation for everybody, homes were left unlocked without any fear of tampering; women were left to run their own affairs and homes without any fear of disturbance by intruders; and children moved about without fear of assault or harassment. All this was happening because of the prevailing *hlonipha* atmosphere. But at present things are different. Most people today regard cultural traditions which include *hlonipha* customary practices as outdated and therefore not worthy of emulating. Hence children are molested; women are raped and people's property is vandalised.

Although the Government of the Province of the Eastern Cape has created the Department of Arts and Culture, yet the machinery and the staff that run it do not address the aspect of *hlonipha* per se which is a fundamental principle and element of the culture of the nation. They merely concentrate on the physical and ceremonial aspects of the culture and hardly ever address the moral aspect of it. As a result our society is wriggling under the pain and scourge of:

- \* The rape of our women particularly the elderly and the children:
- \* The assault, abuse, denigration, humiliation, and ill-treatment of the grown ups by the young.
- \* The corruption shown by indulging in sexual relations between adult people and children - a gruesome indication of a lack of *hlonipha* ethics and respect for children.

- \* The abusive manner in which some children address the adults at home and in public. This needs to be addressed through tuition on *hlonipha* ethics.

As political authority in the past was mostly vested in kings, chiefs and headmen, respect of such authority was shown not only by publicly saluting the king, chief or headman at every occasion where they were officiating, but also whenever a subject met any of these authorities. Besides these occasions it was incumbent upon the subject to salute whenever he or she went past the residence of any of the higher authorities.

Today there is less or no inclination to show such respect to the present day kings or chiefs. Instead, more attention and more respect are being paid to the modern political leaders and politicians who are reputed for having brought democracy into South Africa. The huge turn ups at their rallies, the political songs of emulation sung to them, and slogans written to recognise their leadership - all these are signs meant to indicate the amount of *hlonipha* they have towards them.

The abandonment of *hlonipha* culture amongst amaXhosa today, has, on the whole brought about moral degeneration, erosion of cultural norms and values and emergence of a new society which is amenable to crime. Unless steps are taken to retrieve those lost values which have remained, from time immemorial, the strong pillars of the culture of this nation, there is fear that the future of the Black culture is at stake. It is also clear that the miscegenation of cultures in South Africa has also played a major role in devaluing our cultural and *hlonipha* norms.

Khayakhulu Mbandazayo, one of the researcher's informants from Sawutana, Tholeni, Butterworth reflects on the noticeable occurrence of a remarkable shift from traditional *hlonipha* practices of the past to the modern status quo by saying the following:

That it is common for young girls who are engaged to be married to start cohabiting with their fiances at their homes even before they actually get married and even though they are still staying with their parents. That is, according to African culture, a blatant violation of *hlonipha* ethics, for, the would be *makotis* are supposed to respect their future-in-laws by staying away from them. Similarly, the parents are not supposed to encourage such cohabitation practices. The dramatic changes in the culture of the Black people have brought about, among other things, homosexuality which was not known in the Xhosa indigenous culture before. Indigenous people respected the natural practice of sexual relationship between opposite sexes and regarded it as the law of Qamata (God) which prescribed the natural mode of procreation. Homosexuality was and is still regarded by the indigenous section of our people as a mean and perverted expression of sexual instinct. In indigenous culture it is even associated with witchcraft. People who do such a practice are viewed with suspicion and are regarded as violators of the *hlonipha* culture.

According to Mbandazayo the political transformation in South Africa and the Eastern Cape has taught the Black youth to be confrontational. Once they indulge in strikes or protests, they get into a state of frenzy as they push their political, economic and personal demands. They exhibit an alarming lack of respect towards authority, parents, employers and any other respectful personnel.

The concept of *lobola* which was in the past a very important element of Black culture and which automatically gave to a woman a status and a semblance of respect for her to be chosen amongst many and honoured by the payment of *lobola* on her behalf, has nowadays lost its value to certain youth, and to the detribalised and modernised section of the people. They regard it as a commercial venture instead of taking it as a well respected cultural norm. They even forget that it has the backing of ancestors.

The concept of circumcision as a principle, cultural practice and custom, is no more given the same respect and value by the youth of today as it was given in the past. Hence the calibre of the young men who emerge out of circumcision schools these days is subject to criticism because of their strange and unseemly behavioural patterns.



Pregnancy among young girls today has become rife and common because of over-indulgence in sexual activities by these girls even at a very young and tender age. In the past sex was taboo for women before marriage because the virginity of a woman was highly respected especially amongst the indigenous group. No vaginal penetration was allowed and encouraged even to those who ventured to have sex. But the youth of today respect no sexual boundaries like those of the past who valued any form of cultural restrictions. As a result, the rape of children and older women which is common today, was unknown.

### 11.2 General recommendations

During the conducting of research for this thesis, all the people interviewed expressed a common feeling with regard to the problem of moral and cultural degeneration which was brought about in our modern society as a result of loss of *hlonipha* ethics. In attempting to seek a solution to what they termed a national problem, they were unanimous in recommending that the Xhosa nation should look back to its roots, examine them and see if it cannot retrieve those lost cultural values which it can use for its future posterity.

Some of the values yearned for would be the following; general respect; family co-ordination based on cultural norms; recognition of seniority by the young; recognition of human rights but with provision for the respect of men by women and vice versa. This to act as a basis for solid marriages; respect for property - and many more.

Hlangula Makhasi, one of the researcher's informants from Cape Town, recommended that:

The child should carry and abide by family traditions and values so that wherever he meets any cultural impediments and obstacles, he should always refer to his original values, norms and traditions for a guide. The cultural boundaries between the old and the young must be

maintained so that our children should learn at an early age how to respect those certain moral boundaries he cannot cross. Whatever is deemed by the parent to be right should be respected by the child. Although the views and rights of the child should not be ignored, yet the child should abide by the final say of the parent.

On boundaries, Gitywa (1978 :16 (1)) says:

When we use symbols (either verbal or non-verbal) to distinguish one class of things or actions from another, we are creating artificial boundaries in a field which is 'naturally' continuous.

Edmand Leach: (1976 : 33) as cited by Gitywa claims that:

The natural continuity in our context is expressed by the fact that daughter-in-law and relatives -in-law were members of the same community prior to marriage, and governed by a different set of relationships which did not emphasise so strongly the setting apart of the two parties. With marriage, however, the need has arisen for redefining these relationships by the reation of artificial boundaries between, for example, daughter-in-law and relatives -in-law. The same principle may apply in the case of children versus their parents.

Makhasi expressed his staunch belief in a man believing in himself as a man.

His manhood should be illustrated by his determination to respect himself, to follow his customs and traditions for the sake of pandering to the demands of his society. A man has to shoulder the responsibility of looking well after his family, of knowing and doing his duties towards all the members of his family. This should also be the responsiblity of the wife towards her husband, her children and her immediate family which should include the father-in-law, the mother-in-law and other in-laws. In that way both will be satisfying the demands of the *hlonipha* principle.

Biko (1978 : 108) on the theme of manhood has this to say in one of his essays on Black Consciousness and the quest for a true humanity:

Hence thinking along the lines of Black Consciousness makes the black man see himself as a being complete in himself. It makes him less dependent and more free to express his manhood. At the end of it all he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of

manhood.

Christianity which is known for undermining the cultural practices of the black people, should be accepted within the context of African culture. While it is operating among those people who accepted it as their religion, it should accept those values and traditions which are based on *hlonipha*. These are such values as *ukubuyiswa komninimzi* (bringing back of the family head), *ukukhatshwa komninimzi* (the sending off ceremony) and any other cultural activity which is purported to *hlonipha* the ancestors. In one way this should be aimed at showing the importance of merging the two religions together viz the Christian and traditional religions so as not to allow one kind of religion to dominate the other.

The chastisement of children by parents should be maintained without violating the children's rights as propounded in the South African Constitution. As indigenous parents of the past believed in the maxim -'spare the rod and spoil the child', children were chastised when they went wrong. This chastisement went along with the teaching of the *hlonipha* principles and ethics - hence respect became the fundamental principle in a Xhosa culture. It could not be compromised for anything.

Educationists approached during the research felt that the school curriculum on arts and culture should be reviewed to make provision for the teaching, maintenance and practice of respect in all levels of society. In that way, curriculum designers will be paying lip service to the moral aspect of our culture which has become eroded.

In the Eastern Cape despite the multi-cultural situation which has come about as a result of the miscegenation of races, languages and different cultures, it is incumbent upon the Xhosa children to stick to the requirements and demands of their own Xhosa culture as much as possible despite what is happening around them. This can be achieved if the children respect the cultural teachings offered by their parents at home.

At the same time it is necessary and important to respect the cultures of other people

which must be allowed to flourish without being undermined. Interfering with them and denigrating them would be tantamount to showing no respect to them and this would not be in conformity with the spirit of the Constitution.

The media must be involved to highlight those areas and elements whose objectives are to help resuscitate the waning values and norms and build the culture of the people.

According to Mbheki (1998 : 261-262):

It is estimated that roughly 30% of all cases of violence reported to the South African Police Services are domestic in nature. One out of every four women is either physically, emotionally or sexually abused by her male partner. An average of 15000 cases of child abuse is reported to the Child Protection Unit of the S.A.P.S every year. This scale of violence and abuse against women and children demands that we give full appreciation to the fact that this form of oppression which is devoid of cultural respect for women folk is a human cancer which affects all sectors and all levels of society. As a result, the struggle against women oppression and child abuse should be situated within the broader struggle for political, constitutional, social, cultural and economic emancipation. In order to fully exorcise the body of society of this cancer, it is important to address political, constitutional, social, cultural and economic conditions which give rise to this disease. On a broader perspective Mbheki says in his emphasis: 'We are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding an accelerated as well as sustainable social, economic and cultural renaissance'.

It is clear from the comments made by all informants interviewed during this research and the references consulted, that the erosion of our indigenous culture by the dynamic forces of change, resulting in the transition, dilution and annihilation of the *hlonipha* cultural principle, has had a profound effect and negative impact on the cultural lives of the present generation. One cannot, therefore, over-emphasise the need to join forces with those who champion social, economic and cultural renaissance as a means of cultural survival.

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## APPENDIX

### (a) CORE VOCABULARY IN RESPECT OF *ISIHLOLONIPHO* SABAFAZI

#### (i) HUMAN BODY PARTS

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		ENGLISH
iinkcumbuso	(9/10)	<i>iindlebe</i>	(9/10)	ears
ityhontsi	(9/10)	<i>intloko</i>	(9/10)	head
amalozelo	(6)	<i>amehlo</i>	(6)	eyes
amagabuko	(6)	<i>amehlo</i>	(6)	eyes
iminawuka	(4)	<i>imilenze</i>	(4)	legs
iminabelo	(4)	<i>imilenze</i>	(4)	legs
umnabo	(3/4)	<i>umlenze</i>	(3/4)	leg
inkxubula	(9/10)	<i>unyawo</i>	(1/10)	foot
iphoba	(5/6)	<i>intloko</i>	(9/10)	head
umnakazo	(3/4)	<i>ingalo</i>	(9/10)	arm
isinyamba	(7/8)	<i>isifuba</i>	(7/8)	chest
ikruqelo	(5/6)	<i>idolo</i>	(5/6)	knee
amanyiso	(6)	<i>amabele</i>	(5/6)	breasts
intshicila	(9/10)	<i>intamo</i>	(9/10)	neck
ubugabuko	(14)	<i>ubuso</i>	(14)	face

#### (ii) ANIMALS AND BIRDS

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		ENGLISH
ibetha	(9/10)	<i>inja</i>	(9/10)	dog
ikhanka	(9/10)	<i>inja</i>	(9/10)	dog
itsokhwe	(9/10)	<i>ibhokhwe</i>	(9/10)	goat
isikapu	(7/8)	<i>igusha</i>	(9/10)	sheep

itatanqu	(5/6)	<i>ihashe</i>	(5/6)	horse
ixhesha	(5/6)	<i>ihashe</i>	(5/6)	horse
igqeku	(5/6)	<i>ithole</i>	(5/6)	calf
ihuko	(1/6)	<i>ithole</i>	(5/6)	calf
inombe	(9/10)	<i>inkomo</i>	(9/10)	cow
imethu	(9/10)	<i>inkomo</i>	(9/10)	cow
iphala	(5/6)	<i>ihashe</i>	(5/6)	horse
iqhajana	(5/6)	<i>ikati</i>	(9/10)	cat
ingulube	(9/10)	<i>ihagu</i>	(9/10)	pig
ityiphu	(9/10)	<i>inkuku</i>	(9/10)	fowl

(iii) PEOPLE

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
incentisa	(5/6)	<i>indoda</i>	(5/6)	man
ityhagi	(5/6)	<i>inkhwenkwe</i>	(5/6)	boy
umnyatheli	(1/2)	<i>umntu</i>	(1/2)	person
umndyu	(1/2)	<i>umntu</i>	(1/2)	person
undyilikida	(5/6)	<i>ipolisa</i>	(5/6)	policeman
isatlani	(5/6)	<i>ipolisa</i>	(5/6)	policeman
igilikida	(5/6)	<i>ipolisa</i>	(5/6)	policeman
indyombi	(9/10)	<i>intombi</i>	(9/10)	girl
intsonta	(9/10)	<i>intombi</i>	(9/10)	girl
inikazi	(9/10)	<i>intombi</i>	(9/10)	girl
umNyepha	(1/2)	<i>umLungu</i>	(1/2)	White man
utyirha	(a/2a)	<i>ugqirha</i>	(1a/2a)	doctor
ikhitha	(5/6)	<i>ixhego</i>	(5/6)	old man
ikhithakazi	(5/6)	<i>ixhegokazi</i>	(5/6)	old lady
ityubuka	(9/10)	<i>usana</i>	(11/10)	baby

(iv) AGRICULTURAL IMPLIMENTS AND PRODUCTS

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
ubunameka	(14)	<i>ubulongo</i>	(14)	cow dung
ikhuthulo	(5/6)	<i>igaba</i>	(5/6)	hoe
ibuwa	(5/6)	<i>intsimi</i>	(5/6)	land
umtampo	(3/4)	<i>umngqusho</i>	(3/4)	samp
igwegwe	(9/10)	<i>irhengqe</i>	(9/10)	sickle
intusi	(9/10)	<i>ubisi</i>	(15)	milk
uhlaza	(11)	<i>ubisi</i>	(11)	milk
amakrola	(6)	<i>amasi</i>	(6)	sour milk
umshuqwa	(3/4)	<i>umgquba</i>	(3/4)	manure
ukuhuka	(15)	<i>ukusenga</i>	(15)	to milk
ukunyakula	(15)	<i>ukutya</i>	(15)	food
igabada	(5/6)	<i>ithanga</i>	(5/6)	pumpkin
iintlumayo	(9/10)	<i>imbotyi</i>	(9/10)	beans
izambane	(5/6)	<i>itapile</i>	(9/10)	potato
ihlongozo	(5/6)	<i>iqanda</i>	(9/10)	egg
umolokhwe	(1/2a)	<i>usolontsi</i>	(1/2a)	pumpkin
utiya	(1/2a)	<i>umbona</i>	(1/2a)	mealies
intyabontyi	(9/10)	<i>umxoxozi</i>	(9/10)	water-melon

(v) CLOTHES, SHOES AND BLANKETS

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
idukhwe	(9/10)	<i>iqhiya</i>	(9/10)	head cover
isondwana	(5/6)	<i>iqhiya</i>	(9/10)	head cover
intyatha	(9/10)	<i>ingubo</i>	(9/10)	blanket
isicathulo	(7/8)	<i>isihlangu</i>	(7/8)	shoe
ithekelezo	(5/6)	<i>iqhina</i>	(5/6)	tie

ikhwilintya	(9/10)	<i>ibhulukhwe</i>	(9/10)	trousers
iwayi	(5/6)	<i>ibhayi</i>	(5/6)	cotton-blanket
umphawulo	(3/4)	<i>umbhaco</i>	(3/4)	traditional skirt

(vi) HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, UTENSILS, DUTIES AND CONSUMABLES

<b>HLONIPHA</b>		<b>XHOSA</b>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
ukukhwica	(15)	<i>ukusinda</i>	(15)	to smear
ukunameka	(15)	<i>ukusinda</i>	(15)	to smear
isawuti	(9/10)	<i>ityiwa</i>	(9/10)	salt
ukuqoba	(15)	<i>ukugraya</i>	(9/10)	to grind
inteleko	(9/10)	<i>imbiza</i>	(9/10)	pot
isimundelo	(7/8)	<i>isitya</i>	(7/8)	dish
iwaku	(5/6)	<i>icephe</i>	(5/6)	spoon
igxabelo	(5/6)	<i>izembe</i>	(5/6)	axe
inqamlo	(5/6)	<i>izembe</i>	(5/6)	axe
isikhanyiso	(7/8)	<i>isibane</i>	(7/8)	lamp
isisilelo	(7/8)	<i>isithebe</i>	(7/8)	mat
isika	(9/10)	<i>imela</i>	(9/10)	knife
ihabathi	(9/10)	<i>imela</i>	(9/10)	knife
ikomululeko	(9/10)	<i>ikomityi</i>	(9/10)	cup
ifayiqhiya	(9/10)	<i>ifayidukhwe</i>	(9/10)	dish-towel
ukubhicika	(15)	<i>ukucoca</i>	(15)	to clean
umkhanyiso	(3/4)	<i>imatshisi</i>	(9/10)	matches
imuncu	(9/10)	<i>ityiwa</i>	(9/10)	salt
isiqhusheko	(7/8)	<i>isonka</i>	(7/8)	bread
iwekethe	(9/10)	<i>iswekile</i>	(9/10)	sugar
intlabathi	(9/10)	<i>iswekile</i>	(9/10)	sugar
amagqabi	(6)	<i>iti</i>	(9/10)	tea
impungo	(9/10)	<i>ikofu</i>	(9/10)	coffee

umolulo	(14)	<i>utywala</i>	(14)	beer
umbaso	(3/4)	<i>umlilo</i>	(3/4)	fire
idyekile	(9/10)	<i>ibhekile</i>	(9/10)	tin-
inyakulo	(5/6)	<i>icephe</i>	(5/6)	spoon
indywilo	(9/10)	<i>inqawa</i>	(9/10)	pipe
ukutheleka	(15)	<i>ukupheka</i>	(15)	cook

(vii) GEOGRAPHICAL ITEMS AND CONDITIONS

<i><b>HLONIPHA</b></i>		<i><b>XHOSA</b></i>		<i><b>ENGLISH</b></i>
iluleko	(5/6)	<i>ilitye</i>	(5/6)	stone
imvotho	(9/10)	<i>amanzi</i>	(6)	water
amayila	(6)	<i>amanzi</i>	(6)	water
kumweke	(qual.)	<i>kumhlophe</i>	(qual.)	it is light
ukuzongoma	(15)	<i>ukududuma</i>	(15)	thunder
amakhazi	(6)	<i>ingqe</i>	(9/10)	cold
kumakhaza	(qual.)	<i>kuyabanda</i>	(qual.)	it is chilly
umgade	(3/4)	<i>umhlaba</i>	(3/4)	earth
ingethe	(5/6)	<i>ihlathi</i>	(5/6)	forest
impambuko	(9/10)	<i>indlela</i>	(9/10)	road
kumkhaca	(qual.)	<i>kumnyama</i>	(qual.)	it is dark
imfipha	(qual.)	<i>imnyama</i>	(qual.)	it is black
kunkiphala	(qual.)	<i>kumnyama</i>	(qual.)	it is dark
amanunga	(6)	<i>amanzi</i>	(6)	water
imango	(9/10)	<i>indawo</i>	(9/10)	place
umtyanti	(3/4)	<i>umzi</i>	(3/4)	home-stead
umbanti	(3/4)	<i>umzi</i>	(3/4)	home-stead
inkumba	(9/10)	<i>indlu</i>	(9/10)	house
isibane	(7/8)	<i>ilanga</i>	(5/6)	sun
umgaqo	(3/4)	<i>indlela</i>	(9/10)	road

ihloma	(5/6)	<i>izulu</i>	(5/6)	weather
inkwezi	(9/10)	<i>inyanga</i>	(9/10)	moon
ethameni	(adv.)	<i>phandle</i>	(adv.)	outside
intshiza	(9/10)	<i>imvula</i>	(9/10)	rain
inetha	(9/10)	<i>imvula</i>	(9/10)	rain

(viii) MISCELLANEOUS

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
ukuloza	(15)	<i>ukubona</i>	(15)	to see
amabiyo	(5/6)	<i>amahlahla</i>	(5/6)	dry wood
umqolo	(3/4)	<i>umdeko wendlu</i>	(3/4)	eaves
ngxathu	(qual.)	<i>mbi</i>	(qual.)	ugly
ekugabukeni	(adv.)	<i>ekuseni</i>	(qual.)	at dawn
intshicelo	(9/10)	<i>intambo yendlu</i>	(9/10)	string
ukuphuza	(15)	<i>ukusela</i>	(15)	to drink
inene	(9/10)	<i>inyani</i>	(9/10)	truth
imheya	(9/10)	<i>inyama</i>	(9/10)	meat
ukunawuka	(15)	<i>ukuhamba</i>	(15)	to walk
ubutywa	(qual.)	<i>mhle</i>	(qualif.)	beautiful
ishi	(9/10)	<i>into</i>	(9/10)	thing
elokwana	(qual.)	<i>encinci</i>	(qual.)	small
iyholo	(adv.)	<i>izolo</i>	(adv.)	yesterday
kunyhahla	(qual.)	<i>kudala</i>	(qual.)	it is old
ukutyatyamba	(15)	<i>ukuqaqamba</i>	(15)	painful
uku-ela	(15)	<i>ukuxela</i>	(15)	to tell
ukunoboka	(15)	<i>ukufa</i>	(15)	to die
ukunyambela	(15)	<i>ukufaka</i>	(15)	to push in
ishwelo	(9/10)	<i>inqwelo</i>	(9/10)	wagon
uku-ina	(15)	<i>ukuqina</i>	(15)	to be strong



uku-ondela	(15)	<i>ukusondela</i>	(15)	to come close
ukusinya	(15)	<i>ukuphela</i>	(15)	to get finished

(b) **CORE VOCABULARY IN RESPECT OF ISIHILONIPHA SABAKHWETHA**

<i>HLONIPHA</i>		<i>XHOSA</i>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
izagweba	(7/8)	<i>umbona</i>	(1/2a)	mealies
iinjima	(9/10)	<i>iinkomo</i>	(9/10)	cattle
amacam	(6)	<i>amanzi</i>	(6)	water
idada	(5/6)	<i>icephe</i>	(6)	spoon
ingokra	(9/10)	<i>icephe</i>	(5/6)	traditional spoon
iintsedeba	(9/10)	<i>iinkobe</i>	(9/10)	cooked grain
iqhele	(5/6)	<i>ithole</i>	(5/6)	calf
isigqwathi	(7/8)	<i>umfazi</i>	(1/2)	woman
inqalathi	(5/6)	<i>inkwenkwe</i>	(5/6)	boy
ibhengetha	(9/10)	<i>inkwenkwe</i>	(9/6)	boy
ingema	(9/10)	<i>intombi</i>	(9/10)	girl
itshiki	(9/10)	<i>intombi</i>	(9/10)	girl
ityubuka	(5/6)	<i>iselwa</i>	(5/6)	calabash
izingqwashu	(7/8)	<i>iingubo</i>	(9/10)	blankets
amarhola	(6)	<i>amasi</i>	(6)	sour milk
umkhatha	(3/4)	<i>umhlambi</i>	(3/4)	dancing kilt
ikhanka	(9/10)	<i>inja</i>	(9/10)	dog

SOME *IHLONIPHA* WORDS EXTRACTED FROM BONGELA'S MANUSCRIPT  
TITLED '*INGQONGOTYI*'

<i><b>HLONIPHA</b></i>		<i><b>XHOSA</b></i>		<i><b>ENGLISH</b></i>
ikota	(9/10)	<i>ingceke</i>	(9/10)	white ochre
ukukota	(15)	<i>ukungceka</i>	(15)	to whiten body
isikhafulo	(7/8)	<i>ukutya</i>	(15)	food
ukucathula	(5)	<i>ukuhamba</i>	(15)	to walk
isirhuza	(7/8)	<i>inyama</i>	(9/10)	meat
umshengethe	(3/4)	<i>umoya</i>	(3/4)	wind
umnyenye	(3/4)	<i>umlilo</i>	(3/4)	fire
ibhotwe	(5/6)	<i>imbiza</i>	(9/10)	pot
umaquthwana	(1/2a)	<i>ikati</i>	(9/10)	cat
iinoyi	(9/10)	<i>iimboty</i>	(9/10)	beans
isidwashu	(7/8)	<i>ingubo</i>	(9/10)	k h w e t h a blanket
umdlanga	(3/4)	<i>umkhonto</i>	(3/4)	spear
ikrali	(9/10)	<i>intonga</i>	(9/10)	stick
uvundu	(11)	<i>uthuthu</i>	(11)	ash
imbelu	(9/10)	<i>umkhwetha</i>	(1/2)	circumcised boy
umzimela	(3/4)	<i>umkhwetha</i>	(1/2)	circumcised boy
ibhoma	(5/6)	<i>ithonto</i>	(5/6)	khwetha hut
incentsa	(5/6)	<i>indoda</i>	(5/6)	man
isinyenye	(7/8)	<i>isilonda</i>	(7/8)	sore
icobelo	(5/6)	<i>igazi</i>	(5/6)	blood
ibheyile	(5/6)	<i>izembe</i>	(5/6)	axe
ingqondela	(9/10)	<i>igusha</i>	(9/10)	sheep
isikhafu	(7/8)	<i>ukutya</i>	(15)	food

imbuzi	(9/10)	<i>ibhokhwe</i>	(9/10)	goat
iganta	(5/6)	<i>izembe</i>	(5/6)	axe
ukugcaka	(15)	<i>ukutya</i>	(15)	to eat
ukudumisa	(15)	<i>ukugezula</i>	(15)	to roar
ukudumisa	(15)	<i>ukuggezula</i>	(15)	to roar
isitshetshe	(7/8)	<i>imela</i>	(9/10)	knife

#### OTHERS PROVIDED BY GENERAL CLIENTS

<b>HLONIPHA</b>		<b>XHOSA</b>		<b>ENGLISH</b>
abanawuki	(1/2)	<i>abantu</i>	(1/2)	people
ukutsitha	(15)	<i>ukubetha</i>	(15)	to strike/hit
umbhudo	(1/2)	<i>ubusuku</i>	(15)	the night
umtsibane	(1/2)	<i>umfana</i>	(1/2)	a young man
igqagala	(5/6)	<i>ibhekile</i>	(9/10)	a can
ukungcefa	(15)	<i>ukutya</i>	(15)	to eat
ukubhoda	(15)	<i>ukupheka</i>	(15)	to cook
imfoza	(9/10)	<i>ingca</i>	(9/10)	grass
amagwijo	(5/6)	<i>iintswazi</i>	(11/10)	switches
isibhabham	(7/8)	<i>inkuku</i>	(9/10)	fowl
impaphele	(9/10)	<i>inkuku</i>	(9/10)	fowl
ityubuka	(1a/2a)	<i>umntwana</i>	(1/2)	child
olutyaya	(qual.)	<i>omncinane</i>	(qual.)	small
isamkelo	(7/8)	<i>isandla</i>	(7/8)	hand
omtyinzi	(qual.)	<i>omninzi</i>	(qual.)	many/much
incamazana	(9/10)	<i>intaka</i>	(9/10)	bird
ukusinya	(15)	<i>ukuphela</i>	(15)	to get finished