

**WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY
IN LESOTHO:**

A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY

ETHEL LEA 'M'AJONATHANE MOLAPO

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A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY**

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family

My husband, Seeiso

My grandchild, Mosa Naledi

*My five children, Jonathan, 'M'amosa, Theko David
And Ntšeke Jonathan*

My mother, 'M'a Lea

DECLARATION

I, Ethel Lea 'M'ajonathane Molapo, declare that the thesis hereby submitted is my own independent work and that it has not been previously submitted by me or anyone else for evaluation at any other university, faculty or department. I furthermore cede copyright of the thesis in favour of the University of the Free State.

E.L.M. Molapo

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ACL	Anglican Church of Lesotho
ACHPR	The African Charter on Human and peoples' rights
AU	African Unity
BAC	Basutoland African Congress
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BG	Basutoland Government
BNP	Basotho National Party
CBS	Central Bank of Lesotho
CDP	Congress Democratic Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the child
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FAWU	Factory's Workers' Union
FIDA	Federation International De Abogadas (International Federation of Women Lawyers)
HIV	Human Immune Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IPA	Interim Political Authority
KBP	Kopanang Basotho Party
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
LEP	Lesotho Education Party
LHDA	Lesotho Highlands Development Authority
LG	Lesotho Government
LWP	Lesotho Worker's Party
LLP/UD	Lesotho Labour Party/United Democratic Party
LLRC	Lesotho Law Reform Commission
LNCW	Lesotho National Council of Women
LPC	Lesotho Peoples Congress
LPPA	Lesotho Planned Parental Association
MFP	Marema Tlou Freedom Party
MGYS	Ministry of Gender Youth and Sports
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MTP	Marema Tlou Party
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NIP	National Independent Party
NLFP	New Lesotho Freedom Party
NPP	National Progressive Party
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
PFA	Platform for Action
RCC	Roman Catholic Church

RLDF	Royal Lesotho Defense Force
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADCGU	Southern Africa Development Community Gender Unit
SANDF	South African National Defense Force
SAUSSC	South African Universities of Social Science Conference.
SDP	Sefate Democratic Party
SDU	Social Democratic Union
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of South Africa
UFS	University of the Free State
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP	United Party
VDC	Village Development Committees
WB	World Bank
WCW	World Conference on Women
WLSA	Women and Law in South Africa

SESOTHO GLOSSARY – WORDS AND PROVERBS/MAXIMS

Balimo/Ba faatše	Ancestors
Bachana	Nephews/Nieces
Bipa	A ritual for expectant mother with first-born
Bohali	Bridewealth/lobola
Bonyatsi	Extra-marital affair
Chobeliso	Elopment
Koae	A welcome sheep slaughtered to a new daughter-in-law
Kenela	Levirate
Ke mosali ha a nyaloa	A useless person
Konthoma	Condom
Khotso ke khaitsele ea ka	Peace is my sister
Khotso, pula, nala	Peace, rain and prosperity
Khotla	Court
Khoetsa	Lineage mark
Lefa	Inheritance property
Lehlaka	Reed
Lethisa	Uncircumcised girl
Lekhala la bafu	Aloe maculate
Lekhotla la mahosana	Council of Princes (Lately Senate)
Leqai	Uncircumcised boy
Letsoku	Ocher
Lifaqane	Wars of calamity
Liroto	Basins made out of “Loli” grass.
Likahare	Intestine of an animal (sheep or cow).
Likholokoana	Ropes manufactured from grass worn by female initiates while in training

Loli	A grass grown in a marsh area
Lithoko	Poems/Praises
Malome	Maternal uncle
Mafisa	Lending out of cattle/animals
Makhooeng	Gauteng, especially mining industries of the Republic of South Africa
Mangangajane	Dried fruits especially peaches
Matšela-nokana	Food brought as provision
Matsoho a moren a malelele	A chief works with the help
Meelela	Mealies or crops given to women at threshing place (seotlong after winnowing)
Mofumahali	Chieftainess
Mohlongoa fatše Mophato	Lodge for circumcision
Moja-a-lefa	The one who inherits
Monki	Black soil mixed with fat
Monna	Man
Monna ke nku ha a lle	A man is tough
Monna ke tšepe e ntšo	Man's strength resembles that of an iron instrument
Morena	Chief
Morena e moholo	Paramount chief
Morena ke khomo e tjicha	A chief should be neutral
Morena ke Morena ka batho	A chief is a chief by people
Moreneng	Chief's place
Mosali	Woman
Mosali o ngalla motšeo	A woman should have perseverance in marriage
Moshanyana	A boy
Mosoang oa ntloana ea lehlanya	Chime from small intestine
Mokhahla	A turned cow skin
Ngoetsi	Daughter-in-law

Nyoko	Bile
Phepa	A white substance applied by female initiates
Pitiki	A ceremony after the birth of a child to honour the women who acted as birth attendants and a new nursing mother
Pitso	A public gathering
Tsoho la monna ke mokolla	Man's assistance is highly appreciated

ABSTRACT

The motivation for this study was a realization of the need to seek from the perspectives of both males and females the different meanings and experiences of patriarchy. Through reviewing existing feminist theories and explanations in Anthropology it became clear that the focus is, to a large extent, only on female views and experiences. The phenomena of patriarchy can thus not be understood and interpreted in terms of the total socio-cultural context which encompasses it.

As is suggested by the title of the thesis, Lesotho was chosen as the research area. Lesotho has a pre-industrial, migrant labour driven, subsistence economy where traditional values seem still very much reflecting on gender relations. The study was conducted in Peka, in the Leribe district, where six villages were selected. The research took as its point of departure an insider perspective. The emphasis, therefore, was on data collecting by means of unstructured interviewing, participant observation and life histories. Regarding the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data, an inductive analytical strategy was followed. Apart from that, an important emphasis was placed on deconstruction. Surprisingly handbooks on social research are not dealing with the topic and guidelines for practical application almost do not exist. Therefore, it was necessary to develop an own methodological approach.

The deconstruction of ethnographic texts provided access to the mode in which patriarchy is/was constructed, constituted and entrenched in Basotho customs, beliefs, practices, social relations, family life and institutions. It detects the shifted, deferred and concealed meanings of patriarchy, it reveals that patriarchy hinders gender equality and that it has several facets, and that

male and female informants viewed, understood, explained and experienced patriarchy differently.

In conclusion, the possibilities, on the one hand, for future research on the methodological refinement of the deconstruction of ethnographic texts, as well as on the other hand, the challenges to the Basotho government and society in order to address gender discrepancies and inequalities, are adumbrated.

Key words: *Patriarchy, gender inequality, Anthropological perspectives, feminist theories, post-modernism, deconstruction, life histories*

OPSOMMING

Die motivering vir hierdie studie was 'n besef van die noodnagheid om uit perspektiewe van beide mans en vrouens, die verskillende betekenis en ervarings van 'n patriargale regeeringsvorm te soek. Deur die beskouing van bestaande feministe-teorieë en verduidelikings in Antropologie het dit duidelik geword dat die fokus in 'n groot mate slegs op vroulike oogpunte en ervarings is. Die verskynsels van patriargale regeeringsvorms kan daarom nie verstaan en geïnterpreteer word in terme van die totale sosiaalkulturele konteks wat dit omvat nie.

Soos te kenne gegee in die titel van die tesis is Lesotho as die navorsingsarea gekies. Lesotho het 'n pre-industriële, rondtrekkende arbeidsgedrewe bestaans ekonomie, waar tradisionele waardes steeds 'n weerspieëling van geslagsverhoudings blyk te wees. Die studie is uitgevoer in Peka, in die Leribe-distrik, waar ses dorpie geselekteer is. Die navorsing het as vertrekpunt die perspektief geneem van 'n lid van die binnekring. Die klem was daarom op die versameling van data deur middel van ongestruktureerde onderhoudsvoering, deelnemende waarneming en lewensgeskiedenis. Wat betref die analisering en interpretering van die kwalitatiewe data, is 'n induktiewe analitiese strategie gevolg. Benewens dit is 'n belangrike klem op dekonstruksie gelê. Dit is verbasend dat handboeke oor sosiale navorsing nie hierdie onderwerp aanspreek nie en riglyne vir praktiese toepassing bestaan feitlik nie. Om die rede was dit nodig om 'n eie metodologiese benadering te ontwikkel.

Die dekonstruksie van etnografiese tekste het toegang tot die manier waarop patriargale regeeringsvorms gekonstrueer, gekonstitueer en verskans word/is in Basotho-gebruik, -geloof, -praktyke, sosiale verhoudings, -gesinslewe en -instellings verskaf. Dit ontdek die veranderde, uitgebreide en verborge betekenis van die patriargale regeeringsvorm; dit toon aan dat 'n patriargale regeeringsvorm geslagsgelykheid verhinder, dat dit verskeie fasette

het en dat manlike en vroulike informante patriargale gesag verskillend beskou, verstaan, verduidelik en ervaar.

Samevattend word die moontlikhede vir toekomstige navorsing oor die metodologiese verfyning van die dekonstruksie van etnografiese tekste, aan die een kant, asook die uitdagings vir die Basotho-regering en –samelewing ten einde geslagsteenstrydighede en –ongelykhede aan te spreek, aan die ander kant, aangedui.

Kernwoorde: *Patriargale gesag, geslagsongelykheid, antropologiese perspektiewe, feministe-teorieë, postmodernisme, dekonstruksie, lewensgeskiedenis*

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study deals with women, patriarchy and the Basotho people. The main aim of this chapter is to clarify the status, role and position of Basotho women. This will be conducted against the traditional and actual cultural backgrounds of the Basotho. The distinction between 'traditional' and 'actual' is an analytical one – because the focus is not on culture or on acculturation, but rather on women operating in specific cultural spheres and under particular cultural constraints. It is, however, necessary to briefly introduce the country. Secondly, the origin of the Basotho people will receive attention, and then the traditional context, followed by the present situation, will be sketched. It is important to note that the purpose is not to provide a detailed, chronological description of events, but rather to indicate the effect of the events on women. Finally the problem statement will be dealt with.

1.2 LESOTHO AND ITS PEOPLE

“I am Moshshesh and my sister is peace” (Smith, 1996:89). These popular words were uttered by Moshoeshoe I, the founder of the Basotho nation. They denote that Moshoeshoe I aspired to peace and unity. However, the structure of Basotho society due to patriarchy, in fact created gender disparity and injustice. The kingdom of Lesotho¹ is a small country in Southern Africa, with a total area of 30 350 square kilometres (Ferguson, 1990:3; Kishindo, 1993:2; Gay, Gill & Hall, 1996:37). It is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa.

¹ Lesotho is the name of the country, known as Basutoland during colonial rule. Basotho are the people of Lesotho and Sesotho is the language of Basotho. This is referred to as Southern Sotho in some literature.



Map 1:

Source: University of Texas : Relief map of South Africa

Lesotho is a mountainous region, situated as it is in the Maluti mountains, and due to its rough terrain and high altitude, it is commonly referred to as “The Kingdom in the Sky”. The Maluti attain a height of more than 3 000 metres above sea level with the highest peak, Thabana-Ntlenyana, reaching an elevation of 3 482 metres above sea level (Gay *et al.* 1996:37; Gill, 1994:94; Smith, 1996:35; Palmer & Poulter, 1972:3-4). The country is divided into ten administrative districts and only 11% of the land is arable (Kingdom of Lesotho <http://lycos.factmonster.com>). Maize, wheat, sorghum and beans are the major crops. The Maluti are well suited to the grazing of livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys (Gill, 1994:9).



Map 2: Lesotho's Administrative Districts

Thahane (2003:6) notes that the agricultural sector is suffering heavily because of soil degradation and seasonal constraints. This has an impact on both men and women, although the latter are more affected because they are faced with the responsibilities of taking care of the family while the men are off earning a living in South Africa.

In 2001 the estimated registered population figure was 2 107 670 (Country Profile, Lesotho, 2004:1). There has been a decrease in population due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic which has resulted in a lower life expectancy, high infant

mortality rates and lower population figures, according to CIA - The World Fact – (Lesotho, 2004).

1.3 MOSHOESHOE, FOUNDER OF THE BASOTHO

In discussing the origin of the Basotho, it is pertinent to note the different groups which originated from areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Nurse, Weiner, Jenkins, 1985:78-92). Fokeng, Tlokoa, Taung, Koena, Khoakhoa, Kgolokoe and the Sia² settled in the central areas of Southern Africa. The Koena people mainly settled at Ntsoana-Tsatsi. According to Couzens (2003:46) Ntsoana-Tsatsi means “the rising sun”, and is assumed to be at Tafelkop, which is said to be midway between Frankfort and Vrede in the Northern Free State. It is believed to be the home of the Koena clan and their ancestors. Hammond-Tooke (1974:73), Lagden (1909:19) and Ellenberger and MacGregor (1912:20) confirm that these groups/clans all have totems to which they owe allegiance. Animals or plants were central in the totem formation. For example, the Bakoena’s totem is a Koena (crocodile) which is a male figure and is symbolic of Koena leadership. The totemic structure is one of the sources of patriarchy.

An important event in the formation and development of the Basotho people was the “*lifaqane*”. The “*lifaqane*” took place during 1822 and 1837. The whole of southern Africa was in conflict (Palmer & Poulter, 1972:7; Dreyer & Kilby, 2003:2). People fled to various parts to escape the calamity of war. This was the time when every single group struggled for power and the whole of the region was affected by political turmoil in some way or other. Eldredge (1993:141) posits that most of the stronger groups conquered the weaker ones for their resources. The fighting affected especially women and children, who were insecure and less mobile while food resources were limited (Eldredge, 1987a:61-71, Eldredge, 1993b:144). Women lived under difficult conditions, having to take

² To these the prefix “Ba” is usually added, for example Fokeng-Bafokeng, Tlokoa-Batlokoa. Lagden (1909) has followed this pattern of naming the groups.

care of children while producing more children as a result of men's control over women's reproductive rights. According to Sekese (2002:7), girls were often left behind or were forced to enter into sexual relationships with soldiers who had invaded the area. The implication is that women were largely the victims of the "*lifaqane*".

During this time Moshoeshe³ started to bring together remnants of various clans that had been scattered as a result of the "*lifaqane*" (Gill, 1993:25). Moshoeshe used his diplomacy and the advice he received from his mentor Mohlomi⁴ a seer, who advised him to take care of the poor, to love his enemies and to share his cattle through the "*mafisa*" system (Gill, 1993:63; Thompson, 1975:57; Sanders, 1975:55; Burman, 1976:11, Benyoni, 1974:379). Moshoeshe also gave poor young boys "*bahlanka*", or cattle to raise. When they reached maturity and were ready to marry, he took responsibility for their "*bohali*". In practising the system of "*mafisa*" he became the real father of his nation, taking care of his subjects. In spite of all his liberal and noble political diplomacies, however, Moshoeshe I was a traditionalist when it came to women and the maintaining of patriarchy. In his administration, for example, councillors assisted his wives with their duties, such as cultivation of crops, construction of houses and other errands. Even Mofumahali 'M'amohato, Moshoeshe I's first wife, did not assume any meaningful role in the administration, although she acted from time to time as regent when he was away. Another example was that of 'M'antsopa. Her prophecies were more or less similar in importance to those

³ The actual name of Moshoeshe was Lepoqo. He was named Moshoeshe after defeating the Bakoena Ba ha Monaheng clan and seizing their cattle. He was applauded as a shaver and the sound "shoeshe" imitates the sound of a razor blade. His other name was Letlama. He got this name after graduating from the initiation school. Traditionally boys and girls are given names at the school. His regiment was known as Matlama. For explanation of the names, see Lagden (1909). He was also called Tlaputle (Thompson, 1975:6): this was a name he used in his initiation songs. Also see Couzens (2003:60).

⁴ Mohlomi was a diviner and a healer who advised Moshoeshe on how to gain power and authority. According to Tylden (1950:3), Mohlomi was a man of wonderful gifts. As he puts it: "Mohlomi was a wandering philosopher, a rainmaker, a witchdoctor of repute in the best sense of the term". It was because of this that Moshoeshe depended on his advice. Moshoeshe succeeded in following Mohlomi's advice and consequently emerged a brilliant leader, a diplomat and the founder of the Basotho nation (Smith, 1996:5)

of Mohlomi, yet she never publicly received recognition or acknowledgement. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of Moshoeshe I's concern for maintaining the patriarchal genealogy of the royal house, was the so-called Senate Saga (cf. diagram 1).

DIAGRAM 1: THE SENATE SAGA⁵

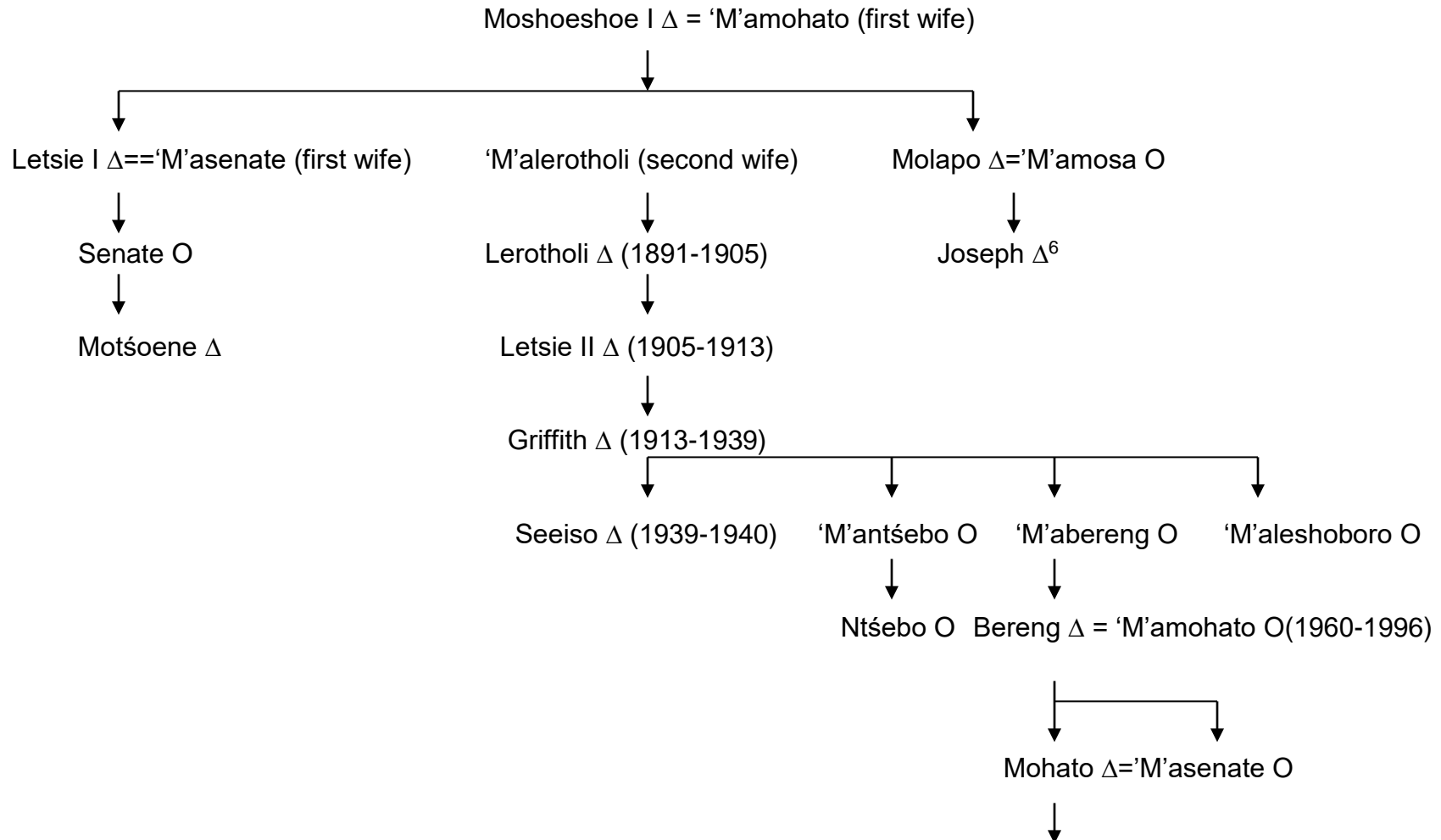


Diagram 1: Genealogy of the first royal house of Moshoeshe. The second house of Molapo portrays his son and grandson Mots'oene.

⁵ This diagram only presents genealogical data to illustrate the Senate Saga and that the royal descent follows the patrilineal line.

⁶ Senate was the first born of Letsie I and his only child by the first wife. Senate bore Motsoene through her cousin Joseph, the first son of Molapo.

According to Machobane (2000:22-29) Moshoeshoe I implemented several strategies to maintain the patriarchal royal lineage of his first son Letsie I. Senate was Letsie I's first child by his first wife. She was a girl and according to custom she could not succeed her father after his death. Letsie I married polygamously and in the second house he had a boy called Lerotholi. However, Moshoeshoe I wanted the chieftainship to be in Letsie I's house. He wanted Senate to give birth to a boy who would become the heir and the chief.

As a back-up, Moshoeshoe I encouraged his grandson Joseph, Molapo's son who was already married, to move virilocally with Senate. The result of this union was the birth of a baby boy named Motsoene. Joseph had to return to Leribe where his father Molapo was allocated land, while Motsoene remained with Letsie I. Moshoeshoe I was ambitious and content that the royal patriarchal lineage would remain in Letsie I's house, although according to custom Lerotholi was the prospective heir. Moshoeshoe I's wishes were, however, not followed after his death, even though Motsoene had already been announced as the great chief of Lesotho. The nation felt that Moshoeshoe's strategy was contrary to Basotho custom, which did not allow females to marry patrilineally because through such a practice a woman becomes part of the man's kin-group (Ashton 1967:34). The Senate saga shows that the stronghold of patriarchy in Lesotho was maintained by the great chief Moshoeshoe I. Various scholars such as Kimble (1999:13-14), Smith (1996:39), Gill (1993:49), Machobane (1990:22), Ashton (1952:203) and Casalis (1861:125) provide further detailed information on the administrative structures of Moshoeshoe I.

1.4 TRADITIONAL SOCIETY AND PATRIARCHY

Circumcision is one of the traditional customs which was used to promote men and women into adulthood (Ashton, 1967:46) and is still a major practice even today. An uncircumcised man was not regarded as a

real man. He was derogatively referred to as "*leqai*" (the uncircumcised boy) or "*moshanyana*" (little boy) (Ellenberger & MacGregor, 1912:250; Ashton, 1967:47). Girls were also expected to go to initiation school, otherwise they would be stigmatised and called by the name "*lethisa*" (little girl). They ran the risk of never being married. There was a myth that if one went into marriage as a "*lethisa*", one was prone to barrenness. This attitude forced women to conform to patriarchal myths, which remained a threat to them. The initiation for boys took place at a place called "*mophato*", which was usually situated at a hidden place in the mountains or valleys. This place provided the teacher with good security to train initiates in military activities. Matšela (1979:182) explains that it was a very important institution with knowledgeable philosophers as teachers. The initiates were expected to be exemplary members of society and the nation after completing the course. Khalanyane (1995:52) and Van der Vliet (1974:231) observe that the initiates underwent useful training and that the syllabus covered the following subjects: sex and life education, cultural history, military techniques, national philosophy and patriotism. Much of the training for the young men emphasized toughness and masculinity. This legitimises the expression: "I am a man today ("*ke monna kajeno*"). After completion of initiation school a man could join other men in discussions and deliberations and decision-making in "*khotla*" meetings as a full member of society (Ellenberger and McGregor, 1912:283). At this stage, upon assuming an adult role, the initiated young man was expected to be treated and respected by women in the same way as the older men were.

The girls' initiation rite took place in summer in the village. They moved out to the veld for the gathering of crops and other activities. The girls were taught about sex and life education, politeness towards men and which foods were taboo for them (Laydevant, 1952:63). Eggs, for example, the intestines of a sheep, and food from distant places were all taboo ("*matšela-nokana*"). Candidates were taught to respect their

fathers-in-law and not to call them by their names⁷ and the dresses they wore during this period left their breasts naked. The attire for married women was indecent: their breasts were no longer firm and showed that they had already breastfed. According to Basotho culture the woman's body is highly respected and valued. At this time girls were highly mobile, going out to the fields to find green vegetables or fresh mealies and pumpkins. Moitse (1994:66-79) elaborates on the various stages of girls' training, showing all the stages undertaken and the make-up worn. At one stage, for instance, they wear a whitish substance called "*phepha*" and they put on woven ropes of grass called "*likholokoana*" (Moitse, 1994:78). Ashton (1967:57) confirms that initiation of girls consisted of training them in taking care of their spouses and families. Indeed much emphasis was placed on respect for the husband who was the head of the household, and conforming to patriarchal rules. Girls were supposed to look forward to getting married. They added "*bohali*" to the family and were therefore groomed to be under patriarchal orders. This traditional education system moulded women for their roles as mothers and wives. This could be perceived as socialisation in the service of patriarchy.

Language is another factor which strengthens the power of patriarchy. The extent to which day-to-day language use depicts gender stereotypes and thus promotes patriarchal power is also important in this study. Sesotho as a language is characterised by patriarchal usages.

Some Sesotho proverbs, for example, are highly gender stereotypical in favour of men. Machobane (1996:35) encodes the following proverb: "*Monna ke ts'epe e ntšo*" literally as "a man is a black iron indeed" and meaning "men are strong and endure suffering without complaining". Machobane shows that this particular proverb denotes the power of men, stating that even in difficult circumstances they have perseverance. Sekese (2002:65) states that "*Tsoho la Monna ke mokolla*" ("a man's

⁷ This is called "*hlonepha*" system. Also see Arnott (2004).

hand is marrow”) which in essence means that a man’s assistance is always appreciated. Proverbs such as these give men praise, power and strength generally over women. Women are seen as weak and fragile. For example, Sekese (2002:166) cites a proverb which shows that some kinds of labourers are regarded as “useless” like a woman who lives with a husband without “*bohali*” being exchanged. The proverb states “*Ke mosali ha a nyaloa*” (she is a woman who is not married). In essence the proverb is derogative to women.

According to Moloji (1998:199) mothers and fathers have different modes of communication with children. For example, when mothers talk to children, they are polite, whereas the father’s speech is not as polite as that of the mother. Basotho boys are socialised to use forceful and strong language. The forceful language is used towards women and children by men when giving instructions. Moloji (1998:200) emphasises that as a result when men cry or perform their roles in a sloppy manner, they are said to be behaving like women.

Another very important factor to be considered is the binary gender oppositions⁸ which are constructed in Sesotho to enforce gender inequality. Matšela, Matsoso and Ntimo-Makara (2003:49) identify what they call the two “gender wardrobes”. The adjectives are not exhaustive and emphasise the idea of gender discrimination. There are two unequal parts in the wardrobe, which perpetuates the idea of patriarchal power.

GENDER WARDROBE ADJECTIVES

o Males	Females
o Adventurous	Attractive
o Aggressive	Charming
o Ambitious	Curious
o Arrogant	Dependent

⁸ Binary opposition is used in Chapter 2: see explanation.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| ○ Assertive | Dreamy |
| ○ Autocratic | Emotional |
| ○ Clear thinking | Fearful |
| ○ Courageous | Gentle |
| ○ Cruel | Mild |

Praise poems are geared towards male rulers. Males were praised for various things such as conquests, battles and wars, for instance (Mangoaela, 2001). Traditionally women are merely good at singing and ululating men's poetic language while men were usually the poets. Language thus symbolises the gender identity of the Basotho and it contributes in many aspects to the upholding of patriarchal power.

1.4.1 Marriages and related customs

Traditionally, for the Basotho people, polygamous marriages were the norm rather than the exception. In such marriages a man has complete control over all his wives, and women are virtually enslaved as a result of various customs and rituals. By virtue of their sex, for example, men automatically become heads of the households. This practice gives more significance to males, and especially to the heir (Letuka, Mamashela, Matashane, Mbatha & Mohale, 1994:38). The male heirs are responsible for the management of the property after the death of the father (Poulter, Maclain, Kaburise, Mugabusa & Milazi, 1981:36; Maqutu, 1992:125). The heir is expected to take care of the needs of the entire household and also to perpetuate the lineage. Contrary to this, a girl is never noticed in the same way as the boy is, because of patrilocality, according to which she has to leave her natal family and join her husband's family in accordance with the customary laws usually known as the laws of Lerotholi (Letuka, Mamashela, Matashane-Marite, Morolong & Motebang, 1998:169). In terms of the laws, a widow will also fall under the custodianship of her son and any paternal relatives.

Polygamous marriages were, as has been mentioned, traditionally allowed. In these marriages a man has full control over his wives. Each house, however, has its own resources. All wives operate under the patriarchal authority of the husband. Polygamous marriages are nowadays not common and the practice is diminishing (Letuka *et al.* 1998:35-36). It should also be noted that there are other forms of marriage which were practised but which are currently also gradually diminishing, such as sororate (“*se ea ntlo*”), levirate (“*ho kenela*”), wall (“*ho nyala lebotla*”) and grave (“*ho nyala lebitla*”) marriages (cf. Preston-Whyte, 1974:190, Ashton, 1967:83, Epprecht, 1992:45, Poulter, 1976:158-159, Matšela, 1979:106 and Letuka *et al.* 1994:39).

“*Bohali*” is necessary in order to institutionalise all forms of marriages. This is an essential act of legalizing marriage (Preston-Whyte, 1974:187). “*Bohali*” cattle signified the transfer of both uxorial and generic rights to the man and his lineage (Letuka *et al.* 1997:48, 1994:150). The transfer of “*bohali*” fixes the social position of the wife and children. The marriage where “*bohali*” has not been exchanged is regarded as null and void. In such a case the woman is denied marital status in that particular family.

Upon marriage, girls move out of their natal homes to live patrilocally with the husband’s kin. At marriage, a woman is given a name with prefix “Ma” (mother of) in anticipation of the children that she will bear. This act is accompanied by the ritual of slaughtering a sheep as a sign of welcome. This ceremony is called “*koae*” (Ashton, 1967:74). She is given a new blanket and a long dress to wear. These rituals confirm that she is welcome in the new family. She now belongs to her husband’s family. Letuka *et al.* (1998:50) confirm that the wife is socialised as mother to the entire family; hence she has to show great respect to her in-laws, especially her father-in-law and her husband’s paternal uncles and older brother (Matšela, 1979:110). The new daughter-in-law is now under the guardianship of the husband, and depends on the husband financially.

The mother-in-law supports this patriarchal system by training and teaching the daughter-in-law the customs of her son's family.

In the Basotho customary marriage, once "*bohali*" has been exchanged, there is no possibility of divorce because the woman has married into a family, with all the rites accompanying the union. A married "*mosotho*" woman is supposed to endure hardships and even ill treatment, including violence, by her spouse. To this effect the Sesotho maxim states, "*Mosali o ngalla motšeo*" meaning that a woman is supposed to stay and bear the problems within the house. Letuka *et al.* (1997:74) explain that the literal translation is "when woman sulks she just goes as far as the cooking area of the hut". This emphasises that a woman should have perseverance in the marriage. Women are scared to go back to their natal homes or to make any ill-treatment by their parents public, because according to her culture she would have to leave the children behind. Women living with violence should rather approach the husband's entire family council to take action. If there is no satisfaction, she could desert her husband and his family. This mechanism under customary law is known as "*ngala*", which gives the husband the opportunity to reconcile with the wife's parents (Poulter *et al.* 1981:31). The parents of the spouse play an important role in trying to normalise the situation.

1.4.2 Death and rituals

There are many rituals pertaining to death which are carried out only by the male members of the bereaved family. However, it is generally accepted that the rituals performed by men regarding mourning and cleansing were not compatible (in seriousness and extent) to those of women (Letuka *et al.* 1998:55; Ncube & Steward, 1995:35). For women, the consequences of death are far more serious. The loss of a husband degrades her status: the mourning ritual demands that she dress in a particular fashion – she must dress from head to toe in black. Everything

that she wears should show that she is mourning (Ncube & Steward, 1995:35). The widow is also given instructions to show respect during this period: she is not supposed to travel after sunset because the spirit of the deceased husband will haunt the community; she should not shout at the top of her voice because she must show sorrow; she should avoid having sexual intercourse with other men because the men will develop a sexually transmitted disease called “*mashoa*” or venereal warts; and she is not supposed to quarrel or be at loggerheads with other people (Letuka *et al.* 1994:115).

According to Ncube and Steward (1995:41) women undergo a series of cumbersome cleansing rituals after the mourning period. First, a widow goes to her natal home for cleansing accompanied by one of her in-laws. An animal is slaughtered, her head will be shaved and she is bathed in water with traditional herbs, specifically aloe maculata (“*Lekhala la Bafu*”)¹, the chyme of the small intestines of the slaughtered animal mixed with its blood, and bile liquid. She is then given new clothes to put on.

1.5 WOMEN AND THE PRESENT SITUATION

Several issues which emanated during colonial rule and which still affect the life and position of women will be addressed.

1.5.1 Church and education

The system of education was introduced by the first missionaries who came to Lesotho. The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) established, for example, a teacher’s training college in 1868, the so-called “Sekolo sa Thabeng” in Morija (the mountain college) for the training of boys only. In 1871 they started a girls’ school at Thabana-Morena, which

¹ Most authors, like Jonathan (1989a and 1990 2b); Maliehe 1997, Guillarmod 1982) have written a lot about the use of the aloe maculata as a medicinal herb by the Basotho nation in several ceremonies and rituals used for cleansing and exorcizing.

later on moved to Morija. It was then named the Morija Girls' School. According to Epprecht, (1992:231) and Ntimo-Makara (1985:114), the emphasis was on the training of women to maintain the home and motherhood. Ntimo-Makara (1990:50) indicates in this regard that King Moshoeshoe I was in need of women who could train Basotho women in home economics.

Goduka (1999:122) emphasise that the system of education was also discriminatory. Women were excluded from taking courses in fields such as the natural sciences. Missionaries and their wives believed that science subjects were for boys because they were tough and men could think well, "better" than women. In Lesotho it was a general practice not to educate girls, because they would move away from their families after marriage to service the husband's family. At the same time, families were eager to educate boys who would support their parents and increase the family patrilineal wealth. According to Modo and Ogbu' (1998:40) and Mosetse, 1998:18) these gender stereotypes were engraved and valued by African people and have been transmitted from generation to generation through the socialisation process.

However, during the independence and post-independence eras, the practice of educating women became more and more accepted in Lesotho. Letuka *et al.* (1997:28) point out that women nowadays participate in various programmes offered at tertiary institutions within Lesotho and at some of the tertiary institutions within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states region, and even overseas. According to CIA – the World Fact book – Lesotho (2004:2) the literacy rate is higher for females at 94.5%, while for literate males the figure is 74.5%.

1.5.2 Political economy of Lesotho and its impact on women

Before Lesotho became a British Protectorate in 1868, it enjoyed a prosperous economy. The country exported grain and other agricultural produce to the newly-developed mining towns in the Free State and the Transvaal (Gay *et al.* 1996:9). The expansion and export of grain production was the result of the adoption of ox-drawn ploughs, which increased production levels. Lesotho came to be known as the granary of the Cape Colony (Kimble, 1999:17; Kegaan, 1986:xii) and in turn also imported goods which were not available in Lesotho (Murray, 1981:11; Kimble, 1999:17).

The economic boom of Lesotho was short-lived. Several factors militated against economic prosperity. Firstly, Lesotho lost much of its arable land due to the wars between the Basotho and the Free State. This led to the re-demarcation of the country in 1846 and 1854, leaving it with inadequate land for agricultural production (Kimble, 1999:45). The shortage of land led to the suffering of many families. Women as mothers were hit hard by these circumstances, because they were already operating on meagre agricultural produce. Secondly, there was the continued unilateral taxation of Lesotho grain, which resulted in the decline of trade. Murray (1981:13); Kishindo (1993:6) and Kimble (1999:45) confirm that the introduction of these measures with regard to Basotho grain and the importation of cheaper grain from North America and Australia, effectively removed a major incentive for surplus production and trade on the part of Lesotho. Thirdly, Lesotho experienced a severe drought during the 1930s, resulting in a catastrophic famine. Most animals died, leaving families destitute. Eldredge (1993:114) posits that during this time women and children were the most vulnerable. The wealth gained by the Basotho prior to these disasters increased only the power of men. In spite of all their hard work and suffering, women were no better off. The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1870 and gold in the Witwatersrand

areas in 1880 opened another economic opportunity for the Basotho. Basotho men went to work there as migrant labourers (Gill, 1993:120). There was a demand for labour by the capitalist mining industries. This led men to move in great numbers to South Africa to find work. The outflow of labour to South Africa signified the incorporation of the Basotho into the capitalist system and the country became more firmly integrated into the regional political economy.

The women who were left behind were dependant upon their spouse's remittances, which were insufficient. Women were left with heavy social and economic responsibilities while economically insecure (Murray, 1981:156, Gordon, 1981a:11; 1981b:16, Molapo, 1984:47, Nindi, 1996:10). Women were allowed to take minor decisions but the major ones, like the marriage of a child or dealing with cattle, were handled by their husbands. Women also had to produce the new male labour force for the labour migration system, while also taking care of the retired ones, the aged and the disabled (Meillasoux, 1972:103; Eldredge, 1993:127).

Due to the long periods of absence, women often ended up being deserted by their husbands. In some cases women had to live with the husband's family and were controlled by the in-laws. However, some deserted women went to the mines to look for their husbands (Bonner, 1990:230). According to Bozzoli (1991:90-105) some women even joined their husbands. In recent years the number of migrant workers has been drastically decreasing (The Lesotho Government Sixth National Development Plan, 1996/97-1998/99:93). The decline in the figures since the 1980s has been largely due to South Africa's policy of internalisation of labour, the mechanisation of the mining industries and the global decline in the price of gold. The retrenchment of migrant labourers means that many women are without employed spouses. It is expected of women that they will provide for their unemployed husbands and for their children. In most cases the power relations between women and their ex-miner

husbands are not comfortable. Males are without jobs and spend much time in shebeens or playing games such as “*moraba-raba*”. Yet the men maintain a dominant patriarchal power over the women.

Another aspect that affected women adversely, was the acceptance of the Government of Lesotho in the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The austerity measures adopted by the Lesotho Government were many (Matlosa, 1986:26; Moshi, 1992:106; Motebang, 2000:3 and Letuka *et al.* 1997:14) but only the following two will be discussed:

- Improvement of the public sector; and
- The introduction of cost recovery measures on public and utility services.

In the application of measures to address these factors, many government civil service employees were retrenched. This impacted more heavily on the lower grades, where the majority were women. When women lost their jobs, a greater economic dependency on men was created, thus upholding the patriarchal structure.

The reduction of government expenditure resulted in the curtailment of social services such as health services (United Nation Document, 1991:18). In the case of Lesotho, the consultation fees in health centres and government dispensaries increased by 100% (Gay *et al.* 1995:82). This impacted severely on women who are regular visitors to health centres for antenatal examinations during pregnancies.

1.5.3 Legal status of women

The legal system of Lesotho discriminates heavily against women (cf. legally, women are minors. Fanana (1989:6) explains several aspects of

the minority status of a Mosotho woman, together with their repercussions. A married woman under community of property contract cannot borrow money or obtain credit from financial institutions without the consent of the husband. Seeiso (1986:49-50) and Mamashela (1985:166) show that a married woman cannot sue or be sued without her husband's consent in all civil matters. The implication is that the wife, like other minors, has no *locus standi in Judicio* (Mamashela, 1991:75 & 198). This state of affairs amazed one of the prominent judges of the Lesotho High Court, when it came to his attention that women who were magistrates or advocates, and presiding over cases for other people, were not entitled to stand on their own to defend themselves (Maqutu, 1992:118). A further case study confirmed that a woman who is a government employee in the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (in fact, the President at Rothe Local Court and a widow) cannot represent herself in court matters (Letuka *et al.* 1997:18).

This situation occurs despite the stipulations of the Lesotho Constitution (Lesotho, 1993) which clearly states that discrimination on gender grounds is illegal. According to SADC Gender Monitor (1999:4) the impression is that the Lesotho Government is slow to transform its judicial system. Letuka *et al.* (1998:150-151) are of the same opinion. These authors accuse the Lesotho Government of dragging its feet and state that it has often used culture and custom as excuses for the lack of attention to the empowerment of women.

1.5.4 Access to land and property rights

The Deeds Registry Act No 12 (1967) states clearly that no immovable property shall be registered in the name of women married in community of property (Khabele, Lekoetje, Letele, Mapetla, Mtashane, Mofomobe, Moholi, Moitse, Mokhothu, Molapo, Moshoeshoe-Chadzingwa, Mosoang, Motebang, Ntimo-Makara, Ranthimo, 1994:13). The husband's consent is very important, and this hampers the progress of a married woman. The

examples above show that patriarchal law relegates women to lower status and deprives them of their own personal rights. Another issue to be examined is that of land distribution in the case of women.

The situation regarding the land rights of women is quite confusing. On the one hand, as indicated, in the Deeds Registry Act, No 12, 1967 (Lesotho, 1967) it is stated that no immovable property shall be registered in the name of women who are married in community of property. On the other hand, the Land Act, No 14, 1979 as amended by Order No 6 of 1992, includes women and gives them full ownership rights over land. In terms of customary laws, the allocation and inheritance of land (both for arable and residential purposes) are in the hands of men (Letuka *et al.* 1998:38; Grdanicki and Hall, 1999:37). Women are regarded as minors and are debarred from owning land or inheriting it (Selebalo, 2001:3, Andrade, Aphané, Bhuku-Chuulu, Gwaunza, Key, Marite, Mvududu, White, 2001:27). Although a widow can be the usufructuary of the land of her late husband, the land reverts back to her first son after her death.

1.5.5 Present administration

Currently Lesotho is a monarchy under His Majesty King Letsie III. In his administration there are twenty-two Principal and two Ward Chiefs, who are directly responsible to him (cf. Table 1.2 for detailed information). The twenty-two Principal Chiefs form the College of Chiefs, whose main duty it is to nominate the King according to the Lesotho Constitution. Ward chiefs are under the jurisdiction of the Principal Chiefs and are not members of the College of Chiefs. Of the twenty-four chiefs eighteen are men and six are women. The latter act as regents on behalf of male relatives.

Chiefs feature in both legislative and executive organs of government. On the executive level they cooperate with the district secretaries of the

Ministry of Local Government, while on the legislative level they form, according to the Lesotho Constitution, part of Parliament. Together with eleven nominated members they constitute the Senate. The nominated members are appointed by the King, upon the advice of the Council of State. Only one is a woman. In the National Assembly decisions are determined through voting, and consequently the numbers of women are severely curtailed. The issues which matter most to women either do not appeal to or are considered a threat to men.

TABLE 1.1 : Administration at district and ward areas

Districts	Names of Wards and Areas	Names of Principal and Ward Chiefs
Maseru	Matsieng Thaba-Bosiu Ha Maama Kubake and Rambanta	Chief S.B. Seeiso M Chief K.L. Theko M Chieftainess M. Maama F Chief S. Api M
Berea	#T.Y. Ha majara Koeneng	Chieftainess M.G. Masupha F Chieftainess M.. Majara F Chieftainess M.L. Peete F
Leribe	Leribe Tsikoane, Peka and Kkolobere	Chieftainess M. Motsoene F Chief L.J. Mathealira M
Mokhotlong	Mokhotlong Malingoaneng	Chief M. Seeiso M Chief M. Sekonyela M*
Mafeteng	Likhoele Matelile Tebang, Tšakholo, Seleso	Chief L.L. Seeiso M Chief S. Moholobela M Chief T. Mojela M Chief N. Mohale M
Mohale's Hoek	Thaba-Tšoeu Likoeneng Taung Phamong	Chief L. Lebona M Chief M. Moshoeshoe M Chief M. Moletsane M* Chieftainess N. Bereng F
Quthing	Sebapala (Quthing)	Chief T.Q. Nkoebe M
Qachas' Nek	Qachas' Nek	Chief M.T. Makhaola M
Butha-Buthe	Butha-Buthe Makhoakhoeng	Chief K. Molapo M Chief T. Matela M*
Thaba-Tseka	Rothe, Kolo, Seroeng and Letšeng	Chief B. Bereng M

Source: The Government of Lesotho Constitution(1993:152)

M = Male and F = Female

* These three chiefs are not related to Moshoeshoe I, but their forefathers were accorded historical alliance with Moshoeshoe I (Smith, 1996:39).

T.Y. = Teya-Teyaneng

The section of the fourth amendment to the constitution, changing the electoral model which provided for a quota of women in the party lists, was rejected by the male dominated National Assembly (Hansard, 2001:42). This resulted in the minimal representation of women after the 2002 elections.

1.5.6 Modern party politics and patriarchy

Lesotho became independent on 4 October 1966. This political move was preceded by the District Council paving the way for independence (Khaketla, 1971:40). Party politics has developed since 1952 (Gill, 1993:203). Josiel Lefela formed the "*Lekhotla la Bafo*" (Commoner' League) which paved the way for the formation of various political parties (Weisfelder, 1999:1-5). In 1952 Ntsu Mokhehle formed the Basutoland African Congress (BAC). This name changed to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in 1958 (Gill, 1993:170). The Marema Tlou Party (MTP), led by Chief Seephephe Matete, broke away from the BCP and was later converted into the Marema Tlou Freedom Party (MFP), (Gill, 1993:210). The Basotho National Party (BNP) was established in 1959. Only men were involved in the establishment of the above-mentioned political parties, and only they participated in negotiations for independence. Women were not allowed to vote for the 1960 district council elections. It should be noted that women were deliberately left out because it was felt that politics and tough decisions had to be taken within the public sphere, and culturally this was the domain of men – not women. It should also be noted that the BCP, the pioneer political party in the struggle for the country's independence, failed to play any supportive role regarding women's participation in politics and voting powers. Motebang (1998:58) argued that the electoral law gave voting powers to all people without any discrimination, on condition that they were taxpayers and had reached the age of twenty-one. As men were the taxpayers, only they were eligible to vote (Epprecht, 1992:66 & 204; Khaketla, 1971:55). Women were thus

harshly oppressed and they were denied the fundamental human right to vote for the government of their choice. However, some women objected strongly to their exclusion. One regent Chieftainess, as quoted by Epprecht (2000:194), said in this regard: *“Women, mothers of the nation, should not be made slaves. They should be given the right in the country to vote and also stand for elections”*.

Finally, women were allowed to vote in the 1965 general elections after a lengthy debate in the legislative council. The result of female enfranchisement was that some women did stand for elections. Two women from two different political parties were elected as candidates. One was from the MFP and the other was from the BNP (Gay *et al.* 1996:19). The defeat of these women in the elections could be attributed to non-support from other women, who still tend to vote for men. In a study undertaken to find the reasons for the low level of participation of women in politics, women have this to say: “Politics are for men, because they need a lot of time which as women we do not have, because we are looking after our families. Again we are looked upon as loose women without manners, once we enter politics and we do not have money to go about campaigning” (SADC Gender unit 1999:58).

The BNP supported the voting of women and won the first national elections leading to Lesotho’s independence (Epprecht, 2000:210). However, no woman was appointed as a cabinet minister, and all the members of the National Assembly were men. The absence of women in the Cabinet and in the National Assembly from all parties indicates that men perceive women as their supporters. Men acquire power which is used to discriminate against women.

One must mention that the period from 1970-1992 was one of non-politics, as Lesotho was going through a period of political turmoil. The 1970 elections were declared aborted, with the declaration of a state of

emergency and the suspension of the constitution (Lesotho Order 1 of 1970 and Khaketla 1971:208).

Women became more active and vocal on political issues for the 1993 elections, and there were twenty-three women candidates (Khabele *et al.* 1994:20). Although this number is still insignificant, it was an improvement compared to the 1965 figures. It is of great concern that while the manifestos of most political parties place a high priority on women's issues and they pledge commitment to empower women politically as well as to remove laws that discriminate against women, only three women from the BCP (which won all of the sixty-five constituencies) were sent to parliament. One out of fourteen was appointed as a cabinet minister.

During the 1998 elections, the number of women candidates from different political parties, together with those who stood independently, rose to 65. These numbers are still negligible in comparison with those of men. This improvement is due, however, to several strategies adopted by women, such as political education, awareness creation and advocacy. In these elections the Lesotho Congress for Democracy won with a landslide 79 seats out of 80 constituencies. Three women were elected to parliament, and one was appointed as a Cabinet Minister holding the portfolio of Minister of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs.² This indicates that women are still at a disadvantage in policy matters and that the patriarchal stereotyped attitudes still exist.

This is clearly shown in the various executive committees in which all the key positions are in the hands of men. Women in some of the parties have been relegated to women's league structures. The women's leagues or leaders of wings, act in an *ex officio* capacity and they lack voting powers in the executive committees which constitute the primary mechanisms of the parties. The manifestos are good at advocating

² It is currently known as the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Sports (MGYS).

gender equality on paper or for purposes of campaigning, but women remain unequally represented in parliament and even in the decision-making positions (cf appendix 1).

One important observation and a reality in the politics of Lesotho, is that women vote for men and women do not generally want to campaign or stand for elections. However, women add pressure and support to the opposition alliances, which press hard at the negotiation table for a government of national unity. Matlosa (1999:190) observes that the negotiation process gave way to the establishment of an Interim Political Authority (IPA) as a new structure which was to prepare for the holding of fresh national elections. The IPA was composed of representatives of twelve political parties with two members from each party. Of twenty-four members there were only five women in this structure.

The 2002 general elections did not bring about gender equality. Table 1.2 confirms that patriarchal structures with cultural attitudes still prevailed strongly.

TABLE 1.2 Number of members of parliament by gender: 2002 elections

PARTY	WOMEN	MEN
LCD	10	69
BNP	3	18
LPC	-	3
NIP	-	5
BCP	-	3
LWP	1	2
MFP	-	1
NPP	-	1
PFD	-	1
LEP	-	-
NLFP	-	-
SDP	-	-
SDU	-	-
LLP/UD	-	-
UP	-	-
CDP	-	-
NDP	-	-
BAC	1	2
KBP	-	-
TOTAL	15	105

Source: Lesotho Monitor Review, 2000:13.

According to the above table, there are 105 men in the National Assembly (Lower House of Parliament), compared to 15 women. There are currently six women ministers. Four of these are ministers with portfolios, while two are assistant ministers. This is an improvement compared to the previous elections of 1998 where only one woman was nominated to cabinet. It is evident, however, that political leadership and power remains firmly in the hands of men, as has always been the case.

1.5.7 Government and the implementation of gender policies

The Lesotho Government as a member of the United Nations has signed most gender conventions and has ratified some of the conventions dealing with discrimination against women. These conventions deal with issues such as the improvement of the lives of women, and their release from patriarchal power. However, little improvement has taken place, in spite of the few ratified agreements. Some of the instruments have only been signed, without any ratification. (Johal R, S Kayvashad and D Lisker, 1993).

1.5.8 Violence against women

According to the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the frequency of rape in Lesotho between 1998 and 2000 increased by 500%. Information from five districts in Lesotho (shown in Table 1.4) illustrates the pattern of sexual violence against women. Most alarming is the number of cases where the victims are between 2 – 12 and 50 – 85 years of age.

TABLE 1.3: Sexual violence cases by age of complainant in selected districts for June 1998 to 2000

Age in years	Berea	Butha-Buthe	Leribe	Mohale's Hoek	Thaba-Theka	Total
2 – 12	3	11	17	1	2	34
13 – 16	18	25	23	9	5	80
17 – 18	4	13	15	8	2	42
19 – 40	11	31	32	19	10	103
50 – 85	2	1	2	2	2	9
Unstated	8	29	5	8	6	56
Total	46	110	94	47	27	324

Source: Chaka-Makhooane L, P Letuka, M Majara, K Matashane-Keiso, M Matela-Gwintsa, B L Morolong, S Sakoane (2002:54)

Various authors confirm that males are socialised to demand sexual intercourse from women and that women are regarded as 'passive satisfiers' or 'passive receivers' (Letuka *et al.* 1998:131 and Chaka-Makhooane *et al.* 2002:13). If the husband demands sexual intercourse, the wife has to conform without any resistance. The men have all sexual rights over women. The older people will always tell the girl before marriage that she should never deny her husband sexual rights. In Sesotho, this is "*O seke oa hanela monna ka likobo*", literally meaning, "do not deny the husband with blankets", i.e. do not deny the husband conjugal rights. Consequently many men exploit their partners. A study done by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and the Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA) for example, revealed that women do not have the right to determine the number of children in the family nor could they make any independent decisions regarding their fertility (Gill, 1994:213).

In a study undertaken by Tuoane (1999:20) about the use of contraceptives, one woman stated "we always hide our pills and health booklets from our husbands who are migrant labourers; this is not an easy thing to practise". In another instance, in the same study, one married woman had seen a woman abused by her husband who beat her because he discovered that his wife was taking contraceptive pills, which she had hidden from him.

Chileshe, Hlanze, Joseph, Kaunda, Letuka, Matashane-Marite, Mvududu and Nzira (2002:40) state that some men deny the use of contraceptives to their wives. Men have a belief that contraceptives promote disloyalty in women, because women might be promiscuous. LPPA provides a number of services country-wide in health centres regarding the use of contraceptive devices. According to Letuka *et al.* (1997:33), women are aware of these services yet do not make much use of them. Women are scared to make any major decisions concerning their

fertility rights, while others ask for the consent of their husbands who in most cases deny them the use of these facilities (Gill, 1994:213).

1.5.9 Patriarchy in the employment sector

According to information compiled in Table 1.4 there is a vast discrepancy between the numbers of men and women in top civil service management positions.

TABLE 1.4: Men and women in employment and decision-making positions

Position	Women		Men		Total
Principal Secretaries	-	5		21	26
Ambassadors	-	3		6	9
Council of State	-	2		11	13
Judiciary (Judges)	-	3		8	11
Local Government District Secretaries	-	2		8	10
Police Service Administration Structure	-	2		7	9
Public Service Commission	-	0		3	3
Teaching Service Commission	-	4		4	8
Independent Electoral Commission		1		2	3

Source: Ramokhoro 2004:1-2

In administrative and managerial sectors twice the number of men occupy positions.

In agriculture, animal husbandry and production and related occupations, men feature well. Women form the bulk of the labour in subsistence farming, as they assist in planting, hoeing and harvesting of

the crops. In most cases women do gardening. In the armed forces only 4% of females have been recruited.

In the industrial and manufacturing sectors women are limited to the operation of the sewing machines, while men do the cutting of fabrics (Dyer, 2001:12-15). On the same note, only men are promoted to positions of foremen and personnel managers, as well as heads of trade unions. The Lesotho Labour Code Order 24 of 1992 aspires towards equality in all sectors and salaries, but in vain (Labour Code No 24, 1992:356).

The informal sector is rapidly growing in every township in Lesotho (Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations Report, 1995:34). Originally this sector was mainly the domain of women. The high unemployment rate, which was worsened by the retrenchments in the mining industries of South Africa, has lately forced many men into this sector. Indications exist that men and women have utilised this sector for different reasons (Mhone, 1994:39-55): women enter this sector to support and maintain their families, while men are more motivated by personal needs.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The foregoing sections show that patriarchy has diffused into and permeated the history and every sector of Basotho society; in the cultural context, politics, employment, in decision-making positions and in the legal system. The upshot of this is that women are marginalised and discriminated against. Women are treated as second-class citizens. They are relegated to the lowest levels in Basotho society and culture.

Despite the overwhelming burden of patriarchy, the growing awareness of its devastating consequences, and the political process (albeit very slow) of recognising women's basic human rights, Basotho women are still

not given a fair opportunity/voice to respond in terms of what they feel and why, within the larger framework of what they have experienced and what they think.

Given this situation, the aim of this study is the deconstruction of patriarchy and its ramification in Basotho culture and civil society - to uncover the views and perceptions of women, and to articulate their opinions. Accordingly, the following objectives are formulated:

- to investigate the entrenchment of patriarchy in the family;
- to determine the nature of gender relations within the institutions;
and
- to deconstruct patriarchy, and to unveil the differences of meanings allocated to it.

1.7 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of three chapters, is introductory in nature: to the empirical situation of women, and the current state of theories and perspectives on feminism and patriarchy. It traces the history of theorising through to post-modern theories on gender and patriarchy (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 deals with methodology. Apart from the 'normal' reporting on methods and techniques used for data collection, indigenous anthropology produces important implications for the study and is therefore also dealt with.

The second part of the study deals with the ethnographic data. Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the entrenchment of patriarchy within the family, while Chapter 5 considers patriarchy at institutional level.

The third section can perhaps be viewed as the most important section of the study. In order to understand the 'consciousness' of patriarchy, the empirical data will be deconstructed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 provides an assessment and a meta-theoretical overview of the study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES AND PARADIGMS IN GENDER RESEARCH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In anthropological discussions on the behaviour, roles and status of men and women, it has often been argued that differences are either cultural or biological in nature. Many anthropologists, such as Rosaldo (1974:23) for example, emphasize the biological make-up of the sexes in discussing the unequal status of women. Haralambos and Holborn (1991:327), as well as Oakley (1974:10-11), operate according to the same view. It is on this basis that Lamphere (1974:3) concludes that sexual asymmetry seems to be a disease affecting many societies. In addition, Murdock (1949: 91-112), in examining gender roles and the composition of families in different societies, found that cultural factors are responsible for the division of labour. Although these anthropologists did not formulate explicit feminist theories in analysing the problem of gender inequality, they did lay the groundwork for most discussions on feminist theories in anthropology.

For Seymour-Smith (1986:114) the term “feminism” embraces a variety of movements and ideologies concerned with the emancipation or liberation of women, the establishment of equal rights for women and opposition to forms of male dominance. Feminism has, however, never been a united or homogenous movement (cf. de Jong 1992:123-128). Orthodoxies such as Marxism, socialism, liberalism and racism have all proposed specific answers to (reasons for) existing inequalities between men and women.

The above-mentioned anthropological and feminist approaches can to a large extent be grouped together because, to a greater or lesser degree,

they are all based on the modernist assumption and acknowledgement of the existence of one single, constant principle – whether it be culture, biology, race, capitalism or certain structural elements without which gender issues like patriarchy cannot be explained and at the same time be devoid of meaning.

In this world of continuously changing historical events, the establishing of any constant cultural, biological, racial or structural principle is quite simply not possible – and by extension there is also no fixed single frame of reference in respect of issues such as patriarchy for example. In the process of arguing the relationship between “truth” and “reality”, the post-modernist influence has as its point of departure the supposition that people shape their world in terms of their experiences through narrating their life stories (this is because every “story” constructs a unique life world). The acknowledgement of a plurality of voices, and the concomitant acknowledgement of uncertainties, awakens the awareness that different interpretations are possible. The interpretations can at most be considered to be subjective, fluid (i.e. not absolute) thought and/or language constructs, that are revealed in life histories or narratives which find no reality beyond the human spirit in societal reality.

This chapter is based on the following two major approaches: firstly, to introduce briefly some of the (modernist) more general anthropological approaches and feminist theories on gender, where some commonalities and differences will be highlighted; and secondly, to identify in a more detailed discussion the central concepts of post-modernism. The deconstruction of patriarchy forms the core heuristic concept of this study and will therefore also receive the necessary attention.

2.2 ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES

2.2.1 Biological perspectives

Firestone (1970), quoted in Haralambos and Holborn (1991:537), acknowledges the work of anthropologists in observing the importance of female inequality to the material world of reproduction. According to her, men and women were created differently. Inequality and the division of labour stem from each sex's biological make-up. Their biological differences have led to the formation of the biological nuclear family. In her view, all societies share the concept of the biological family, which has the following key aspects involved in its functioning: childbirth, pregnancy and lactation. Pregnancy and lactation in particular have serious consequences for the lives of women. It is during the time of pregnancy and nursing babies that they depend on men for survival. Men are supposed to be the full providers for the family, but also in the extended family and even in the state, where government institutions are established to deal with welfare and support services. Women usually fall into this dependency category according to national legislation, and the dependency period depends on the length of time needed to nurture infants. The point Firestone makes is that the dependency of the child on the mother, and of the mother on the man or the state, is present in every society. This has influenced the unequal power relationship between women and men in favour of the latter.

Authors such as Rosaldo (1974:28), Haralambos and Heald (1989:27), Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1986:24) and Ross (1987:816-817) confirm that the biological differences between men and women are accountable for the sexual division of labour within the modern nuclear family. According to these scholars, women are responsible for the socialization of children because of their reproductive role and their assumed ability to nurture children. The father is the sole provider of resources within the

household. Wharton (2005:82-86) shows that the family operates on the basis of the rigid division of labour; he asserts that biological functions are entrenched in body hormonal development over the life cycle.

Man's dominant position over woman extends to most, if not all, relationships in society. Mannathoko (1995:3), for example, asserts that men are socialized to be authoritative leaders controlling the life of women, while women are socialized to respond passionately to men.

2.2.2 Cultural perspectives

In order to gain understanding of the cultural perspective on the study of gender it is imperative to focus on the work of Margaret Mead. According to Nanda (1994:93) Mead studies masculine and feminine roles in different cultural groups in order to find out whether their personalities are influenced by their biological make-up or not. In her opinion, the roles of the sexes in non-industrialized countries differ from those of Western countries, with the roles differing from culture to culture. Sex roles are thus determined by cultural patterns. This implies that culture determines one's behaviour through the socialization process, because individual members of that society are guided by the norms, values, rules and customs of societies. Nanda (2003:248) recognizes this factor and points out that in some societies there is a concept of the "real man" which denotes aggressiveness and masculinity, while the perfect woman is modest and feminine, yet also relegated to lower status.

In his well-known cross-cultural survey, Murdock (1949:91-112) found that according to culture men undertook the harder, more physical work like hunting, lumbering or mining, while women performed most of the household chores such as the subsistence farming and nurturing of children. Murdock concludes that this asymmetry of labour is a universal phenomenon. According to Oakley (1974:67) this has nothing to do with

biology, but reflects cultural arrangements. Among the Imbuti of Central Africa, for example, women and men work together and both sexes are responsible for childcare. On the same point di Leonardo (1991:7) asserts that evidence from contemporary hunting and gathering or foraging societies shows that women also do some hunting. She talks of the importance of gathered foodstuffs, which promotes the idea of food-sharing by both sexes in the hunting activity. In her view, hunting and gathering are not compatible with childbearing and nursing. The point made by the two authors is that women can perform hunting and gathering while at the same time taking care of children.

According to Ortner (1974:76) the fact that women are universally oppressed and devalued³ has to do with the way in which culture defines female roles. She feels that society should place more value on the meaning of culture than on the meaning of nature (1974:77). It is through culture that humanity controls and regulates nature. In her opinion, men in general rank higher in specific aspects of life, such as religion, rituals and politics. In the same vein, Chodorow (1974:54-55) and Lamphere (1987:11) argue that boys and girls are socialized differently within the family; girls are encouraged to be like their mothers, to be “little women”, while boys are encouraged to emulate their fathers, to become “men”. It is through this enculturation process that girls become invisible while boys are trained to be visible in public to assume the role of their fathers.

From the above discussion it is clear that there is no general agreement among anthropologists about the phenomenon of female subordination. Some locate the roots of female subordination in the biological nature of the woman and the reproductive function, and the

³There is no general agreement among anthropologists about the existence of universal female subordination (Seymour-Smith 1986:115)

corresponding biologically determined aggressiveness of the male, while others stress that this is essentially a social and cultural phenomenon.

2.3 FEMINIST THEORIES

Generally speaking, “feminism” refers to a practice and theory which acknowledges the subordination of women and concentrates on the equalising of their rights, economically, politically and culturally. As stated however, there are differing views within the concept of feminism. The emancipation or liberation of women, the establishing of equal rights for women, the question of female sexuality, and opposition to forms of male dominance are all ideologies and strategies that are apparent. In the following sections central themes of the more prominent feminist movements will be introduced.

2.3.1 Socialist feminists

Socialist feminists believe that there is unequal power-sharing, based especially on wealth, gender, class and sex⁴. The main idea of socialist feminists is that this unequal sharing of resources between males and females is based on class and capitalism. This has resulted in males being more likely to be the owners of property and resources. They are more absorbed in the market economy through employment, while the labour of females either takes place in the family or is under-remunerated. This promotes the low status of the female in institutions and in the family. Patriarchy and capitalism are important terms used by socialist feminists in analysing gender inequality (Mannathoka, 1995:12).

⁴ Gender is a social/cultural constructed concept recently used to denote how males and females have to act while sex is a biological determinist position denoting female and masculine organs (Seymour-Smith, 1986:129, Mannathoka, 1995:3-6, Ramphele M, E Boonzaier, 1988:154 and Wharton, 2005:6-7).

Taking the point further, Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988:97) and Epprecht (1993:60-62) demonstrate that gender and class relationships are interconnected with each other in capitalist society, which is highly patriarchal. A patriarchal society once more highlights the emphasis of male power over women.

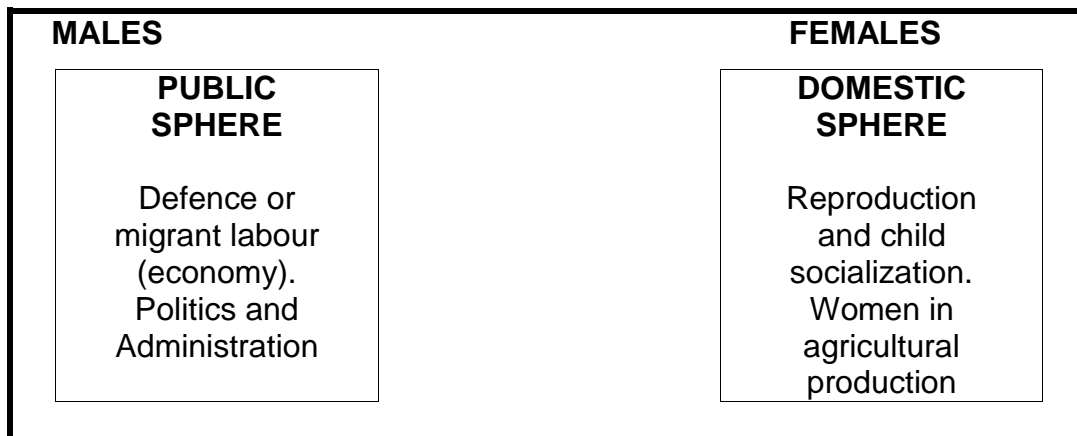
For the socialist feminist, the labour of women may be likened to a reserve army of cheap/unpaid labour which is used whenever there is a shortage of male labour (Lindsey 1997:15; Adamson *et al.* 1988:98). Women's salaries in the capitalist system are generally lower than those of their male counterparts. Exponents of socialist feminism feel very strongly that the capitalist economic system should completely be changed in order to free women. They believe that the economic oppression of women and sexism work hand in hand and they therefore call for a socialist revolution to change it (Basow, 1992:331). The major goal is thus to transform the economic system of the capitalist state: this will act as a strategy to bring gender equality, because men and women then will have the same economic power and sharing of resources.

2.3.2 Liberal feminists

The major principle of liberal feminists is equality of rights and granting of freedom to everybody in society (Lindsey 1997:14). Liberal feminists strive towards fair competition, equality of opportunities and resources for all, regardless of sex. This means that everybody must be free to rise into decision-making positions according to their competence and talents; there should be no legal or custom-related hindrance. Ritzer (1996:453) stresses that everything that seems to be a barrier to the freedom of women should be removed, and in fact, that all the stumbling blocks preventing women from overcoming gender inequality should be addressed. This will pave the way for females to take leading roles in the same way that their male counterparts do.

Liberal feminists explain gender inequality according to the public:domestic dichotomy. (Mannathoka, 1995:8; Sanday, 1974:195, Freedman, 2001:26-27 and Lamphere, 2000:88).

DIAGRAM 2: Public and domestic dichotomy.



The domestic sphere is appropriate to women because they reproduce and socialize children. The public sphere, however, has power because it is the sphere of administration and decision-making. Women are less respected in this sphere because of discrimination by men. The public sphere governs and restricts the lives of women entirely. At the same time, however, men control women's lives in the domestic sphere by virtue of their being the heads of the families, according to the patriarchal system. The introduction of the market economy and the migrant labour system left women taking care of household chores as *de jure* heads of the households. However, women are marginalized in the public sphere because few are employed in decision-making positions. The public sphere remains the domain of men; this is supported by gender discrimination by men operating in that sphere.

Liberal feminists advocate transformation of state policies and the reform of laws on credit, inheritance, and property equality that discriminate against women (Haralambos & Holborn, 1991:536-537).

Their strategies include equal job opportunities, equal power-sharing in politics and decision-making positions. Equality, not equity, is the norm insofar as their mission is concerned. According to liberal feminists the solution is not revolution for their cause but transformation.

2.3.3 Black feminists

Black feminists emphasize the notion of triple oppression: race, class and gender discrimination suffered by Black women (Nain, 2002:117; Hill-Collins, 2002:6; Walby, 1997:76 and Elliot, 1996:65-66, Puryear, 1983:266-268). The main focus, however, is on discrimination by Whites on Blacks. McKay (1994:355) contends that race is the cornerstone of the Black feminist movement, which argues that Western feminist theorists marginalize them because of their colour. White people, for instance, created laws that discriminate against Blacks. In studying Black women in both the Northern hemisphere and in less developed countries, Moore (1989:11) and Mohanty (1991:53-59), come to the conclusion that Whites tended to label them as “women of colour” or “third world women”. Noonan (2000: 135) states that White feminists from Western countries in the struggle for gender equality see themselves differently from the way they see women of the third world. This discrimination portrays White feminists from the West as superior to Black feminists from Africa. Accordingly, she shows (2000:138) that in fighting patriarchal power, White middle class feminists in the West have excluded women of colour, lesbians and third world women, arguing that White middle class females consider themselves superior. To make the point even clearer Lindsay, cited in Mohanty (1991:58), writes about discrimination against African women in the following terms: *“My analysis will start by stating that all African women are politically and economically dependent, while other writers show that the only work for African women is prostitution because of their economic dependency”*. McFadden (2000:52) and Epprecht (2000:26-27) align themselves with Mohanty (1991:76) in stating that the

writings of female Western feminists regarding third world women are biased in nature.

2.3.4 Classical Marxist and radical feminists

For classical Marxists the class system as organized by the capitalist state creates gender inequality. According to Hartman (2002:99-102) and Sacks (1974:209) private property in capitalist societies meant that men became the owners of property, while women as non-owners of property depend on the men. This was responsible for the power of men over women, because women were without any movable or immovable property. Women's work was mainly the reproduction of male heirs who could follow in the footsteps of their fathers as property owners. The women were bound to operate under the authority of their husbands, taking instructions from them. On the same point MODO (1998:176) and Walby (1997:29) posit that men own the means of production in the capitalist system. Not only are they the ones who will most likely be recruited, but they will also be paid more than women for the same work. Women, on the other hand, can easily be sent back to the domestic domain when no longer needed and are therefore usually the first victims of retrenchment. Back home, they perform essential domestic services free of charge and reproduce the next generation of labour for the capitalist economy. Capitalism thus both depends upon and reinforces sexism and male supremacy.

The major point of departure for radical feminism according to Delamont (2003:9) is their outspokenness against patriarchy. For them this is the most important vehicle for gender inequality. Adamson *et al.* (1988:112) for example, clearly indicates how patriarchal capital perceives society and its institutions as oppressive to women and supportive of patriarchy. In the same vein, Ritzer (1996:462) describes the nature of

patriarchal bureaucracy and its negative influence on the attitudes of men towards women.

Radical feminists perceive society and its institutions as oppressive to women and supportive of patriarchy (Basow, 1992:332; Popenoe, Cunningham & Boulton 1998:254). A discrepancy exists between men and women regarding power-sharing. Because in most institutions men possess more power than women, patriarchy is an oppressive structure which supports male domination (Coetzee, 2001:300-301). Under the rule of patriarchy women are powerless and unable to exercise their rights as human beings. In order to correct the situation, radical feminists opt for an anti-militaristic, non-hierarchical society organized on female values (Lindsey, 1997:16).

Radical feminists have made some strides in investigating domestic violence and especially sexual harassment in the workplace, in order to show how patriarchy spreads its web (Walby, 1997:38). Sexual harassment in the workplace is a factor which gives men power and denies women's chances of gaining upward mobility at the workplace. Radical feminists have moved the focus of the debate on patriarchy to include other matters such as status, work and public life.

2.3.5 Interlude

In the presentation thus far the focus has been on the central ideas of different anthropological perspectives and feminist theories. These orthodoxies are fairly well known in anthropological circles and in-depth discussions were not required.

The issues pertaining to each of the different theories and perspectives are summarized below:

TABLE 2.1: Commonalities and Differences

Themes	Bio.	Cul.	Soc.	Lib.	Bla.	Cla.Marx	Rad.
Capitalism			√			√	√
Patriarchy							√
Division of labour and women's labour	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Equality and freedom				√			
Race					√		
Sexism			√	√	√		
Social class			√			√	

Legend:

Bio. = Biological; Cul. = Cultural; Soc. = Socialist; Lib. = Liberals; Bla. = Black; Clas. Marx. = Classical Marxists; Rad. = Radical.

The capitalist theme is to be found in Socialist, Classical Marxist and Radical feminist theories. The issues of division of labour and women being underpaid or undervalued cut across all perspectives, while the liberals place more emphasis on equality of sex, rights/opportunities, and freedom of individual rights. Furthermore, Socialists agree with Liberals that sexism promotes inequality and gender discrimination, while Socialists

and Classical Marxists concentrate on social class aspects. The Black feminists' argument is based on race.

In most of the above-mentioned perspectives, the oppression of women does not relate to patriarchy. Radical feminists acknowledge it, but give a very brief explanation of the root cause of patriarchy. It is clear that a more detailed description of patriarchy is necessary. There is a need for a theory that will turn away from the class system of the division of labour in discussing gender oppression. There is a need to allow communities to narrate their own life experiences. It is believed that post-modernism allows a deconstruction of the discourse about patriarchy through the narration of different life histories.

2.4 POST-MODERNISM, DECONSTRUCTION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Most post-modern theorists agree that post-modernism has to do with scepticism about grand narratives and the promise of a positive, emancipator science. Post-modernism focuses more on heterogeneity and the search for concrete, context-specific and historically situated narratives that are not divorced from the social and political interests of the people (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001:645, Powell, 1998:149, Ritzer, 1996:609, Flax, 1990:54-63, Van Rensburg, 2004:13-34, Van Niekerk & Venter 2002:99-105).

In dealing with post-modernism, Goduka and Swadener (1999:3) uphold the view that we have to become subjects, not objects, of knowledge. They emphasize the idea of integration, that we are interconnected; hence it is not easy for an individual to operate on her/his own. We realise that the interrelation that Goduka and Swadener (1999:16) talk about is seen in our daily lives and in different institutional structures. In everyday life, individuals talk about what happened in the

past, what we are doing in the present and how to plan for the future. We are aware that people cannot divorce themselves from these periods as their life histories touch on them. Degenaar (1987:116) shows that the periodization of time into pre-modern, modern and post-modern confirms that changes are taking place. With these changes there are alternative ways of understanding human experiences. Each time period explains a problem utilizing different explanatory methods. Degenaar (1987:117) asserts that a post-modern social theory examines the world from various angles such as class, race, gender and other factors.

According to post-modernism, maxims and proverbs which shape a language are full of discourses which have led to the formulation of knowledge and which should be uncovered. Post-modernist theorists support various discourses and meanings which form texts. The meaning of texts in post-modernism is not derived from literature only; rather, the conversation between two people can form a text in the post-modern understanding of the term.

Much post-modern thought has to do with the 'other' – whether it is the 'other' individual, 'other' groups, 'other' races, the 'other' of male, the 'other' of the West, etc. Post-modernism's emphasis on otherness/difference has allowed formerly silenced 'others' such as women, Blacks, and gays to express their own stories in their own voices. This is the point that some feminists are acknowledging. Referring to a post-modernist feminist theory, Erasmus (1998:26) posits:

“Post-modernism, in principle, enables previously peripheral voices (including those of third world women) both to be legitimately heard and in relation placed on a stronger foothold to previously privileged discourses. This, to my mind, perhaps implies a certain deepening and strengthening of democratic values such as tolerance and inclusivity.”

Post-modernist theory needs plural voices to give “more” meaning and to create an opportunity for listening to their experiences. This means, in terms of the argument of this study, that the oppression of women cannot be understood in terms of one answer only: i.e. patriarchal ideology. Women are individuals in their own right: listening to them through their own voices and experiences will give multiple answers about patriarchy. Post-modernism therefore is the tool which will help to uncover in this study what is concealed in the Basotho culture with the purpose of finding new ways and suggestions for understanding patriarchy.

The analysis of communications (conversations) with special attention to the author’s or speaker’s intent is of great importance to post-modernism. In this regard the concept of ‘discourse analysis’ is used to indicate the concern with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence, the interrelationships between language and society, and the interactivities of everyday communication. As deconstruction normally represents the starting point for discourse analysis the focus of the next section will be on deconstruction.

2.4.1 Deconstruction

“Deconstruction” is generally associated with Jacques Derrida. Derrida shows that in a text a word can mean different things depending on its usage and therefore one should be flexible in adding meanings to words (Caputo, 1997:27). Higgs (2002:171) asserts that words can have different meanings especially when integrated or connected with other words. Deconstruction thus draws attention to ‘several meanings’ which gives way to deeper thinking so as to uncover other meanings and avoid monotony.

Caputo (1997:9) in defining deconstruction, states clearly that deconstruction applies not only to the fields of philosophy or linguistics, but

can be applied to all other disciplines. In this regard Higgs (2002:171) and Kuper (1992:5-6) point out that every event or cultural practice, whether marginalized, excluded or not, can be deconstructed. Derrida cited by Higgs (2002:170-171) writes that: *“There are always gaps in communication, and no way can that meaning be present in its totality at any one point.”* This implies that the meanings of concepts, events or practices cannot be explained in one word, symbol or sign alone. According to the prevailing meaning, culture, accompanied by its rituals and ceremonies, should be interpreted by unpacking/uncovering multiple meanings for better understanding.

From the above discussion it is clear that deconstruction will allow us to find the heterogeneity of meanings. The experience of many people will shed some light for better understanding and gaining more knowledge through several voices. To emphasize this point, Caputo (1997:13) and Kierans (2003:25) show that identity, for example, cannot be taken at face value. In the identity of a culture the definition of patriarchy as male domination over females does not hold completely: it may be taken as truth, yet the multiplicity of voices and experiences will uncover several different meanings of what it entails. Once the inner issue is unpacked, it creates a space for other voices and meanings, and it discloses knowledge and thus prevents totalitarianism.

Most post-modernists agree about the central concepts within post-modernism. These concepts perform an important heuristic role in this study, namely the deconstruction of patriarchy. In the following sections the central concepts that have been selected will be discussed.

2.4.2 Binary oppositions and power relations

Degenaar (1987:93) points out that Derrida advocated that in language usage there are binary oppositions (for example, male/female, presence/absence) which reflect different positions of dominance or power

and are characteristic of many language usages. In these hierarchies of terms it is the first term, which overshadows the meaning of the other term; which has more explanatory weight. Powell (1998:106) and Rorty (2004:1) confirm Derrida's concern that the binary oppositions force the human mind to operate according to these pairings, yet this contributes to the problem of an imbalance of power. Under binary opposition a power structure is instituted which becomes a reality of life – usually without any further explanations. However, words do not have a single, concrete meaning (as pointed out in section 2.4.1). Therefore people exercise the power allocated to words differently (Francis 2001:67); Agger 1991:16). Foucault (1977, cited in Powell 1998:94-95) argues in this regard that there is no fixed explanation for the subject of power. According to him, power is a set of relations between individuals, it is a phenomenon which occurs when partners relate to one another; therefore no single action can clarify it (Leroke 1994:378). This being the case, it means that social life is characterized by power relations. In his well-known study on prisons Foucault (1977:255-256) shows that planned actions/decisions turn out to mean different things to different people. Baudrillard, quoted in Powell (1998:80) takes the argument further by using the concept "double coding". People in post-modern society are, according to Baudrillard, growing up in a world of simulations and the consumption of commodities (Powell, 1998:54). One such commodity is sex. Baudrillard in Powell (1998:96) argues that sexual simulations are everywhere: in advertising, fashion, on television and film, to a point of absolute absorption, where the difference between reality and simulation disappears. There are no sexual codes and everything becomes sex because sex is (in) everything, therefore sex is dead (Powell, 1998:62, 96).

2.4.3 Plurality of voices and experiences

According to post-modernist theory it is impossible for a universal positivistic social science to take a stand, because all people have their own unique ways of telling stories about thought and experience. On this

subject Agger (1999:117) asserts that post-modernism wants to unpack different meanings through the recognition of various voices: multiple voices thus add to various meanings which are contextualized by history and culture (experiences). Lindholm (1997:749) is of the opinion that anthropologists have to use multiple narratives on the feelings of people and their behaviour, and he emphasizes that individual narrative stories are more informative than grand narratives. In many ways people behave differently in different situations. In this way the knowledge of people is not the same, although everyone has authority and power over his own knowledge. Therefore, more meanings of the “texts” should be employed through the use of plural voices relating their narratives. The recognition of the plurality of voices will help us to form more ‘texts’, which will give more versions in the production of knowledge.

2.4.4 Logocentrism and decentering

The idea of decentred knowledge is at the heart of post-modernism. Post-modernists assert that knowledge should be available to the people who are the soul of society. Derrida (1983:40; 1978:281;1976:3) asserts that Western thought is entrenched in logocentric truth and reason, and that this has dominated the Western voice in explaining issues. For example, what is given as reason may be regarded as truth. No other way of thinking is recognised, except the monolithic way. According to Derrida (1978:11) society lacks the power to think on its own except by following what is regarded as “truth”. People conform to what intellectuals tell them without them giving any meaning or interpretation to the issues. This is wrong, because a word can mean different things to different people, depending on the nature of the discourse. Furthermore any activity or event has different layers which form many meanings when interpreted. It is in line with this thinking that other explanations have to be sought out, that the gaps or loopholes have to be filled.

Derrida, as quoted in Ritzer (1996:598), wants to see society free from central scientific ideas propounded by intellectual authorities that claim “truth” and rationality that “strengthen” the dominant discourse. Society must say what it wants to say. Here Derrida talks about the idea of decentering, moving away from authoritative explanations. Powell (1998:100-101) points out that the centre holds power; authority and represses, ignores and marginalizes others. In the same vein, he points out that Derrida noted that rationality and truth are regarded as the core of most of people who are strong on the enlightenment school of thought which is based on a centre. In decentering, there is a constructive force which extends knowledge to those who marginalize others. Once the constructive force takes place through decentering the knowledge is distributed to all.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The epistemological premise for Chapter 2 can be summarized as follows: Feminism in anthropology has flown under several flags; anthropology of women, anthropology of gender, or feminist anthropology. Different feminist theories all try to legitimize their one (monolithic) kind of knowledge – whether it is based on liberal values, race, class or capitalism and invariably end up excluding other forms of knowledge. Feminist anthropology should not ignore shifts in the larger intellectual scene, especially the current post-modern trend. The underlying conditions of post-modern knowledge, according to Seidman (1991:131-146) are:

- Social scientists are intrinsically linked to their social and historical inquiry.
- Knowledge and power are closely related and mutually dependent.

Post-modern (feminist) anthropology has been criticised on various grounds. For Tong (1989:232) for instance, post-modern feminists have not produced any common, concrete theory for understanding female

oppression; Lindholm (1997:747) argues that post-modern approaches to anthropology typically display certain characteristic logical errors and are based on questionable assumptions about human thought and desire; while Mascial-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen (1991:225) believe that anthropologists who want to write 'new ethnography' would do better to use feminist theory as a model than to draw on post-modern trends.

Contrary to the above-mentioned views, Marcus and Fisher (1986:135) construe feminism as little more than the expression of women's dissatisfactions with a sinister patriarchy. Similarly, Clifford and Marcus (1986:20-21) are of the opinion that feminist ethnography has focused either on setting the record straight about women or revising anthropological strategies. According to them, it has not produced unconventional forms of writing or developed a reflection on ethnographic textuality as such.

Much more criticism could be raised against both feminism and post-modernism. However, it is believed that common ground between feminism and post-modernism exists. Erasmus (1998:19) for example, argues that feminists' tradition of overgeneralization, universalization and the habit of non-transparency of plural voices could be overcome by employing post-modern theory to counteract the problematic areas of feminism. Plurality and flexibility make room for a multiplicity of voices. It is along this line of thinking that he suggests (1998:19) a "marriage contract" between post-modernism and feminism to pave a path of transparent understanding of gender relations and female oppression in society. This implies that there should be a relationship between post-modernists and feminists. Erasmus (1998:23) believes that no one will criticize another for being historical and using narratives of rationality, and that the post-modern paradigm empowers marginalized groups by making their voices heard historically.

Looking at Basotho society, it is clear that discrimination based on gender and sex is still inscribed in common linguistic usage, in aesthetic values, knowledge and everyday activities; it continues to be a matter of widespread consensus which maintains the central position of “man”, while women remain “invisible”. Yet in the official rhetoric, in the political argument, and in the ecclesiastical voice, at least, the premises of gender and sexual inequality are no longer acceptable. However, in the world of mundane practice the battle to control values, meanings, symbols and practices rages on.

Given that the course of the everyday Basotho ethnographic text contains two “cultures” of consciousness and representation regarding patriarchy, the unraveling of the ‘patriarchal labyrinth’ rests on

- Listening to plural and diverse ideas from different people about how they experience, perceive and view the world (the perceptions of individuals differ from one another and it is essential to capture these different meanings for representation); and
- Deconstruction, which will uncover and unpack hidden meanings and will help to write different/more texts, which will give more/different meanings about patriarchy.

Having stated the above about the theoretical focus of this study, it must be emphasized, however, that the methodological approach will not be based on one or other literary model, but more on an anthropological type of analysis. The next chapter provides detailed information on the research design.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is fourfold: firstly, to compile and to present an overview of the investigation; secondly, to address specific issues regarding indigenous anthropology; thirdly to introduce the research area; and finally to explain and describe the process of data collection, interpretation and presentation.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This is an ethnographic study⁵, consisting of qualitative research aimed at describing and understanding patriarchy. When anthropologists study their own societies, they cannot take any terms for granted, since the particular segment of the society may contain variations of the subculture that they are not familiar with (Nash, 1981:409). To be aware of, and in order to deal with, familiar and/or unfamiliar issues, the emic-etic distinction - while it cannot be used to classify or divide all anthropological research approaches into neat categories (Seymour-Smith, 1986:92) - remains of great methodological value.

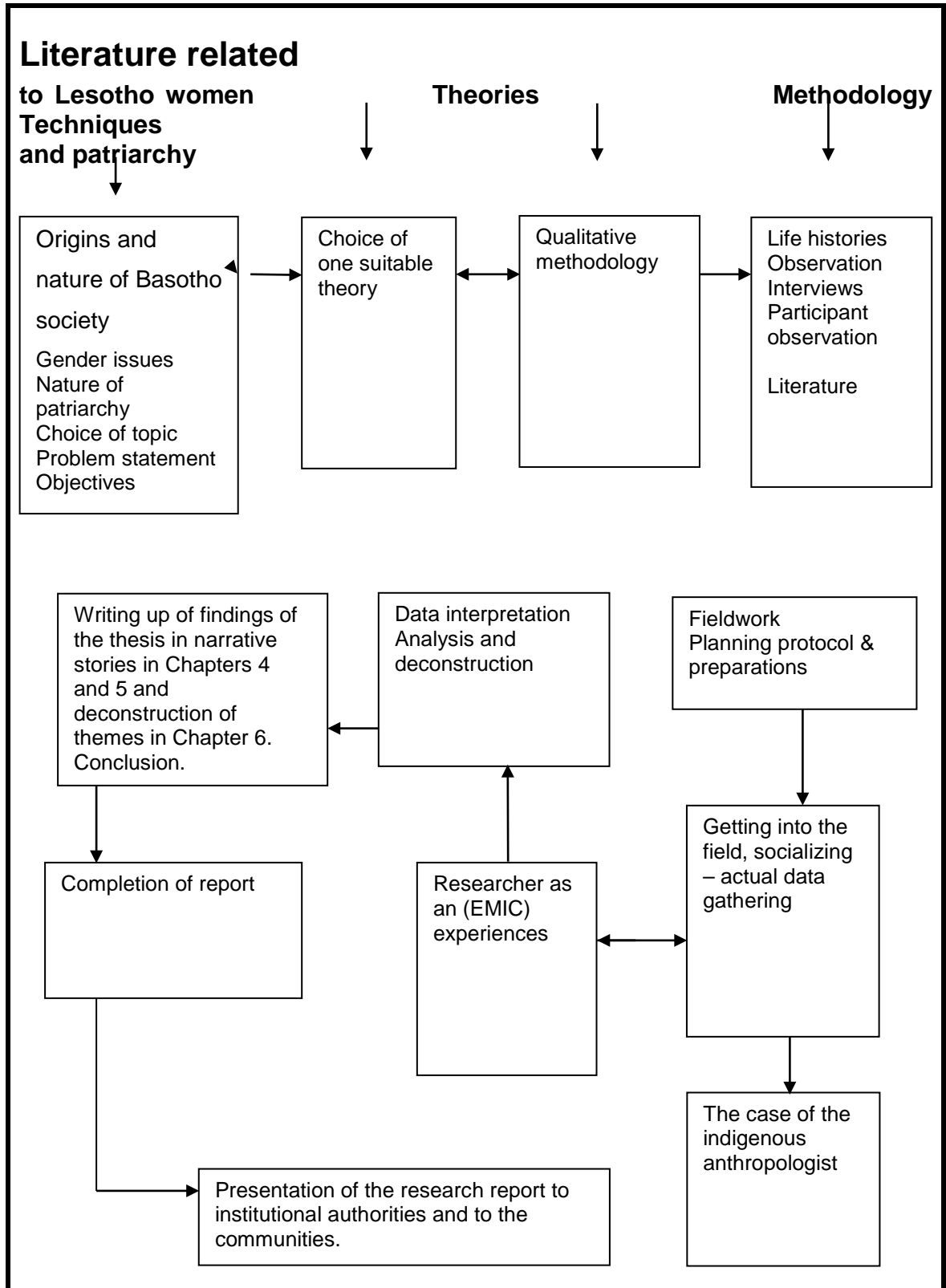
The need to establish a conceptually interwoven framework for the study is acknowledged, and diagram 3.1 provides an overview of all of the purposely selected dimensions/aspects, theories, techniques and methods. The main point is that the research conducted was viewed and dealt with as an integrated process involving the examination of dimensions, aspects, theories, techniques and methods. The overriding

⁵ See Mouton and Marais (1993:22); Fouché and Delport (2002:265-269); Mapetla and Schlyter (1998:4); Babbie and Mouton (2001:271) Neuman (2003:17); Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:38 and Neuman, 2003:146, 376) for more details on the nature of this kind of research.

point is that the research conducted was viewed and dealt with as an integrated process.

Diagram 3

The route for research



3.3 INDIGENOUS PROCESS

This section is deliberately written in an idiosyncratic style. Firstly, I will briefly introduce myself, explain the field protocol and then describe my place of settlement, the building of rapport, the role of the male guide, the advantages and disadvantages of being an indigenous anthropologist, the ethical problems experienced, and adjustments which needed to be made.

3.3.1 The researcher

I am 'M'aseoehla Molapo. I was born in the Mokhotlong district of Lesotho, in the heart of the mountains. I am a lecturer at the National University of Lesotho in the field of Social Anthropology/Sociology. I am married to Seeiso Ntšeke Molapo of Chief Ntšeke Jonathan Molapo of Manganeng Ha Ntšeke.

3.3.2 Field protocol

I obtained letters of introduction from my supervisor and employer introducing me to the chief of the area, spelling out the purpose of the study and requesting permission on my behalf to undertake a study and asking for protection. This protocol was important in that the chief was the one who had to notify his sub-chiefs and his people about the study. I was introduced to the villagers in a public gathering organized by the chief, where he spelled out the purpose of the study. In a country where the institution of chieftainship is as important as it is in Lesotho, the support of the chief is crucial. The chief, as principal administrator, knows about everything which takes place in his area. He was also responsible for security and for the accommodation of the researcher. The meeting was fruitful because people were made aware of my presence and my objectives, which I stated as being to undertake a study, investigating the relations of men and women in the family, and focusing on customs, rituals

and day-to-day living. I also indicated that I would visit institutions. I emphasized that I was a teacher at their university and that we were eager in our Department to add more knowledge to our programmes for the benefit of the students in our country.

I informed them that I had to write a book, which I would bring back to them. I emphasized that I was one of their children: some of them, in fact, knew me. This was not the first time they had seen me, as I am always present at Moreneng (the principal chief's place) whenever there are family occasions.

During these introductory meetings, in most villages, I usually allowed time for questions and clarification. In some villages one question that was always asked was, "Have you been sent here by the Government?" Some of the men posed this question: "Are you one of the women from Beijing⁶ fighting for equality with us? You want these women to undermine our authority." However, there were not too many sceptics among the villagers. Some of the women were more interested in reviving the income-generating projects in their villages, which were no longer in existence as a result of many problems. I repeated the aim and purpose of my study and my current status, at the end the chief summed up what I had said. He talked to the chiefs of the villages involved in the study, pleading with them to be cooperative by calling "*pitsos*" for me. Perhaps the most important way of building rapport was by way of the "*pitso*". Normally, about a week before my visit to a village, I arranged with the local chief to call a "*pitso*" for me. The chief would tell his/her own court counsellors ("*banna ba khotla*") to arrange the said "*pitso*" for my benefit.

The procedure for calling "*pitso*" involves one of the counsellors choosing a particular time in the day to stand at a strategic part of the village and in a clear, loud voice invite villagers to attend the "*pitso*" as

⁶ The Fourth United Nations World Conference for Women was held in Beijing, China, in 1995.

requested: *“banna le Basali ba motse ona le metse eohle e oelang tlasa morena mang mang. Morena o le memela pitsong ka tsatsi le itseng ka nako ena.”* Literally, this means: “Men and women of this village and villages under the administration of this chief (*“morena”*) or chieftainness, you are invited to attend a *‘pitso’* at such time on a particular day. You are all invited. It is a matter of necessity.” This person must be an adult male and is called the *“Seepa pitso”* or *“pitso”* announcer.

It was therefore made easy for me, because on each specific day I would find people gathered, as well as the chief/chieftainness. The chief or counsellor would open the meeting with a prayer. Then the chief/counsellor would inform the audience of the purpose of the gathering and introduce me. I commenced by greeting the gathering, according to Basotho protocol and hierarchy. My greeting followed these lines:

“His Majesty, King Letsie II, His Majesty’s Cabinet Ministers, Principal Chief of Leribe, Principal Chief of Peka, Tsikoane and Kolbere; Chief of Peka, Fobane and Kolonyama; Chief of the village (for example Ha Leburu); Moshoeshoe’s priests ...”

This is the usual salutation even if some of those addressed are absent. I started by telling them that I am *‘M’aseoehla Molapo*, from Manganeng Ha Ntšeke. I am Chief Ntšeke’s daughter-in-law, and my husband is Seeiso Ntšeke Molapo. After the greetings and introduction I explained the purpose of my presence. In handling matters in this way, I was acting in the accepted manner, required by the patriarchal system. I had to mention my husband’s and my father-in-law’s names. Customarily, I am an appendage of my husband, as dictated by patriarchal custom. I could mention the name of my mother-in-law, but women are not recognized to any real degree in a patriarchal context.

I then introduced the chief's counsellor (Matsukulu Matsukulu of Peka Moreneng) who was accompanying me. Then I explained the research techniques, pointing out that these would comprise one-to-one interviews, which involved listening to people's life stories. If I had already completed interviews in other villages, I told them so. I told them where I was living in the village, and estimated the amount of time I would spend among them. I stated clearly that I would participate in and observe their family activities, rituals and customs, if given permission by that particular family. I would also observe and record their activities and I would go from house to house, until I was satisfied that I had gathered sufficient data for my study. I then allowed time for questions and clarifications.

The most controversial subject at Ha Leburu was the Beijing issue: some men responded by saying: "Me', do you mean to tell us that these women or our wives should no longer listen to us?" As a response to this question I reiterated my purpose. Women were more responsive: Even for those who did not attend the "pitsos", rumours spread quickly, and everyone was soon aware of my presence.

3.3.3 Place of Settlement

I had to find a place to settle for the duration of my study. The chief looked for a house for me, which I rented. The owner, 'Me' Amelia, was very kind to me; the house was well chosen because it was a three-roomed house and one room was rented out to me.

My experience while living with my landlady was that she treated me like her mother, with great respect. The negotiation for the payment of rent was done in the presence of the chief's counsellor, who was sent out to accompany me to 'Me' Amelia the first time we met. 'Me' Amelia had only one child, a boy who had died in the mines two years ago, leaving a wife with five children. The widow lived in her own home at Masaleng, a village about four kilometres away, with her

children (except for a ten-year old boy who lived with his grandmother (my property owner). In front of my room was a bare area (“*Lebala*”) which extended to a small garden and latrine (see photo 3.1).



Photograph 3.1 The room I occupied during my fieldwork was in the house on the left. I am standing in front of “*mohlongoafatše*” (typical Basotho oblong hut).

3.3.4 Building rapport

As already indicated, I had to be like the rest of the community both in dress and behaviour. I had to stick to the norms of the society when greeting and talking to the people, attending ceremonies such as “*pitsos*”, church services and funeral services. My landlady was very kind in talking to people about me and my work and introducing them to me. At times she was very protective especially when drunkards tried to talk to me. The next-door neighbour ‘*Me*’ M’alikeleli, brewed and sold Basotho beer.

I also observed the beer-brewing business, noting how the customers interacted with one another. They would continue talking, and would often ask me to buy them beer. I told them that I did not have money. In most cases they were men. I had to keep my visits brief because my landlady would talk harshly to them, pointing out that they should behave respectfully. In a way this was positive, but at the same time, I felt that she was too protective of me. I told her that part of my work was to interact with people and to observe how they socialized with one another. Whenever I had the chance of talking to 'Me' 'M'alikeleli's customers, who were buying Basotho beer, grape beer and hops, I asked them about their occupations. Most of them were former migrant labourers who had worked in the mining industries of South Africa.

Another important aspect of building rapport was my relationship with the principal chief, who is highly respected by his subjects. Some of the people in the area were my husband's relatives, as his village was not far from Peka, the area of my study. Most of the people recognized my family name and my given name.

3.3.5 The role of the guide

The chief of Peka provided me with a personal guide who was with me all the time. The guide was male, in his early 40s, an ex-migrant worker whose wife worked in Johannesburg as a domestic worker in a white person's home. He was well-known, and his guidance assisted me a great deal; he was also a mature person. The guide, however, did not serve as a research assistant. The research technique employed, in terms of collecting life histories and holding interviews, requires one-to-one contact sessions, so as to allow freedom on the part of the respondent. In order to protect the privacy of the informants, the guide was requested to withdraw to a respectable distance during interviews.

Perhaps I ought to explain that I was given a male guide because in Lesotho the chief counsellors and court messengers are men, not women. Even if a regent is chieftainess, for example Chieftainess 'Mà'likotiko Ha Leburu and 'M'apatso of Ha Napo, their counsellors (*"banna ba khotla"*) and court men – some are called court messengers – are all male. The rationale is that no woman can go about running errands for the chief instead of looking after the family, doing daily chores such as cleaning, cooking, smearing houses, washing, or taking care of subsistence farming.

There is a traditional practice according to which men assume security responsibilities. In the earlier times when a family was on a journey, the man always walked in front with his weapons – that is, a stick, a knobkerrie and a spear – ready to fight the enemy or wild animals that might appear. The wife would follow behind with the children (or a child on her back if the child was an infant) and with the luggage on her head. In essence, this supports the idea of court messengers/counsellors needing to be men. A chief's messenger is therefore always a mature man. In my case the same reasons applied: I had to be guided by a mature man. One important role of the messenger was to go to the chief to find out whether the letter from the area chief, concerning my visit and my work in his/her village, had been delivered, and whether the chief was aware of it. In all the villages the answer was positive.

3.3.6 Advantages and disadvantages

Doing fieldwork amongst one's own people has certain advantages, as one will be familiar with the cultural norms and values of the people. In Lesotho, Sesotho and English are the official languages. Sesotho is the language used by every Mosotho and is my mother tongue. The language of interaction was, therefore, Sesotho. Fahim and Helmer (1982:xx) confirm that knowledge of values, symbols and religious beliefs are an advantage to indigenous anthropologists. Indeed being a Mosotho, and

knowing the values of the culture, I was aware of the mode of dress that was expected. I would therefore put on traditional Basotho dress called “*Seshoeshoe*” and I covered my head with a headscarf. During cold weather I had to wear a blanket. This type of dress, which had to be below the knee, gives a person respectable status as an elderly woman. It is a typical Basotho woman’s dress, whereas both males and females use the blanket. If one deviates from this attire, one is unlikely to be accepted in the villages.

Discussions were more open with the older people, whereas young married couples took time to talk freely with me. I could see that it was a matter of age, not class. I had to develop the ability to communicate comfortably with people of all ages. In some cases it was hard for me as a researcher to be neutral, for example when listening to cases of domestic violence by men on women. I sometimes became emotional and was tempted to give the women advice. Hammersley and Atkinson (1991:14) confirm that during ethnographic research, anthropologists should use all means to mingle with the members of the communities. I was able to mingle with the locals and attend most of the events to observe the behaviour of people.

It was an advantage to be able to undertake this study as an indigenous anthropologist because some of the issues were very sensitive and controversial. This might have been an obstacle for a foreign anthropologist, who would be seen as an intruder, and not permitted to participate or observe certain rituals – for example, the ceremony accompanying the birth of a child (“*pitiki*” in Sesotho) or the “*bohali*” ceremony (exchange of bridewealth). I was allowed to observe the “*pitiki*” ceremony by virtue of my age and the respect I had gained from the villagers. I was also given permission to observe the beer trading ceremony in several situations. It is sometimes hard for a foreign researcher to get first-hand information. It would be problematic, for

instance, for a foreign anthropologist to attend court cases, because there is a rule of complete silence in court proceedings which applies to everyone except the protagonists and their witnesses. The rest of the audience must remain silent during the court proceedings. Foreign anthropologists, therefore, who do not understand the indigenous language, would face the problem of not understanding the terminology used in the courts, even if they know a little of the language. I had the opportunity to attend and observe some court cases dealing with issues related to the study, and to go over certain past records written in Sesotho.

Fahim (1982:xv) observes that foreign anthropologists may become ethnocentric or they may take local issues lightly, using as a frame of reference their own models and ways of thinking, which may be inappropriate. It is against this background that Madan (1982:xvii) calls “for a new kind of anthropology to fill gaps of knowledge and understanding that the unbridled positivism of Western anthropologists has created.” In this particular study I had a chance to talk to some of the men and to link some beliefs to behavioural patterns that were associated with patriarchy.

I had to change my urban habits for the benefit of the study. In urban areas, for example, people greet one another if they live in the same neighbourhood, or are familiar with each other. In the villages, it is the norm to greet everybody you meet, irrespective of the level of familiarity. I had to adapt to this style: even when people were far away I had to shout “*Lumelang moo lapeng, le phela joang kajeno?*” (“Hello everybody in the courtyard, how are you today?”).

I had to be patient and wait for responses, and very often had to repeat my questions. A successful ice-breaking move, guaranteed to build rapport and win respect, was to talk or play with the young child on the back of the mother next to you in a public transport vehicle (such as a taxi). If one does not play with or talk to a child or take a small child home

when finding it in the street, for instance, one is mistaken for a witch, or somebody who does not like small children. I had to ensure that I followed these practices because I had to surrender to the requirements of research.

According to Sesotho custom a stranger or a person who has arrived after a long journey is not allowed to touch a baby who has not been weaned. It is believed that the stranger has been through places filled with evil spirits on the way, and that such contact will make the child ill with “*phuoana*” (frontal depression of the brain). Medically speaking, this is in fact dehydration of a baby due to diarrhoea. The Basotho believe that certain modes of behaviour are caused by evil spirits, and I had to be careful to conform to all of these practices and beliefs.

As I visited the various villages, I was hailed with complimentary remarks from both men and women like “*Basali ngoana enoa e ntse e le ngoana Mosotho. Re ne re re ke khoana-tsoana kapa morutehi*”. Literally translated, this means: “This is still a Mosotho child – we thought she was now a Westerner in manners.” According to their calling I had to offer something in the form of money (“*ho khantša*”) to make them speak. This implies that the knowledge they possess is a gift from the ancestors and something should be given in exchange for it. I acted contrarily to the requirements of professional ethics because I was not supposed to exchange money for information. However, I had to conform to the custom because I needed the information.

I was really tempted to talk to young teenage girls who were unmarried mothers. The problem of teenage pregnancy at Peka is alarming. Some parents invited me to talk to their children in this regard, but I had to protect my ethical standards by sticking to my area of research. Some social problems are enormous, and communities tend to think that a researcher can help them somehow. Furthermore, the rate of

unemployment was very high for young and old, and some women were newly married with young children to take care of.

3.3.7 Ethical issues

Much has been said and written about the ethical issues involved in social research in general (cf. Babbie & Mouton, 2001:519-535), while most professional anthropological associations have created and published a formal code of conduct. What follows, is a brief report on some of the issues with which I have had to contend.

Old people are usually talkative, so I had to be patient with them, and allow them to talk freely. Sometimes they were simply lonely: one old lady was living alone, and now she had company. To show respect, I had to listen, even if the story was irrelevant to my research. Interviews became confessions under the promise that their life stories would be treated confidentially. People would tell me about personal problems, or about their children being unemployed, for instance. They thought I could help, and they were highly emotional about the fact that they had almost nothing to eat. I sometimes failed to show them any sympathy and told them to go to the government; yet at another time I would come across an old lady who did not have a candle to light, and I gave her money. This was a human reaction to suffering and poverty. At other times, young unemployed couples would ask me to look for jobs for them; or women would visit me in the evenings, also in the hope of my providing solutions to their problems. It becomes problematic when people think that an anthropologist is somebody who is wealthy or who can open doors with the authorities and speak for people about their personal problems.

It was essential always to respond to these requests in a polite way, and to repeat the objective of the study, while at the same time suggesting that they consult the authorities. It was essential for me not to ask

embarrassing questions – for example, when interviewing a single parent with a child born out of wedlock.

When interviewing the community of nuns and the priest, there were some questions that I could not ask directly because these are highly respected people. They afforded me the same respect. I devised a method of sticking to their life histories, but there were questions pertaining to patriarchy and their work that I needed to ask and I did so in an indirect manner. One nun said to me: “Oh! You are not a member of the Catholic church; it will be hard for you to understand our prayers.” I laughed and said: “No, ‘Me’, you know, my in-laws are Catholics.” So she felt more free to talk. What she told me, remains confidential.

I had to tell informants that in writing up the report I would use fictitious names when dealing with sensitive issues: respect was due to all as human beings with their own rights. I had to use numbers in case of the nuns (for example nun 1) because of their sensitivity regarding their life stories. I had to guarantee them full confidentiality and anonymity.

3.3.8 Adjustments

3.3.8.1 Adjustments at the personal level

I had some personal difficulties in adjusting to village life, and going back to my original home briefly on a visit, after having lived for so long in the city. I lived in a small room that was too small for the equipment necessary for fieldwork that was to continue for almost a year. I also had sometimes to share food with my landlady, when she did not have anything to eat with “*papa*”. I had to go to the toilet at night, which was frightening and uncomfortable. I provided my guide with a lunch pack every day when we went out. This was on compassionate grounds, as he was remunerated for his services.

I had to get used to getting around on foot at the time. The most problematic village was Ha Napo, because I had to climb the Peka plateau during hot weather to get there. The terrain was bad, and full of slippery stones. I also had to adjust in the difficult winter climate. I had to use a paraffin heater, my room had no ceiling, and at times condensed water vapour would be dripping down when I tried to work on my notes, either transcribing or translating. I had to go to sleep earlier than I had anticipated. On very cold days I carried a hot water bottle on my back, wrapped in a shawl. Unfortunately, I even contracted asthma, as diagnosed later by a doctor, because of the paraffin fumes and the dust from walking up and down in winter and spring.

Sometimes I had to take public transport to Mapoleseng village. These are ordinary vans, owned by private individuals. I had to pay for transport for my guide and myself whenever we took public transport. These taxis have to wait to be filled before they can depart, and they wait in lines, so if you are in a hurry, this wait can seem very long. Another problem was that telecommunications were not very efficient. There was only one public telephone at the post office, which was usually out of order. If I wanted to call my family, this was frustrating. I worked five days a week, taking weekends off. Most of the people did not want to be disturbed on Saturdays, as they were attending to family work, and in many cases, attending funerals. Sunday was a resting day or church-going day.

3.3.8.2 Adjustment at the professional level

I took notes all the time during the story-telling and the interviews. I made minimal use of the tape recorder. Once when I asked permission to use it, there was a great reluctance and then a complete refusal to give permission. Some informants thought I was a government employee, and they did not want their views to be recorded. Younger women refused to be taped lest they jeopardize their marriages: they worried that I might talk to their husbands who would ask me to play the tapes for them. The older

men would frown at me and say, “*Do you put on record that I used to abuse my wife? If the government officials know this I will be disgraced due to my age*”. But even with those who gave me permission to use the tape recorder, I kept notes so as to be able to double check what the respondent had said.

I must mention that officials from the Bureau of Statistics arrived a week after I had started my fieldwork to conduct a needs assessment study in the communities of Peka. Since it was a quantitative study, they were asking questions and recording information in writing. As I was seen as being on an equal footing with them, this placed my use of the tape recorder under further suspicion. The remark made by one of the informants was: “*A batho uena u nka nako e telele ho bua le motho ba ne ba bang ke one two feela ba qetile*” (“You take time talking to one person, those other people do not waste time, within a minute they are done.”) So I was obliged to explain my mission from time to time; this was not a big issue, however, as most of the people understood that the officials and I were not carrying out the same exercise.

I went over my notes in the evenings, translating from Sesotho into English and transcribing from the tapes. This was very tiring: some Sesotho phrases or proverbs were difficult to translate into English, and sometimes lost their meaning completely in translation. For example, one respondent stated: “*Ngoanaka ke ne ke chepile Gauteng, ke le le chepha ka lebetse tu ka mosali oa ka hae mona*” (“My child, I stayed too long in Johannesburg, I was a deserter, I had completely forgotten about my wife.”) This is a literal translation for someone who does not understand the Sesotho language, but it has lost some interesting phrases and nuances. In English it actually means, “I worked for years in Johannesburg, not keeping in touch with my wife and the family.”

The elections registration process commenced while I was still in the field. I had to be cautious in asking the informants why such a small number of women were involved in decision-making positions and politics. In this respect, one respondent was puzzled; she remarked: “‘Me’, ‘Ma’Seoehla *khanthe o motho oa lipolotiki na? Ho itsoe u tsoa ‘Musong o tlilo bala sechaba*”. (“Oh! ‘Me’ ‘M’aseoehla, are you here for politics? We were informed that you are from the government and that you are counting people”).

Getting life histories from expectant mothers at the clinics was also problematic. The nursing sisters at St Rose clinic and at the Government Health Centre assisted me by giving me permission to talk to mothers on the days of the antenatal clinic. Having talked to two mothers at different times, there was a general complaint about the length of time which the interviews took. Those who arrived late were not interested. I could see that some were not feeling well; and apart from that they came from different villages in the ward of Peka. They were eager to attend to their health matters and return home. I had to change my strategy of visiting them at the clinics; I realized that I would get the information I wanted from every woman I talked to in the targeted villages.

Another area of study was the St Rose Roman Catholic Mission and the nuns belonging to the Order of Sisters of the Holy Name. They were interviewed in their different categories according to their professions, young and old, excluding the novices (the newly recruited members of the order). I agreed with the sister in charge of training that I would not get much from the novices. They were shy even with other nuns. The only problem encountered was that all the key informants among the nuns operated on a very tight schedule, and it was difficult for me to interrupt their chores. Appointments were cancelled or I would suddenly find that something had happened which required the key informant to attend meetings without any prior notification.

3.4 THE RESEARCH AREA

Six villages were identified as forming the area of study. This constituted a fairly large population, according to the Bureau of Statistics' population census of 1996 (1996:29-40)⁷. The Peka area is under the administration of the area chief of Peka, Kolonyama and Fobane, who is Chief Thobelo Mathealira. The villages were:

1. Peka Ha Lechesa or Ha Mathealira (Moreneng, Chief's Seat)
2. Ha Eleke
3. Ha Napo
4. Ha Thipane
5. Ha Leburu (Ha Musi, Ntširele, Mapoleseng, 'Ha Pululu')⁸
6. Ha Tjopa (including Motimposo)⁹

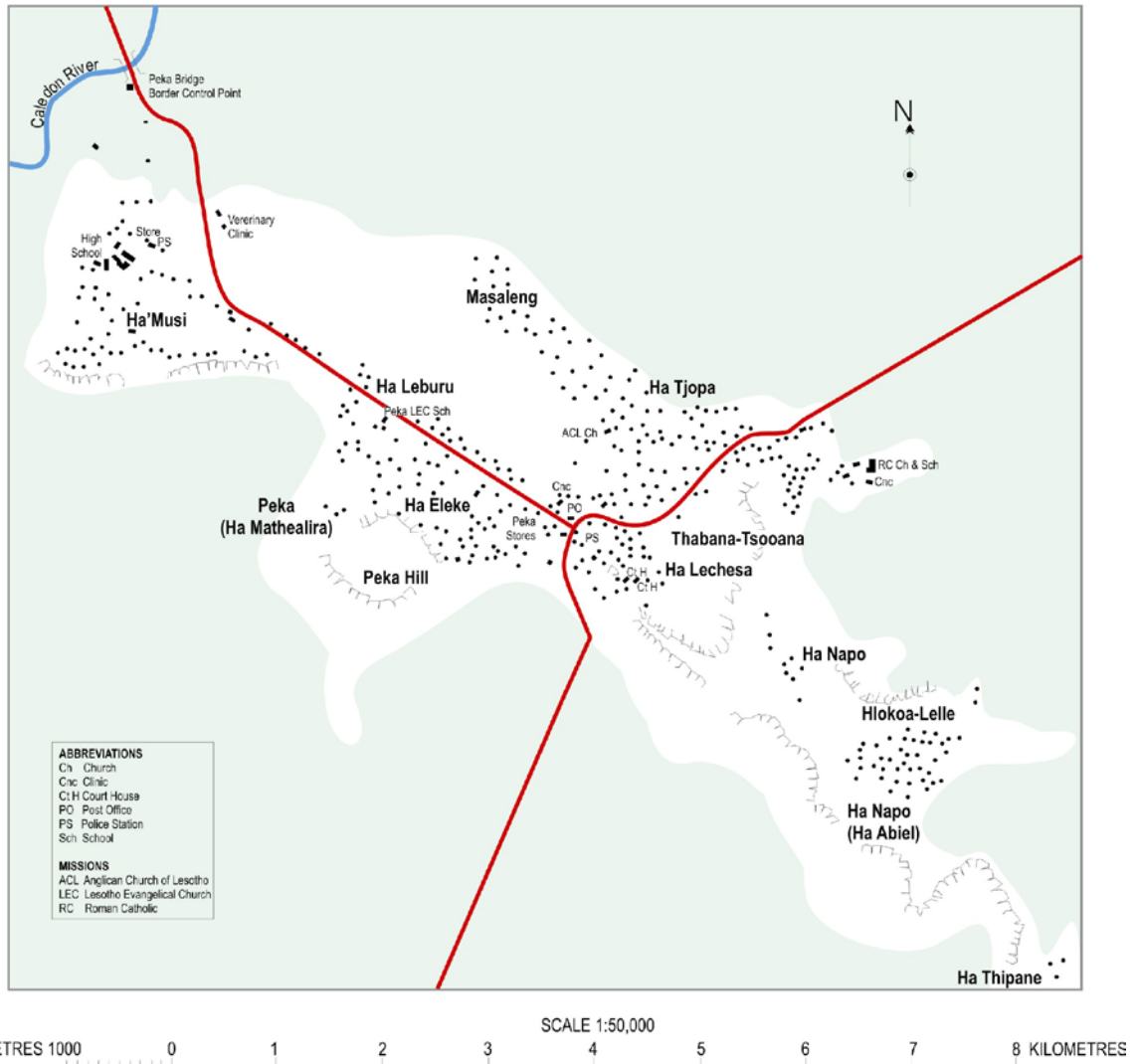
Map 3 shows most of the villages. It was explained to me by the official from the Department of Lands and Survey that the map was drawn up with the intention of converting Peka into a town (interview with an official of the Department of Lands and Survey, 1 March, 2004). This did not materialise and villages such as Ntširele and Masaleeng¹⁰ do not appear on the map because they are of recent inception.

⁷ This is the latest statistical data available taken from 1996 National census, which is taken every ten years.

⁸ Ha Leburu, Ha Musi, Ntširele and Mapoleseng are under the administration of Ha Leburu. Mapoleseng (Police Station) was originally known as Ha Pululu but because the Police are stationed there the village is called Mapoleseng.

⁹ Motimposo falls under Ha Tjopa – Motimposo, Ntširelo and Masaleeng are new villages.

¹⁰ These villages form part of the study I have talked about.



MAP 3: The Study Area of Peka

Peka was, for the purposes of this study, an ideal area comprising several large villages. Ha Eleke village is next to Ha Leburu, separated by a donga with aloe plants. Here there is a lot of confusion, because some people who reside in Ha Eleke under Mohau Mopeli's administration, actually belong to Ha Leburu. Ha Eleke is not very large in terms of households and area, compared to others. There is a grocery shop, and houses have fairly big gardens for growing vegetables: cabbage, spinach, beetroot and radish are very commonly planted, mostly for household consumption. In fact, in all the villages studied, there were attractive vegetable gardens. It should be noted that some villages had had their

well-known names for a long time. For example the village above the Anglican Church is still known by the name Ha Tjopa, although its new name is Motimposo. This was one of the villages I visited. The name Ha Tjopa currently refers to the village next to St Rose RCC. Ha Leburu is another old village. Peka High School used to be known as Ha Pululu.

The following table reflects the population size of these villages as portrayed by the 1996 population census.

TABLE 3.1 Villages referred to in the study
Survey results according to gender

Villages	Male	Female
Ha Eleke	211	135
Ha Lechesa	115	166
Ha Mathealira	412	449
Ha Tjopa (Motimposo)	590	590
Ha Leburu	339	363
Pululu (Mapoleseng)	137	145
Ha Napo	280	325
Ha Musi	203	134
TOTAL	2 287	2 307

The research area includes households, as well as institutions such as churches, with three major denominations: the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), and the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL). Another important institution is the Chieftainship, whose administrative structures include village courts and local courts. Other important institutions are the Roman Catholic Church convent for the Sisters of the Holy Names, and two health centres.

Table 3.2 shows the number of chiefs, institutions and infrastructure in each of the villages visited as well as the villagers' mode of transport and the accessibility of the village.

TABLE 3.2: Chiefs of villages, institutions and infrastructure

Villages	Chiefs	Institutions	Infrastructure
Ha Lechesa Mathealira Ha Tjopa includes Motimposo Masaleeng	Area Chief Thobelo Mathealira	* Customary Court * Local Court * Government Health Centre * Anglican Church * Primary School * Roman Catholic Church * Nursery School * St Rose Health Centre * Pre-School (Likonyana) * Lambs	Accessible by road and on foot.
Ha Leburu Ha Musi Ha Mapoleseng Ha Ntširele	Chieftainess 'Malikotiko Leburu	* Anglican Church * Lesotho Evangelical Church * Peka High School * Roman Catholic Church * Police Station	Accessible by road and on foot.
Ha Napo Ha Thipane	Chieftainess Mapatso Lepipi Headman Piose Thipane Answerable to Chief of Peka on major administrative issues such as issuing of receipts for sale of animals, brewers, passport forms, development projects	None	Feeder roads. On foot and by vans (four-wheel drive vehicles only). No public transport – it is inaccessible.

The residential sites boast typical Basotho houses: built out of stone and thatched with grass. More recently they have used cement blocks or face bricks and are roofed with corrugated iron or tiles. Some of the houses originally belonged to owners who have died, and have been occupied by their descendants. The houses in the villages are not scattered; most have a yard for growing vegetables and fruit trees. Peach trees are common. Next to the older households one can easily see the cattle kraal which is intact, though not in use because animals are scarce.

Young and old men were to be seen roaming around aimlessly in the villages because of retrenchment in the mining industries of the Republic of South Africa. Another income-generating activity is the sale of Basotho beer. White or green flags, made out of plastic or cloth and called "*phephesela*", are the symbol of beer for sale in a house. Informants said the white flag symbolized the pure Sesotho home brew made out of sorghum, while the green flag (previously yellow) represented beer made from brewed grapes ("*morara*") or hops ("*hopose*"). Most of the businesses are found to be situated around the bus stop, the liquor shops and the informal sector shelters, while there are others which operate in open spaces, selling vegetables and fruit.

Women usually start their daily routine around five o'clock in the morning, doing all the household chores such as cleaning the house and the outside area, cooking meals for the family, and preparing the children for school. They are very active, undertaking work in the fields, such as hoeing and harvesting.

Most of the houses are well furnished with modern furniture, kitchen units, gas stoves, and so on. The houses and their surroundings are kept clean. Some of the houses are "guarded" by an old iron horse shoe – a symbol meant to prevent sorcery and witchcraft. In some of the Roman Catholic or Anglican houses one could notice a holy crucifix on one of the walls of the house. Others belonging to Protestant churches, usually have a copy of the Holy Bible in their houses. Some of the houses, especially those of the traditional healers, have black crosses ("*lithakhisa mofifi*") marked by sticks, which contain magic charm/ magic power which is believed to prevent evil spirits, lightning and ghosts. A common sight is a drawing of a cross on the wall at the entrance of a house: this is a form of magic power/charm to prevent sorcery and lightning: this is the practice of most of the traditional healers.

3.5 Data gathering and interpretation

As indicated, this is an ethnographic study, which implies that certain techniques such as interviews, participant observation, life histories, and so on, were utilised. The investigated units varied from individual people, families, communities and events to institutions. The collected data is of such a nature that its supporting evidence can at best lead only to highly probable conclusions.

Generally I had to be careful when talking about politics, not to ask a person her/his political inclination, lest this jeopardized my study. Because Lesotho experienced a political crisis in 1998, I had to be cautious regarding political issues – though I found several studies about the impact of politics on people in various periods of political turmoil since the government declaration of the state of emergency in 1970 and the political disturbances of 1998.

The average time per interview was close to one-and-a-half hours. The older people were very long-winded. It was clear that some were lonely. Talking about their lives made them feel good. The life history technique took up a great deal of time because I often had to repeat the objective of my study, and it was interesting for informants to ask me about other issues. In all the activities in which I participated I acted overtly because I was accepted by the community. The only exception was an event known as "*bohali*" negotiations, regarding which I was informed that only men took part in that particular family. In observing some court cases I observed facial expressions, eye movements, body postures and body movements. I recorded all of these aspects with regard to the court president, the accused and the defendant, with particular attention paid to cases relating to my research, such as pregnancies and inheritance cases. I had to make accurate notes after listening and observing.

I studied a great deal of (mostly unpublished) archival materials pertaining to my topic: journal articles, newspapers, relevant books on gender, Lesotho historical books, anthropological, political and legal journals; previous theses by scholars in different disciplines on Lesotho as well as theoretical contributions.

Regarding parliamentary documentation, I had to use much secondary data and some Hansard materials because the Lesotho parliamentary proceedings (Hansard) are not computerized. The library is also not up to date. Moreover, it is difficult to extract the information dating back to the period of the pre-1966 Legislative Council, up to independence and into the post-independence period.

I revisited the field in February 2005. The aim of this visit was to re-check my data and to speak to people in order to fill in possible gaps relating to specific issues.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In a Mosotho's everyday world there is, on the one hand, his/her 'private world'. This is the sphere where she/he experiences or practices patriarchy, and where it finds expression. On the other hand, there is the living-world that is shared with other people – the 'intersubjective world of culture'. This world represents the universe of meanings and interpretations (the framework) against which background patriarchy must be understood.

The methodological and systematic modes of inquiry that were described in this chapter, were chosen with the above-mentioned dual 'worlds' in mind. Life histories were primarily used as an instrument to obtain in-depth accounts of people's private experiences of patriarchy in their own words. Otherwise, participant observations, interviews and literature studies were used to disclose, unfold and sketch the

intersubjective world of Basotho culture. The results obtained by the application of the selected methods and techniques relating to patriarchy in family life will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FAMILY LIFE AND PATRIARCHY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the institution of the family and its purpose is to identify, find and disclose the entrenchment of patriarchy. Most of the themes related to patriarchy, which the informants raised in the field, emanated from the family. Basotho people have a powerful sense of family relation, which connects them to one another and forms a network of kinship relations. In defining the Basotho family ("*lelapa*"), Murray (1981:113) refers to the following aspects:

- Co-residence and consumption;
- The physical space, the homestead or 'yard' which the household occupies;
- The 'house' of the house-property complex, the basic property-holding unit in customary law, whose focal point is married women; and
- The wider agnatic family or lineage which incorporates many such 'houses'.

For the purpose of this study it may be concluded that the family structure in Lesotho comprises both consanguineous and affinal relatives. The agnatic relationship is highly valued and forms the basis of Basotho tradition. The kinship structure is patrilineal in nature; hence the descent is traced through the patrilineal line. Children born from a marriage follow the father's lineage as well as his totemic clan (cf. Preston-White, 1974: 178; Letuka, *et al.* 1998: 29-37; Matsela, 1979:99; Ashton 1967:170 for more information, as well as definitions on the concept of family).

In anthropological parlance the marriage is important not only for the creation of the family, but also for specific features of the social organisation.

4.2 MARRIAGE, RELATIONSHIPS AND SECRETS

4.2.1 Marriages

According to Seymour-Smith (1986:179) there is not one universally applicable definition of marriage. Rather than trying to define or to distinguish between different kinds of Basotho marriages, this section focuses on the marital experiences of women. From their life histories it is clear that:

- women have followed different paths which have resulted in marital relationships; viz. the “white” or church path, the traditional path, elopement (forced or voluntary), (un)planned pregnancies, as well as sorority and levirate relationships; and¹¹
- irrespective of the path, except for the levirate and to a lesser extent the sororate, bride-wealth (*“bohali”*) is always expected, while certain ceremonies need to be performed; and
- a marriage represents an agreement between a man and a woman to exchange conjugal rights. This concerns two families, even if they are united on their own.

Most of the informants entered marriage or marital relationships as a result of abduction; having been somewhere abducted at night, or during the day while away from home. This was often the case where girls lived with relatives because their biological parents were separated or deceased. One of the informants shared in this regard the following experience: *“My mother was in Gauteng, South Africa, she had separated*

¹¹ This means, inter alia, that it will not be necessary to deal with the differences between mono- and polygamous marriages. The latter was, according to Ashton (1967:80), a common practice, especially among chiefs, in traditional Basotho society. Polygamous marriages were important in the forming of alliances between different clans, or for the expansion of the royal lineage. Although it is in terms of customary law still possible to practice polygamy, it is a declining practice.

from my father. I was abducted and locked inside the house of my in-laws. I cried most of the time. I was forced into sexual intercourse; I had now lost my virginity. My father-in-law insisted that we go to church for solemnization. I was never happy in this marriage but I stuck to it in fear of returning to my natal home. I would be stigmatised as “letekatse” – a woman with loose morals.”

Another informant had a similar experience. She did not know the man and was on a family errand from another village. She states: *“I saw three older boys following me. They grabbed me. I tried to run away but in vain. They hit me. They were physically stronger than me. I was afraid of them. My prospective husband had joined them at that time; we did not take a straight path to his village. We arrived at dawn. I was afraid of running away because people would look down upon me.”* In this particular case, the paternal grandmother later came looking for her granddaughter. The grandmother demanded to be taken to her granddaughter and was shown the house in which the granddaughter was being kept. She instructed the granddaughter to leave with her, but the granddaughter refused, *“I was scared of the people. They would mock me, and it would be a disgrace, to say: My grandmother left disappointed.”* This experience shows that in some cases actual physical abuse was applied, and that the girl often did not know or love the man. She stayed because she had already lost her virginity and she felt devalued. It is also clear that the man in question exercised physical power over the sexual rights of the girl.

Ashton (1967:65) confirms that *“... a man may abduct a woman against her will in order to compel her to marry him, and then if she resists he often treats her brutally and may even force her to have sexual intercourse.”* ‘M’abanka, one of the informants who was abducted, had this to say: *“I had a boyfriend who abducted me and locked me in a house, he was a military officer, and he used to threaten to kill me. One night we clashed, he took me out next to the National Training College and*

beat me. I cried bitterly. He was a savage, he took out the loop from me (contraceptive) using his own hand and he raped me. He did this cruel action because he wanted a child. I was not ready to become a nursing mother under these horrible circumstances. That night, I managed to escape, and went to my brother's place in Mohale's Hoek district. My parents and siblings thought I was at school in Maseru. They were ignorant of this situation, until I went to my brother's place. I had already conceived, a baby boy was born. I suffered from injuries inflicted on me by the man, who applied masculine power and weapons as threats to me."

Many informants confirmed that they had eloped. Reasons mentioned by the informants were, firstly that the man preferred elopement. Most men worked as migrant labourers in the Republic of South Africa under contracts running from six to twelve months. Previously men were also recruited as soldiers for the Second World War and they were eager to marry before their departure. In both circumstances men were not sure about the future and they wanted to leave the women pregnant to leave a progenitor who could carry the lineage name. An old lady, aged 97 years, who had eloped, related her experience: *"I eloped with my boyfriend. My husband went to Vereeniging (in South Africa) with others to join the Second World War. I was with him for one month. I had already conceived and I was under the care of my mother-in-law. I lived under the guardianship of my mother-in-law and father-in-law from 1940-1945. Sometimes, my father-in-law would take the money sent by my husband to satisfy his needs. He used to send me £3.00 every two months. I gave it to my mother-in-law who took care of us. Life was tough. I did not like this, I was pregnant and my husband unfortunately died in the war. I felt like killing myself. Things were tough. I had to go through all the rituals of wearing of 'thapo' custom and cleansing. The paternal uncles arranged for one of his brothers to take care of me. I mean I was forced to get into 'kenela' system levirate. He was young, I had to conform. The whole 'kenela' system is painful, my child ('ngoan'a ka')".* She kept quiet for a

while, and then said: *“My heart becomes sore when I recall the life I went through. The present husband went to work in the mines, he respected me. He built a home for us and we moved out. He died because of tuberculosis contracted in the mines in South Africa. I had to go through the whole process of mourning, that of ‘thapo’ and cleansing once again”.* She said: *“You know, my child, a woman is born to bear difficulties, even to be abused by men.”*

This is a unique life story, for a woman to experience loneliness at such an early stage of her marriage. At that time, nobody was clear about war, or about why the husbands left for it. Women of recruited husbands remained as minors under the rule of the father-in-law. Some whose husbands died had to undergo the levirate type of marriage.

Some informants experience the absenteeism of their spouses immediately after the first month of elopement, as one stated: *“I eloped with my husband who left for Johannesburg (South Africa). He was working as a migrant labourer under a nine-month contract. As it is the custom, I was offered ‘koa’e’ which qualified me as a woman. I was given a name ‘M’amahlomola’ by my father-in-law, named after his mother. A month later, my husband met with an accident; he was trapped and died in the mine”.*

Elopement was the quickest and most affordable way for two people to live together. Some women loved the men and for them a church wedding was secondary. It was stated that, *“It seems we were trapped by these men. Once we arrived at their homes we were declared as married women”.* Informants indicated that a church wedding was expensive. Items such as the *“bohali”*, the feast for the villagers and the dressing of the followers of the bride and groom, who performed the singing and dancing, contributed to the cost of the wedding. Some informants

declared that they had agreed to elope in order to avoid these expenses. Others stated: *“Me’, you should remember that some of us were not educated. We did not see the difference between white church wedding and the customary wedding, where my parents will get into agreement with groom’s parents. The day was chosen to accompany me to my husband’s family”*. Male as well as female informants in their twenties had this to say: *“We prefer elopement because sometimes we misbehave and get into sexual intercourse. In order to hide from the parents, we elope”*. Lereko, for example, stated that: *“I told my parents on our arrival at home. The message was sent to her parents. Our parents had to proceed with marriage to avoid a scandal. The girl would be regarded as a fallen woman by the community if I left her”*.

Informants explained their experience of the elopement process in different ways. ‘M’amohau recalled: *“I had a boyfriend by the name of Thabo. We both tended sheep. I was tending my father’s sheep and Thabo tended his master’s sheep. He was hired as herd boy to that family. He proposed love to me. We fell in love and decided to elope on the 25th December 1970 at four a.m. This cancelled my plans to go on tour to Durban with my friends. We proceeded to his home at dawn. I was scared of the terrain since I was born and bred in the lowlands while he was born in a mountainous area. We travelled on foot for the whole day and arrived late at night at his home. He left me outside to secretly inform his mother who in turn informed his father, who was impertinent. I felt like I was in a dungeon. He beckoned me to a hut and let me in. I sat on the floor behind the door, which he left ajar. Eventually his mother came to fetch me. I had covered my body from head to feet with my blanket. I decided to be reticent. I woke up very early the next morning and swept the courtyard. I had to take care of the kitchen, do the cooking, wash dishes and clean the floors. I had to go to the fields to cut stocks of wheat in order to thrash the wheat, mill and grind it and cook the bread (“mohalikoane”) or I would knead dough and cook either steamed bread*

("leqhebekoane") or baked it for the family. I also collected wild vegetables to enable us to have a meal for the day. My husband did not provide me with good clothing. Thabo and his father would rise early and go to a shebeen where they drank local beer. They used to come home drunk and could demand food, which would not be sufficient for their contentment. My life was miserable indeed. One day I decided to tell my husband that I was returning to my natal home. I felt I could not endure this type of life. I was treated like a slave; did not have cosmetics or enough clothes to wear. The family was poor and my father-in-law expected food from me and my mother-in-law. Thabo accompanied me to my home. My parents were very furious with me. They began to barrage me with questions. I could not answer. I remember my mother asking me where I had been. She remarked: 'Look at her – she is pregnant'. My father was mute. Thabo made an excuse to go to the toilet, which was outdoors. Thabo never came back".

'M'amohau's experience shows, on the one hand, that women under patriarchal rule are the ones who have to see to it that food is available for men and the entire family. On the other hand, it indicates that the patriarchal power of the girl's father overcomes that of the son-in-law who fled.

Informants who eloped voluntarily indicated that there were usually no lengthy courtships. It was a Basotho custom that once girls reached puberty, marriage should take place. Parents were not eager to educate girls. Girls were in transit from their homes to that of the prospective husband. Most of the informants cited the saying that *"You educate a girl, you waste time, and in educating a boy you perform a good job for the family. The educated girl would move out to another family by marriage and become an asset to that family, not her natal one"*. It seems that girls did not bother much about the status of the young men with whom they had become involved. For them it was primarily a question of getting

married and having status and recognition in the community as a married woman. By not aspiring to be educated, but perceiving themselves as mothers, women limited their power. Most of the informants confirmed that their parents preferred to educate their brothers who would carry on the family name and maintain the patriarchal lineage.

Most of the older female informants, like 'M'alebese, indicated that the bride's chastity was very important. The morning after the consummation the following informants, 'M'e 'M'akoeu and 'M'akhotso indicated their experiences in the following statements: *"He! My child, chastity was important. If the boy found that the girl has lost virginity, he would wake up early in the morning and sit alone, not joining the rest of the men at "khotla". This symbolised that the girl was no longer a virgin. She had sexual intercourse with other men"*.

Virginity and dignity have always been highly valued in Basotho society. It was disgraceful for a girl to fall pregnant or to be married already pregnant. 'M'athabo (80 years old) confirmed that: *"A Mosotho girl had to keep her virginity, no sleeping with boys. The hymen lyre was to be intact. She was expected to elongate her labia minora in preparation for sexual relations and in giving birth. It was believed that the longer the labia minora the more pleasure the husbands get during intercourse"*.

In spite of the moral emphasis on virginity, many young girls were lured into premarital sexual affairs and agreed to the demands of boys. Young men always proposed first, which, for the women, was 'proof of love'. Female informants indicated that males were very tactful and overcame their objections in love affairs. Few of the female informants, after noticing that they had conceived, informed their partners, but rather agreed to marry by elopement. If they waited for the child to be born in the woman's home, the child would bear a stigma. Elopement would prevent scandal and gossip which would be hard on the child who would bear the name

“letla le pepuoe”, or “the one who was born out of wedlock”. In such a case the woman would be called all kind of names by others in the family, related to the fact that they had lost their virginity. Yet the men were, and would remain, free from being stigmatised.

Basotho society conditioned a girl-child to accept authority from older people, both male and female, but more so from males. However, under this socialisation process unscrupulous boys take advantage of their male powers to coerce girls into premarital sex, which in most cases results in an unwanted pregnancy. In this category there were few informants who had fallen pregnant and got married. One reason mentioned, was that young men promised marriage just to have sex. As Mpho, who was born in 1984, states: *“I met a boy at Maputsoe. We fell in love and he promised to marry me. One day he asked me to accompany him to his flat. I trusted and loved him and therefore did not anticipate what happened later. On entering the flat he locked the door and persuaded me to have sex with him. He let me out the following morning. I never saw him again, but out of that union I had conceived”*. In this particular case, the girl had been overwhelmed by love that resulted in the boy’s misusing her.

One of the informants had a boyfriend who asked her to have sexual intercourse with him. He promised her that she would not fall pregnant. He bought pills as a contraceptive device for her. The girl failed to use them as she was scared of her mother. She found that she had missed her menstrual periods for a month. In the third month, the mother noticed that her body seemed abnormal. After being questioned, she tearfully informed the mother of what had happened. The boy however denied it when he was confronted by both his and her parents. It would later appear that the girl, because she used to suffer from dysmenorrhoea (menstrual pains), had been advised by some older relatives to fall pregnant. They believed that through pregnancy her fallopian tubes would

expand and she would suffer less and not more. The young girl expressed a great deal of bitterness: *“Oh my God! He never supported me. I was annoyed because, after this episode, more men made advances to me. They were like honey bees hovering on the tree. I told them that, look here, I am not a prostitute, please; I decided to make a child like any other woman, not for you to take advantage of me. I am in control of my private parts. I will report everybody who bothers me, to the chief”*.

All the life histories relating to pregnancies have certain/some commonalities. They all revealed that men had applied power over women under the pretence of marriage. In most cases it failed because men denied or neglected their responsibilities, and as a result women were left in miserable situations.

4.2.2 Ceremonies

The solemnizing of a Basotho marriage is a process where, as mentioned earlier, different ceremonies need to be performed. The most important ones are the ‘paying of bride-wealth’ (*“bohali”*) and the welcoming of the bride (*“koae”*). *“Koaē”* was mentioned by most of the female informants as a ritual which signifies the welcoming of the new daughter-in-law to her husband’s family. Once the groom’s parents slaughter a sheep the intention of the young man to marry the woman is publicly acknowledged. To give one example among many of a similar nature, ‘M’amosiuoa relates: *“I was given a sheep as a sign of welcome by my father-in-law (“koae”). Both older men and women of this lineage echoed: ‘Here is the sheep which signifies you are welcome to this family’. My father-in-law gave me the name ‘M’amosiuoa. This is a family name; my husband was named after his grandfather, whose wife bore the same name. His status is high in the family. Women’s work is to dress up the new daughter-in-law with new attire and to take her to the well for drawing of water and running of the household and domestic errands. The role of*

the women is to teach the new daughter-in-law about the family customs. I was told by my mother-in-law not to eat the meat of the 'koe' sheep; this is eaten by older people. Instead I was given chicken. My mother-in-law said, "you are not supposed to eat your "koe" and your husband".

Furthermore, it was taboo for a Mosotho girl to eat the following foods: eggs, livestock offal (especially the insides), food or provisions of travellers which, in most cases would be meat or boiled eggs and any other type of provision.¹²

In naming the new daughter-in-law clans followed different customs. In some cases the daughters-in-law were given their new names while "koe" was offered. If it was a family where the name was given after the daughter-in-law had a baby, the daughter-in-law would go through the same process of welcome except that she would be informed that she would be known by her original name until she bore a child.

The father of the groom is the one responsible for the name-giving. Some names do not have any particular meaning, because they are family names. In other cases the daughters-in-law are named after the elderly of the clan who are deceased. This is to honour the patriarchal lineage of the family and to appease those who have long departed and who are regarded as ancestors.

The role of women in the "koe" ceremony is to welcome the daughter-in-law by applying "Vaseline" or fat to her body upon arrival and to dress her in new clothes, the traditional Basotho dress, blanket and shoes. In undertaking the welcoming ceremony, old ladies from the groom's family utter the words *"We welcome you in this family and you should know that from now on, you no longer belong to your natal family; you are a woman*

¹² It should be noted that the above-mentioned foods are nutritious and have high protein content. The undisclosed intent was to delay sexual maturity in girls in order to avoid having to marry them off at a young age. However, these practices were only imposed on girls and not boys. Boys, immediately on graduating from the initiation school, were/are declared men by Basotho culture; they are expected to join other men at "khotla" and eat with them and discuss issues of importance to the community.

married in this family. Your burial will be undertaken according to the rites of this family, you will be known by the name given to you by your father-in-law". What transpired in these experiences and life histories is that men take the leading role in "koae", while women perform the work related to domestic affairs. It was revealed that the naming of the new daughter-in-law is done by men. Men retain the headship position and most of the familial decisions are taken by them.

The custom of "bohali" (as indicated in chapter 1) is highly valued in Basotho patriarchal society. "Bohali" determines the validity of a marriage and it is through the exchange of "bohali" that women are given a sense of belonging in the husbands' families. "Bohali" agreements are very important in all types of marriages. Parents are eager that their daughters get married, because they will then receive "bohali" and be prosperous.

Men play an important role in the "bohali" negotiations and women are not involved at all. Men make the decisions and women are simply informed of them. When asking female relatives about their non-involvement in the "bohali" negotiations, the answer was: *"Ah! 'M'e we are women, men are the ones who are involved in "bohali" issues. They are heads of the families and they inform us of the decision taken during negotiations of "bohali" issues. This is the Basotho tradition"*.¹³

It is preferred that "bohali" should be 'paid' in cattle. Although the number of cattle is negotiated, factors such as socio-economic status (of both families) and the level of education of the bride substantially influence the outcome of the negotiations. It seems, however, that the average number of cattle is three. However, the severe droughts of the past years have led to the steady decline in the number of cattle in Lesotho, and

¹³ During my fieldwork, I asked one family if I could observe the "bohali" negotiations which were taking place. The girl's family refused, stating that matters of "bohali" in their clan are dealt with by men only; I joined other women who assisted in the preparation of food.

informants also mentioned the high rate of stock theft throughout the whole country. These are some of the reasons why more and more people nowadays cannot afford to pay “bohali” in cattle. Informants estimated the cash value of “bohali” between M3000,00 and M4000,00.

Once “bohali” has been transferred, women belong to their spouses’ families. In many cases they feel extradited and insecure – outsiders in a strange environment. The husband, on the other hand, now possesses an asset and feels free to exercise his marital power over his wife.

Generally speaking, as has been mentioned, “bohali” is highly valued by the Basotho. The following reasons were identified in this regard: It is a symbol which legitimises marriage because the woman is under the control of the man. It transfers the rights of a woman in her natal home to her husband. Her own natal rights are lost, although “bohali” strengthens her rights to the husband’s lineage. “Bohali” has been regarded as thanks given to the girl’s family for their having socialized her. They are now losing her, and she will now follow the patriarchal lineage of the husband’s father. Most of these “advantages” are very patriarchal and give in-laws and the spouse rights over a married woman.

Virtually all female respondents agreed that “bohali” is a very strong instrument in the promotion of patriarchy. Some female informants even believe that the incidence of domestic violence relates directly to the non-payment of “bohali”. ‘M’anking, for example, stated that she experienced conflict with her husband who was an alcoholic, who did not even maintain her. He was not working; he had deserted his work as a migrant worker. He always uttered these words: *“I did not pay “bohali” for you, so you can return to your home, since you are the only child; your parents will give you whatever support you want”*. One day ‘M’anking took her belongings and returned to her home at Peka Ha Lechesa. Her father called the members of the kin-group and told them about the problems his child was

experiencing in her marriage. He went on to say: *“The ‘bohali’ was not paid at all, and this is our child”*. The father reported the matter to the chief, informing him that his child had returned home permanently.

The practice of levirate (*“kenela”*) and sororate (*“se ea ntlo”*) by the Basotho is well documented (Ntabeni, 1996:148; Lesitsi, 2002:34 & Casalis, 1861:190). Although it is nowadays declining amongst the Basotho, (which means that the experiences of respondents in this regard, relates mainly to elderly people), it is still a very strong expression of patrilineality. It cannot, however, be interpreted only in terms of lineality, as it also reflects on the system of gender relations and the concept of female subordination in Basotho society. One woman, after pausing for some time, had the following to tell: *“I will never forget the incident. I was forced by his relatives to enter into levirate marriage with his younger brother. This man was two years younger than me. You know, I hate male domination among the Basotho. I had to conform, because even my own father and my natal relatives were on my in-laws’ side. My father said, if I went back home, they would demand their ‘bohali’*. *I never liked the levirate “kenela” system. I was not the only one here at Peka who lost a husband in the same mine disaster referred to as the Coalbrook mining disaster in Welkom (South Africa) in 1960. There were about four families who were affected like me. Some women ran away, and went to Johannesburg to look for employment. I was young and scared of my father. You know ‘ngoana oa ka’ (my child), men could do all kinds of nasty things to use girls/women as a means to “bohali”*. *My father-in-law acted as my guide regarding the compensation money given to me by the mining industry. The money serviced the whole family, sometimes without my consent”*.

Some female informants were forced by their parents to enter into a sororate rule of marriage. They were forced to follow in the footsteps of a deceased sister; they were expected to take care of their deceased sister’s

children, the husband and the family. No one likes this type of marriage, but they had to obey the instructions of their parents, especially fathers who were tough on them regarding this issue. 'M'asenuku, amongst others with similar life stories, had this to state: *"My sister was married here at Peka. Our home is at Likhethlane; she died after a year of marriage because of the complications she suffered in giving birth to the firstborn, who also died. I was only eighteen years old. After the burial, my mother and father with some of the paternal family called me. My father instructed me that I should be married to my late sister's husband to take care of him. All the relatives agreed and the women, including my mother, echoed that I had to follow a sororate marriage ("se ea ntlo"). I did not like the man; I was too young for him. I cried a lot, but in vain. They made some preparations with my husband's parents. I was accompanied by a team of women to my new home. There was nothing I could do. We had three children; he worked in the South African mines and died of tuberculosis (TB)".*

A theme which emerged throughout the above-recorded life histories is the way that powerlessness among Basotho women perpetuates itself. The belief that (most?) women have of themselves – that they are inferior to men – contributes to their feelings of fear, apathy and self-repression. Many of the hardships and problems described by female respondents are features of their everyday life and are in no way unique. The research data of the next section highlights this very problem, pointing out particularly the way in which men wield their power as "creators of life" to control their wives.

4.2.3 Different Relationships

Different sets of ordered social relations, which tend to perpetuate themselves over time, are created and institutionalised through Basotho marriage. These relationships centre largely on the domestic household,

and the domestic household and those between in-laws and between husband and wife probably have the most import.

Immediately after a woman has been offered “*koaē*”, regardless of the exchange of “*bohali*”, she must honour certain stringent rules of etiquette and respect (“*hlonepha*”), which apply to the father-in-law and all the paternal in-laws. It is expected that the mother-in-law, assisted by some of the other elderly women, should inform and guide the new daughter-in-law regarding the social usages involving restrictions on her behaviour. She has to avoid situations where sexual conflict may become inevitable. Most of the female informants for example, revealed that they were not allowed to touch their fathers-in-law, or even to come near them. Even to shake hands when greeting them was taboo. Daughters-in-law were to cover their bodies with a blanket or shawls; they were not allowed to enter into a room where the father-in-law was asleep. They could only prepare his bedding and do his laundry after he left.

A powerful mechanism for preventing familiarity is the linguistic avoidance of words which contain syllables occurring in the names of the father-in-law and other senior agnates. Daughters-in-law are forced to invent new words/names for the aforesaid relatives in order to prevent the usage of their names.

Informants from the royal family assert that fictional poetic names are used in the praise poems of particular chiefs in the royal families (see Mangoaela 2001:20 for more information). When a child is named after his grandfather the mother will avoid using the name of her father-in-law, using a diminutive or a pet name. “*Hlonepha*” does not apply to men; they are not required to create any names of respect. They respect their in-laws like any other elderly people. It appears, therefore, that “*hlonepha*” promotes patriarchy; women have to go through all these discriminatory beliefs, but men are free from these taboos. Some young women informants criticized this custom, in very strong terms. They argue that it

is unfair on them. Indeed, they felt that it was discriminating towards them and that it was in fact useless.

Affinal relations are established by marriage and female informants quite frequently referred spontaneously to the poor relationships with their mothers-in-law while living patrilocally. Most of them complained about ill-treatment they received from their mothers-in-law, especially when their husbands went away to work as migrant labourers. It quite often happens in these situations that the mother-in-law will claim all the money that the husband may send, which results in the wife's complete dependence on her mother-in-law. 'M'apetje, for example, relates as follows in this regard: *"My husband worked in Johannesburg as a migrant labourer. My mother-in-law asked him to build her a three-roomed house. We built it. I discovered that my husband was working closely with my mother-in-law. I was angry but powerless. One day he said, "I can see that you no longer care for my mother". He used to go out with his mother to drink at the shebeens and come back around 2 a.m. I did not like this type of behaviour and I talked to my mother-in-law who in turn replied: "Look here, this is my child; he will do what I want him to do. Please do not interfere and he will always give me money". I told my husband about this and he replied furiously, "Yes, she is my mother, and I will do everything for her". When the mother later died, my husband had deserted me. I am now a single parent"*.

After the death of a spouse, according to most of the female informants who were in that situation, their mothers-in-law tried to maintain the patriarchal power of the deceased son. Others indicated that they were even forced to leave for their natal home. 'M'ageorge expresses her experience in relating that; *"My husband died at work through the collapse of the mine at Western Deeplevel Mine in Carletonville, Transvaal. I had papers from the chief and the family council witnessing that I was his wife. I went to the mine compound manager with some agnatic relatives. All his*

benefits were given to me. The mine company incurred the expenses of buying a coffin and transporting the corpse. I was given money to the tune of R4000,00 in preparation for a funeral and the educational fund for my two children who are sent to the principals of the schools in charge. The fund takes care of books, school fees and uniforms”.

In preparation for the funeral I had to go to my late husband’s place of employment to sign for these benefits. My mother-in-law wanted to be part of the team which accompanied me. The senior grandfather of the lineage and other older women refused. She was supposed to be on the mattress, when people brought their condolences. She spoke to some relatives and blamed me for the death of her son. I was told by one of the family members that she had stated, “you know this “letekatse” (‘a loose woman’), she bewitched my son. She wanted the compensation money and other benefits. I think she is glad that a calamity has occurred.” My mother-in-law said that there was conflict prior to my husband’s death. My mother-in-law wanted my husband to give her his full salary. The son never agreed, he used to tell her: “I have my wife; I will maintain you since you are now a widow”. Indeed, he worked to honour his promise”.

It was vital to know from the respondents how they shared power with their spouses and with their mothers-in-law. Most of the interviewed informants experienced unpleasant relationships in their marriages. These often resulted in domestic violence, extra-marital affairs and desertion.

Domestic violence (as indicated in 1.5.8) is a serious and a very common phenomenon in Lesotho. As a matter of fact, it can be regarded as the most dominant characteristic of the majority of marriages. Patriarchy and domestic violence go hand in glove. The man exercises his patriarchal power to dominate the wife and to show that he controls her life. Women were dominated through physical abuse, forced sexual demands, and poor financial support. ‘M’alekhotla experienced bitterness after two years of her marriage. She explains: *“In 1985 I started a*

miserable life. My husband was working in the mines, as a migrant labourer in the Republic of South Africa. He had a “nyatsi” (woman concubine) whom he had impregnated in the village. He left work in 1997 without notifying me. We fought a lot as he was a drunkard. He never gave me money to support our three children. I used to fight a lot with the “nyatsi”. One day I approached her carrying a hammer to fight. My husband fought me. We both left for home. He beat me up. I went to the chief’s court to report him. He was summoned by the chief to come to the court the following day. I was scared of this man. I decided to leave for my natal home “ka ngala” (unceremoniously). I hunted this woman, this time I took a sharp sword. I ran to her, we went to the police station, she confessed to the police that she was in love with my husband. My husband had another affair in the same village. Once in a while he would give me only M150.00. We had five children by this time to take care of. He would come home for weekends, but he would spend his time and money at the shebeens. He could not talk civilly to me, he insulted me all the time; he behaved insolently towards me in the presence of my children. I no longer love the man; I am only living in the house for the sake of my children. He has piecework; he compelled me to provide him with a lunchbox. One day my eldest boy fought him. Lately my husband has forced me to have sexual intercourse with him in a ruthless manner. Now I am sleeping with tides on and wrap the blanket around my waist tightly to protect me. I have repeatedly reported him to his family’s kin-group. They have summoned him, but in vain. I think I will eventually report him to the chief for his inappropriate behaviour. I am living with him for the sake of the children”.

Extra-marital affairs are often a major reason for domestic violence. A female respondent was quite adamant about the fact that “bonyatsi” was the reason why she was ill-treated by her husband: *“I lived happily with my husband till we had five children. My husband supported me. We had a home at Peka. However, both of us lived in Johannesburg with the*

children. He used to give me money, I was the decision-maker. As far as the family finances were concerned, I was in charge. He would humbly ask me for pocket money to meet his needs. He started having an affair with another woman; he used to sleep out and arrive home in the morning hours. One day the girlfriend came to the house at night accompanied by a man from the Venda tribe with long pierced ears. The lady knocked at the window and asked me harshly to open the door. She confronted me, pointing a gun at me. She said: "Look here, stop bothering this man about his whereabouts, he is mine too". I later reported the matter to my husband who was absent at the time of her visit. He in turn said: "That lady is rich, do you not want financial support?" He said: "I beg you, I want to marry that woman". I was shocked, he never talked like this to me, and since that time he never came home to Peka. I went to his brother, since his parents died a long time ago. I reported the matter to him. I even told the brother that I was leaving for home. I was scared for my life, the woman was rough, I feared I would be bewitched. You know Vendas are famous for practising witchcraft. On my arrival home I began to sell dagga, I had buyers; I operated secretly as I could not manage financially. This was my survival strategy."

"I had to find a way of living with and supporting the children. I had connections for this type of business. My eldest child, a boy, was employed in the mining industries in the Republic of South Africa. He assisted me financially in building this house". She pointed to the six-roomed house where we were and continued: "Unfortunately, he died in a car accident. You know, 'M'e, I sent a message to my husband. He did not turn up for the funeral. Later on, I received a message to the effect that my husband was seriously ill, I decided to visit him, though we had twelve (12) years of separation. It was due to the love I had for him. Indeed, he was seriously ill; he asked me for forgiveness. I pardoned him for deserting me and the family. He asked his brother to drive the whole family to the family cemetery to pay tribute to the deceased and ancestors.

The first words he uttered, were: "You, my ancestors, I have fetched my children". He burst into tears and asked: "My wife, have you forgiven me, are you serious - You have forgiven me?" In reply, I said: "I am serious, I have forgiven you". He said: "My soul will rest in peace". To tell you the truth, I decided to remember the good things he did when we first got married. My husband had built that concubine a very beautiful house in Johannesburg. Her children attended the English medium school. I did not have a single concubine."

When I probed further, asking her why she had stuck to this man after all the emotional abuse, her reply was: *"I think we women, we have a loving character, a soft personality. I always think he is around with me all the time after his death – his soul is with me".*

I found an old man sitting outside alone having a cup of coffee. I asked him about his wife, and he pointed somewhere to an open space. This was a grave-yard which I had not noticed. I told him the purpose of my visit. He laughed and said: *"Oh! I am now a widower, why do you want to talk to me?"* I persuaded him and he offered me a chair. He laughed once again and related to me that: *"I went to Morija Training College. On completion of my studies I worked at National Treasury in Lesotho. The salary was low. The salary was low. I married a girl from a royal family. I left for Transvaal in South Africa and worked as a nurse at Leslie Williams Hospital. I ended up working at West Driefontein Mine Hospital in South Africa. I had an extra-marital affair with a Zulu nurse in Vereeniging. I had completely forgotten about my family for a full three years. I had not set foot in Lesotho. She was slender and sexy; when I looked at her I could feel the very marrow in my bones melt in love. Truth, men are wicked, they are easily carried away in storm in unsustainable love affairs, and my salary was spent there up to the last cent."*

“One day when I came from work, I got the shock of my life! My wife was there. It was like a dream, I could not believe it. My ego was shattered and my face covered with shame and embarrassment. I had no choice but to plead with her to pardon and forget. “How stupid and heartless you men are; you did not even think about your children, your own blood you neglected!” said my wife. I could not utter a word except to display a gesture of humiliation and total surrender, by this time the nurse was transferred to Natal. She wrote me letters but I did not reply. That was how I was rescued and reunited with my family. I have to admit that women are powerful. They can be so charming that a man can be naïve and myopic in thinking to desert his family. Maybe this confirms a belief that women can use muti (traditional medicine) to incapacitate man’s intellect to the extent that he perceives reality the way she dictates”.

At the end of this sentence he laughed and uttered an exclamation: *“Yes, we men, we are good at dominating women through “bonyatsi” (extra marital affairs). Look at me spending full three years not knowing how my family survived, yet serving a girlfriend”.* He recalled that: *“Though my wife forgave me, at times she would be furious and reminded me of her miserable life, when I had deserted her”.* He also said: *“I would look small. However, life went on, my wife never returned home, instead she was in the business of smuggling and selling brandy. During that time, the sale of liquor was illegal in South Africa. She was trapped and arrested, she was fined and released. I had to apply for a pension. We came home; she died two years ago due to diabetes”.* The man lives alone, the children are old. He mentioned that he would never re-marry as he was too old and the new wife would be eager to get his property.

Informants related experiences of how some children revealed the truth to their biological fathers: *“The mother used to be visited by her “nyatsi” and she cooked chicken for him. The children were not offered any meat. One day their father was home for a weekend and the wife prepared chicken for him, he gave his children some, then the children were*

surprised and uttered this remark: *“You father, you give us the meat, yet ‘ntate nyatsi’ (father ‘nyatsi’) eats the chicken alone without offering any to us”*. This was an eye-opener to the man: his wife has a *“nyatsi”* who is a regular visitor and very well treated, while his own children are denied the chicken meat which is given to *“nyatsi”*. In another life story informants stated that: *“once more children disclosed the presence of the ‘nyatsi’ who hid himself under the bed not knowing that the husband of the wife would visit his home from the mining industries in South Africa”*. Once the woman heard the voice of her husband she asked the *“nyatsi”* to hide himself under the bed. One of the children asked the following question, shouting: *“Uena mahlonyana oa roabala kae rona re robala mona ntate le ‘m’e ba robala mona, uena?”* (You man, opening your eyes, where are you going to sleep, we are sleeping here, our parents there, and where are you going to sleep?) The children were looking under the bed and it was time to sleep. Their father was curious to find out what it was the children were looking at. He found the man and he confronted his wife in a fighting mood. The wife revealed that this was her man friend, known in the vernacular as *“nyatsi”*.

The informants revealed that the woman was physically beaten by her husband and the *“nyatsi”* man was sent to the chief’s court and charged with adultery, while the woman was expelled from the house by her husband who exercised his patriarchal power. The family council had a meeting to address the matter.

The life histories related by the informants revealed that the children often uncovered the real status of men who pretended to be family friends. This demonstrates that children easily uncover or unpack the aspects hidden by their mothers in regard to *“bonyatsi”*. Some female informants suggest that there are certain signals to show *“nyatsi”* that the husband is around in order to alert him. They have this to say: *“Women are very tactful: some put a box of Omo powdered soap on the window sill; this*

means that the owner of the house who takes care of the family by buying groceries, is around, since Omo soap is part of the groceries.” Others point out that women are good singers and that they sometimes signal danger by singing a particular song while sweeping the courtyard (*“lebala”*). The song goes as follows: *“Sebe tloha lerakong moo oa itšokolisa mong’a sesepa o teng”*, (which literally means that the evil spirit must move away from the wall of the incomplete house because the owner of the family is around). In essence the song means that the *“nyatsi”* must get away from where he is hiding behind the house wall because the husband is around. He is the one who buys groceries such as soap. All these signals show that women are careful not to flaunt the *“bonyatsi”* affair and make every effort to conceal it. In deconstructing the actual meanings of the signals or songs it is found that there are several warnings given to *“nyatsi”* by women.

Sometimes the violent relationships between husband and wife will be transferred to the children. According to the Peka Judiciary Court Records (CR21/01, 2000), a son, after the death of his father, assaulted his mother on more than one occasion. A lady by the name of ‘M’ampama Hlakane sustained injuries from her third son, who was 18 years old. The boy accused the mother, stating that the mother should not have more children with other men because his father was deceased. The boy assaulted the mother who reported the matter to the police. On another occasion, he hit his mother with a three-legged cooking pot. The mother, who had a baby on her back, fell with the baby. The mother sustained injuries and was sent to the doctor. The case was reported to the judiciary court, where the boy admitted guilt. He was sent to jail for six months without the option of a fine. The Basotho custom does not stop a woman from having children. It could be that the woman was meeting the needs of a boyfriend who supported her economically. The boy was looking forward to acquiring his inheritance and might have been suspicious that more children would

become his responsibility. He had tried to exercise his patriarchal power over his mother.

Financial, social and sexual reasons are eminent in “*bonyatsi*” relationships. Many female informants who are/were involved in this kind of relationship admitted freely that financial neglect by their spouses resulted in their having extra-marital affairs. However, as pointed out by Spiegel (1991:151), once men have started to support women financially, they will usually exercise patriarchal power and dominance over the women. Once women were involved in “*bonyatsi*” relations they have to be obedient to the men in order to keep on enjoying the economic benefits.

Regarding their sociological needs, female informants indicated that the absence of their husbands as a result of long contracts as migrant labourers made them experience loneliness. “*We all want to be loved and have “Moriananyana” (meagre medicine – meaning engaging in sexual intercourse) to keep us alive. As we are human beings, we do have these biological feelings*”. This argument is in line with the findings of Spiegel (1991:152) who found that women believe that if they did not have regular sexual intercourse they might go insane. They point out that they could go into the menopausal stage at an early age because of the lack of proper menstrual circulation. It thus seems that a mythical interpretation of “*bonyatsi*” promotes male dominance over women.

Although some female respondents rejected “*bonyatsi*” relations on moral grounds, younger informants perceived it as a relief in a situation of having been deserted. Some also affirmed that it was a good thing for promoting a relationship with their husbands who wanted to play a patriarchal role over them.

Sexual considerations as a reason for “*bonyatsi*” relationship are probably more important to men than to women. “*Man is made to be*

active sexually. He cannot be satisfied sexually by one woman". A male informant relates the following Sesotho maxim to prove his view: "You know, a man is like a pumpkin which expands and fills a big area while growing. On the other hand "Mosali ke cabbage oa ipopa" (a woman is like a head of cabbage which is intact)". Most male respondents stated that a woman should be at home, looking after the family, "She should not be hunting for me; I am the head of the family".

4.3 PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

The cosmological, social and economic importance of children to the Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa is anthropologically well known (Hammond- Tooke, 1974:212-214). Hence, no Basotho marriage is considered complete until the wife has borne her husband at least one child – a married woman is expected to bear children (Letuka, *et al.* 1998:36). Childlessness is a major obstacle which jeopardises many marriages. 'M'aAnna recalls: *"I could not conceive and our marriage became sour as my husband used to tell me that he knew he had children. I am the one who was to be blamed. He refused to go for a medical examination with me, yet the medical practitioner made a request to examine both of us to find the problem. My heart was sour all the time. He started abusing me by not talking to me. He uttered the following words: "I want a child; I know I am capable of having a child". I was persevering and tolerant, I went to the Apostolic Church for prayer. I continued going to the medical practitioner. I eventually conceived; my husband was happy. A boy was born"*.

From the interviews it is clear that the blame for apparent infertility is always placed on the woman, and not the husband. *"For in laying the blame on the woman, people allege that the woman has not behaved well. She indulged in sexual intercourse with several men prior to marriage, which created problems in her reproductive organs"*.

Pregnancy is accompanied by several rituals. Customarily, the route seems to be the same: *“I was taken to my natal home for the performance of the “ho bipa” custom. I was eight months pregnant. I was accompanied by my sister-in-law. My in-laws bought me a pink flannel net sleeveless blouse/shirt (“selapa”) and “seshoeshoe” skirt dress. I was dressed by my sister-in-law after she shaved my hair. She told me that I had to go barefoot. Vaseline was applied on my body mixed with red ochre. I felt humiliated and ridiculed at the ante-natal clinic. The nurses on duty were harsh on me and my sister who accompanied me to the ante-natal clinic. The nurse on duty stated: ‘This red ochre even smells, you people stop this because we have to do the double job of cleaning bed linen, and to remove red stains’. She said, ‘next time you attend the ante-natal check-up you should be clean without this red ochre or I will command that you take a bath before I examine you’.*

It is believed that women have to conform to *“bipa”*, otherwise they will bear disabled children and will suffer delivery complications in future. It is said that *“bipa”* safeguards the lives of the mother and her baby. Although *“bipa”* symbolises virility and is performed exclusively for the benefit and survival of men’s distinguishable clans, men do not undergo *“bipa”*. It is one of those situations where culture and customs humiliate women, yet at the same time improve and strengthen man’s status because the woman undergoes this ritual under the umbrella of his lineage. Moreover, men’s duty is to impregnate women; once the seed is sown, they leave. This custom degrades the position of women. They must walk barefoot without covering the head during hot or cold climate conditions, depending on the time of their pregnancies. Informants mentioned that a woman is not allowed to move around, except for visiting the ante-natal clinic. This restricts the woman’s freedom of movement till she delivers. It is believed that if she moves around evil spirits will affect the child; she might have a miscarriage or experience problems during delivery.

A Mosotho man is not allowed to be present in the labour ward or the delivery house – this is strictly female ‘business’. It is believed that the presence of men will aggravate the water snake, as babies are believed to come from dams where there are water snakes. However, men have the privilege of announcing the birth of the new baby.

After the birth of the first child a message is sent to the woman’s in-laws. The father will be notified regarding the gender of the baby. There are different methods of informing the father about his child’s gender. If it is a boy, the father is notified by being slashed with a stick. In the case of a girl, water will be splashed on the father. The symbols which denote the birth of a baby boy or a baby girl paint a picture of patriarchy even at this early stage. The stick signifies that the boy will use a stick for herding and *“shows that he is a man, who has his weapons to protect the family. A Mosotho man should be brave and holds a stick as his weapon when travelling’*. *The sprinkling of water denotes that a baby girl is meant to draw water. She will be a woman taking care of the household chores”*.

In most cases women are not permitted to make their own decisions concerning their reproductive rights. There is a constant fear which impacts on them psychologically. One example was provided by a woman who revealed: *“I have asked my husband that we should use contraceptives. Both of us are unemployed and we already have four children”*. She pointed them out to me and cried. I stopped for her to calm down. She continued: *“They were unable to go to school today because of lack of money to pay for their exercise books. I went to the clinic secretly and got the pills. I used to keep them with my sister-in-law, who is on the other side of the village. Unfortunately, one day I forgot to fetch a pill for that night, so I got pregnant with my fourth child”*. Another informant related: *“I asked my husband to use a contraceptive device. My husband denied me the right to use them. The point made by him was that “these things “Li etsa hore u be metsi” make you wet, I do not enjoy sex”*.

In general, men are against the use of any form of contraception. They perceive it as bad, unethical and contrary to God-given societal values, and believe that it promotes female promiscuity. 'M'akopeng revealed: *"I first started using a pill, I got the information from my friend, and I went to the clinic. Unfortunately my husband saw them. He was furious asking me about them. I tried to hide; he beat me. I had to tell him the truth. He accused me of committing abortion. He did not agree to my request that we should space our children, at that time I already had three children. Life was difficult; he alleged that I am now cheating him"*.

Elderly women (obviously in their menopause) were almost the only female informants who were completely against the use of contraceptives. They argued strongly that according to "Christian" ethics children are God's gifts, and if they are "killed" God will punish. *"I once tried an injection device. I remembered the Scriptures from the Bible about children. I never repeated this; my conscience revealed to me that I was committing a sin. I stopped immediately"*. It seems that most women preferred injections: *"With the injection it is hard for a man to notice that I am using contraceptive; I visit the health centre for check-ups secretly to get another injection. The husbands cannot suspect anything even when they ask you for a child. Your answer is simple "I am surprised; I do not know what is happening"*.

Condoms are not very popular amongst men or women. A male informant, for example, stated that: *"I agreed with my wife to use a condom. This device causes pain in my kidneys. Furthermore, I do not enjoy sex to the fullest because of this plastic. I think it is the one that causes this current disease "koatsi ea bosolla hlapi" ("an anthrax which moves all over like fish in water"), It is the name used in Sesotho for HIV/AIDS.*

Another male informant relates that: *“If a woman makes a suggestion that we should use it I completely lose interest in having sexual intercourse with her because it gives me the impression that now she is exposed to this device and she is using them with other men. This is a signal to me that I have to be aware and cautious”*.

Distorted perceptions, more than personal preferences as is the case with men, influence women’s views about condoms. *“I do not even want to see this thing called ‘Konthoma’ (pronunciation in Sesotho) an old lady says, “It is the one which has brought “choabo kate” (HIV/AIDS) with this disease a person is ill today and he or she dies within a short time. Ah! You know what, even Her Majesty Queen Karabo (Mofumahali ‘Me ‘M’asenate, the wife of His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho) is completely against the use of contraceptives, especially “Konthoma” because it causes this disease called AIDS”*. The same kind of argument is expressed by another female informant who believed that *“this rubber called condom has small insects if it is exposed to the sun or you pour hot water in it. I am sure you will see them moving in the rubber. We think it is the one that causes HIV/AIDS. Why is the use of condoms highly advertised by media yet people die in numbers because of the new disease HIV/AIDS”*.

In certain aspects of the Basotho culture the use of contraceptives is entirely within the ambit of patriarchy: Some men demand sex and children and deny women the right to participate in any decision-making regarding the number and spacing of children. Irrespective of their own behaviour (men see it as their right to exhibit masculinity), men go so far as to prohibit their wives from using contraceptives in order to control their sexual activities. Women are usually unable to challenge these double standards of sexual morality which men demand.

4.4 MOVING THE TENT-PEGS

In Basotho society death is regarded as a *rite of passage* in which the dying male person becomes an ancestor who will continue to have a social personality, and who will influence, share and reflect certain features of the social and cultural organisation of the living. Various death and funeral-related rituals exist; they are all firmly rooted in the social structure and display cosmological notions about the nature of the world, relationships and modes of thought. A Basotho proverb, for example, states that: "Death is the daughter-in-law of every family" ("*lefu ke ngoetsi ea malapa ohle*"). The meaning is obvious: women are classified (in quite a binary way) as associated with death, contrary to men who symbolize fertility, strength and health.

Ashton¹⁴ has described, over almost two decades and in great detail, the religion and different rituals of the Batlokoa of the Mokhotlong district of Lesotho. These descriptions are, however, not necessarily applicable to or comparable with the rest of the Basotho society, while Christianity and Westernisation were responsible for far-reaching changes. In the following sections the focus will be on the present day situation, main rituals will be examined, while gender discrepancies will be highlighted.

4.4.1 Death and funerals

When a husband dies the community expects a woman to behave in a submissive way. She is not allowed to engage in any activities and must sleep on a mattress on the floor. This could go on for weeks, depending

¹⁴ Ashton, E H (1937) 'Notes on the political and judicial organization of the Tawana', Bantu studies, 11:67-83. (1938) 'Political organization of the Southern Sotho', Bantu Studies, 12:287-320; (1939), (1939) 'A sociological sketch of Sotho diet', Trans. Roy. Soc. S.Afr., 27,2:147-214; (1943) Medicine, Magic and Sorcery among the Southern Sotho (Communications from the school of African Studies, University of Cape Town, New Series, No 10), Cape Town. (1946) The social Structure of the Southern Sotho Ward (Communications from the school of African Studies, UCT. No 15, Cape Town. (1952) The Basuto: A study of traditional and modern Lesotho, London: Oxford University Press (2nd ed. 1967).

on the paternal affines who make the decision regarding when to bury the deceased. The custom of sleeping on the floor day and night before a funeral is a common practice. *“I have to be lying on this mattress till the funeral”,* a widow related: *“My relatives had to leave. I am now with my sisters-in-law. Two of my daughters had to leave too. This is unfair. My sons and their paternal uncles took the decision to wait for the arrival of my sister-in-law without consulting me. You know us women are treated like children. This time is too long, what will I serve these people who come to console me? I am not even supposed to shout or to do some work in the house, or to leave the mattress. I got sick; I had to go to the health centre for treatment. I was told that my blood pressure was too high. I should try to relax. Indeed, I was disturbed by the death of my husband. My sons brought the coffin; I did not even choose it”.*

During the period prior to the funeral, people come regularly give their condolences. The visitors will reply *“M’e ‘M’aselina there is nothing we can say. This is God’s work. This was your husband’s time. Be still, stick to the Lord, He is the one who will give you real condolence. Stick to the Scriptures from the Bible”.*

It is expected that the widow should be miserable, to weep and speak softly. If she displays strength and does not weep much, rumours of her being uncaring will soon begin to spread. These will come from other women or from the mother-in-law, especially if the cause of death is not clear. Allegations may be made that the wife bewitched or killed the husband. The widow will begin a “new” life under the guardianship of the heir and the husband’s kin group. The exposition of the custom regarding the death of the spouse places more patriarchal constraints on the life of the widow. Most female informants complained that male kin groups hold meetings alone with their elder sons in preparation for the funeral, leaving them aside. One informant recalled: *“After the death of my husband, I was consulted when they wanted money to buy the coffin and the cow to*

accompany him, as it is the custom, as well as the groceries. I insisted that I should be the one to select my husband's coffin. My father-in-law as well as my mother-in-law was hurt". Another informant related how she was not consulted during the preparation of the programme for the funeral day. She relates: *"I noticed that my husband's date of birth was incorrect. I called my brother-in-law and brought this to his attention. In reply, he stated: "leave this to me, I do not find it necessary to consult women. He is my brother, I know his life story".* She continued: *"I had to get up from the mattress and lodge a complaint to my eldest brother. I felt like breaking into pieces. I was furious. Luckily, the eldest brother was polite and made the corrections. You know, at the time of bereavement, the most junior men without brains want to take charge, thinking that women are children. No, we are not, we have to stand up and fight for our rights".*

At another village a woman had passed away. It was a completely different scenario: the husband ran some errands in preparation for his wife's funeral. He was never pinned down to a mattress. He attended family meetings and made decisions about the funeral. He was expected to be in the forefront. A Sesotho maxim says *"Monna ke nku ha a lle"* (a man does not easily cry or he is a sheep). It means that a man should never cry.

The movement of the coffin to the exterior of the house and its burial is performed by men. The filling of the grave with soil is performed in the following order by men only, always in terms of their seniority: first the nephews; secondly, boy children of the lineage; thirdly, father and lastly, paternal uncles and the grandfathers. The eldest person is the last to throw in soil. The master of ceremonies (the eldest male person in the lineage) will now utter: *"Ha boje"*, meaning that every man is free to add soil till the grave is covered.

All societies have a concept of the individual. La Fontaine (1985:124) argues that the social representations of society itself, and the nature of authority within society, give a characteristic form to related notions of individuality. In Basotho society, according to Lesitsi (2002:12) and Ashton (1967:104), the following categories of people are sociologically not regarded as persons or individuals, and are therefore not buried in the usual way:

- a young child or fetus;
- a person struck by lightning who is not brought home but buried in the wilderness;
- a person who dies from drowning in a river when in flood;
- a twin who dies leaving another one behind;
- a person who dies on the battlefield; and
- a boy who dies at initiation school (*"mophato"*).

Research confirms that where men are instrumental in the handling of the funerals of "human beings", women are relegated to making decisions only about the burials of "non-human beings". One informant sketched the following picture in this regard: *"I had a miscarriage with my firstborn. I was miserable, and suffered from great pains. The old women took the fetus, which was male. I went to hospital for medication; I wore a white doek (head-scarf). This symbolizes that this was a child with an innocent soul. Prior to that, I was bathed in cold water in which "Lekhala la bafu" (aloe maculata) was added. It is supposed to remove misfortune. I was asked to select old clothes and the old women dressed me. They put the fetus in a cardboard box. Its features were incomplete, because it was not a full-term child. It was without hair, eyes and brows. It was buried at the heap ash ("thotobolo") of the family. Only women attended the burial"*.

Rites are seen by Radcliffe-Brown (1971-153) to be the regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments by a society. Some female informants had this to say: *"The burial on the ash heap expresses*

women's inferior status in Basotho society, and implicate women as the "garbage" removers of the community".

4.4.2 Mourning and cleansing rituals

At one of the funerals which I observed, the village chief made the following announcement: *"All women should put on doeks (head-scarves), or should cover their heads to show respect"*. He was very aggressive, perhaps angry. The women whispered in complaint, but in vain. The wearing of mourning cloths is known as *"thapo"* (cf. Ashton, 1967:109) and according to Ncube and Steward (1995:38-39) the *"thapo"* custom is important in post-death rituals which, to a large extent, only affect the female members of the bereaved family and the widow. The next experience describes what the ritual is all about: *"The following day after the funeral of my husband, I was the last one to have my head shaved. My finger and toe-nails were cut. I was taken to the stream to be washed. My paternal uncle took blood from an animal slaughtered for this ceremony, mixed it with the bile and chyme from the animal's stomach. She was assisted by two women. There were about ten women in all, five from my natal family and five from my in-laws. The ones from my natal family have no say and are observers because this is not their lineage, they no longer have control over me. Then two who were performing the job were from my in-laws. They put the water in the bath and a herbal medication "lekhala la Bafu" (aloe maculata) in the water together with the mixture of chyme and blood. They bathed me. The dirt from the bath water was poured on the ash-heap. My senior sister-in-law dressed me up with new underwear, black dress, black stockings, black shoes, black doek and a black head-scarf doek, a new Victoria blanket and a shawl tied around my waist. One of my husband's aunts gave me the following instructions in the presence of my natal family, my children and my in-laws: "My child, from now onwards you are a widow, you have to put on your husband's blanket "thapo", you have to respect it. Our elder brother*

in the lineage has decided that you will remove this blanket next year in April". My husband died in August, I had to put on "thapo" for nine months".

"Thapo" black mourning clothes, is a potent, nonverbal Basotho symbol. Various rules, practices and actions are directly associated with the wearing of it. These prescriptions signify respect and have a strong sexual undertone. A woman wearing the "thapo" of the husband is, for example, not allowed to do the following things:

- She may not shout, but must speak softly;
- She may not cry;
- She may not be angry;
- She may not visit other people in their homes;
- She may not be away from home after sunset;
- She may not engage in sexual intercourse;
- She may not sit on a chair;
- She may not wash "thapo" garments during the day, but must wash them at sunset and hang them to dry at night;
- She may not sew the "thapo" dress when it is torn; the torn parts must be tied in knots;
- She may not shake hands with people;
- She may not stand for a long time;
- She may not talk a lot;
- She may not be visited by her natal relatives.

Virtually all female informants had experienced the "thapo" custom negatively. *"It is an unfair custom which discriminates against women. However, there is not much that we can do".* Women feel compelled to undergo it; they fear that if they do not adhere to the "thapo" custom, they might become insane, or the spirit of the late husband might bring disaster and calamity over them. According to 'M'apula she was, for example, forced by her late husband's family to undergo "thapo": *"I was completely*

against it. First of all I was fetched from my home, when he died, by his father and uncles. The man who was the head of the lineage came to me and said: "M'apule, you are Sekoa's wife, you are married in this Matebele clan, and we exchanged "bohali". You are our daughter-in-law. You will have to put on your husband's "thapo", and to undergo all the rituals. The church cannot interfere with our traditions and customs. Do you understand me?"

Nkhono 'M'alefiso, who is a traditional healer in the Apostolic Faith Church, could not wear the black garments because she believed that it impeded her communication with the ancestors. However: *"The whole lineage was against me. There was a big conflict. I heard some men saying: "This woman does not belong to this lineage from now onward. She does not have manners and respect for the entire family". They also said: "You will suffer from misfortune". Others said "she did not love this man anymore, and from now onwards you will be on your own." These men were furious with me, stating that I disrespected them".*

For men, *"thapo"* is not that drastic, harsh or comprehensive. Ncube and Steward (1995:36), for example, confirmed that widowers live a normal life; there is no particular attire, they go on with their daily activities, except for not having sex during the mourning period of one month. Female informants are of the same opinion. According to them, *"it is quite different for men. They take a month and then remove the "thapo" cloth with the rest of the family. During the month period of mourning they are not surrounded by several laws as is the case with widows"*. Informants stated that men travel a lot and go to work as migrant labourers. It is believed *"thapo"* brings misfortune when worn at work far from home. One might suffer a misfortune or calamity. It is believed that "men's sexual desires are greater than those of women. This is how they are created. A long period of mourning will therefore put their lives in danger",

During the mourning period widows are perceived as ritually impure. To be re-incorporated into society they need to undergo a cleansing ritual. The Basotho believe that the right period for the removing of the husband's mourning cloth is the beginning of winter or before the ploughing period. According to informants this is to safeguard the crops from hail storms which can destroy the plants. Another point mentioned by informants was that after a year or a similarly lengthy period, it is believed that the body of the deceased has decayed and that he is satisfied. Minor differences existed between different clans: for example, some informants indicated that some clans take the widow to the stream or river for cleansing, while others perform cleansing in seclusion at home or indoors. However, the general pattern of a cleansing ritual is as follows: *"In the eighth month of my mourning I had to go to my natal home for the removal of "thapo" attire. I was accompanied by my sister-in-law to my natal home. On arrival I was forbidden to enter the courtyard wearing "thapo" attire. I was given my grandmother's clothes to wear and they took all the black attire, and everything I was wearing during the mourning period. I was ushered indoors. Early the next morning my parents slaughtered an ox. The blood, chyme from the large intestine, and bile were mixed, I was shaved and put into a bath. The mixture was put into the water. "Lekhala la bafu" (aloe maculata) was cut into pieces and also put in the water. I was bathed by my sister-in-law. She uttered these words "from today, you are a new person; we thank you, our daughter, you respected your husband's blanket and your husband. We never heard about disappointing behaviour during the mourning period". She continued: "This bath and the mixture made and the slaughtering of a cow symbolize that all those taboos are over. However, you still have to respect your family and your in-laws. She applied Vaseline and dressed me up in new clothes from head to toe. Other clothes were gifts from my relatives. This symbolized that the evil spirits or bad luck, which I received during the mourning period were gone. When I was dressed, I became emotional; I remembered my husband and cried. All the "thapo" clothes as well as my*

shaved hair were burnt and water was splashed on the ash-heap. The meat of the beast was divided into two parts. One part was given to us; we left the same day, accompanied by one of the maternal uncles”.

The cleansing ritual of a widower is important as it is believed that he maintains the sweat of his late wife. However, widower cleansing is done at his home without dressing up in new clothes. All other rituals that accompany cleansing are performed: the slaughtering of a sheep, mixing the animal's blood with that of the chyme and putting them in the bath with pieces of Aloe Maculata (*“lekhala la bafu”*), shaving of hair and mixing. If this is not done it is believed that the widower might become sick or experience some misfortune as the spirit of the deceased will not rest. An old lady related in this regard: *“It is true men are to respect their deceased wives “thapo” and be cleansed. I know one chief who lost his wife and he refused to be cleansed. He is now suffering from swollen feet. One lady went to him stating that she had been told by her ancestors that in order for him to get well he should be cleansed of his wife’s “thapo”. He refused”.*

4.4.3 Patriarchy in the kinship system

The Basotho possess a classificatory system of kinship and distinguish between (agnatic and uterine) collateral and lineal kin. Patrilineal descent is recognised for jural purposes and forms a vital basis for cooperation. This organisational principle constitutes, *inter alia*, a tendency where the mother's brother (*malome*¹⁵) and the father's sister (*rakhali*¹⁶) are regarded respectively as a sort of 'male mother' and 'female father'. A unique, 'warmth' relationship, with clear elements of the joking relationship¹⁷, exists between the '*malome*'/'*rakhali*' and Ego. Various authors have

¹⁵ Core *Ma* (mother) + adjective *lome* (masculine) = *malome*

¹⁶ Core *Ra* (father) + adjective *hali* (feminine) = *rakhali*

¹⁷ The joking relationship is widespread in the ethnographic record and has been the subject of different types of anthropological explanations (Radcliffe-Brown, 1924, Preston-Whyte, 1974:178 and Seymour-Smith, 1986:156 and Erasmus, 1978).

reported on it in Basotho society (Ashton, 1967:72, Laydevant, 1952:42 and Lesitsi, 2002:76), and from their interpretations it can be concluded that the basic nature of this relationship reflects a combination of social conjunction and disjunction whether it be conflict resolution, or establishing marriage alliances.

Briefly, it can be confirmed from the interviews that the '*malome*' and the '*rakhali*' play important patriarchal roles in various rituals and ceremonies, but always with the sole intention of representing patrilineal interests. The '*malome*' will, for example, be called upon to preside in paternal meetings when discussing issues concerning his nephews, like attending the initiation school. And although he performs certain rituals in this regard, like the slaughtering of a sheep or the giving of a '*mokhahla*' (a turned skin of an ox which was worn as a blanket by initiates), his involvement has the wellbeing of the male lineage in mind. By enabling his nephew to become a man through initiation, the foundations of a new house within the family is being laid. If the initiate marries one of the '*malome*'s' daughters (which is a preferred union – Preston-Whyte, 1974:192), the '*malome*' will benefit from maintaining the male lineage.

The '*malome*' also acts as guardian and caretaker for his nieces. Where a late niece's husband has, for example, no male relatives to perform the ritual removal of '*thapo*', it will be done by the '*malome*'.

Under certain circumstances, such as the '*bohali*' negotiations, the '*rakhali*' will be consulted on issues relating to her brothers' children. As a matter of fact, women will only be allowed to participate in the mentioned negotiations in this capacity and the '*rakhali*'s' duty is primarily to watch over the interests of the patrilineage.

The type of kinship terminology used by the Basotho is a topic too complex to deal with in this section, (which is not the purpose of this

chapter, as it is not the purpose of this project to provide a functional and structural analysis of the kinship system). Suffice it to point out that the Basotho has a variation of the so-called Iroquois system, in which (i) differences in the gender of relatives, (ii) differences in the gender of the speaker, and (iii) differences in the gender of the person through whom the relationship is established, are utilised in shaping the Basotho kinship terminology in a patriarchal mould.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the patriarchal values current in Basotho society are maintained by being expressed in kinship relations and terminology.

4.4.4 Inheritance – tears of joy and frustration

From the literature studied in this regard, it is evident that the ideal type of Basotho family law (private as well as public) is changing.¹⁸ It is not possible from a qualitative research design perspective to determine the exact degree of transformation. However, interviews with (especially female) informants echoed the following sentiments: *“In terms of inheritance, it is the duty of parents to divide the property equally among their children. This assists in preventing unnecessary family disputes and hatred among children”*.

Views which support a more traditional approach to inheritance can be summarised by the following statement: *“My first male born is the one who will inherit my property. The kitchen utensils, and my clothes, and blankets belong to his sister. This is the tradition, but if the girl is not married, I will support her and the boy will have to share the property with her”*.

¹⁸ Cf. Myburgh (1974:306-309), Seymour (1970:116-120). Olivier (1969:1-8), Letuka et al., (1998:169), Gill (1992:6), Poulter *et.al.* (1981:36) and *Lesotho Constitution*, 1993, section 11(1) for detailed information in this regard.

What is significant about the above pattern of inheritance and the transfer of property is, on the one hand, the reduced value of the property that will eventually be transferred to the daughter after the death of the father. On the other, we should also not forget that inheritable property is not limited to material goods. Names, titles, genealogical positions and ceremonial and ritual knowledge, which constitutes important valuables in Basotho society, will be inherited by the male heir only. It can thus be concluded that although family law may be changing the coherent social structure is much more static.

4.5. ANCESTRAL WORSHIP

In terms of the Basotho world view, patrilineal deceased male ancestors are particularly relevant. Important religious, magical and political powers, as well as kinship morality and the expression of social organisation are vested in them (Cf. Ashton, 1952:113-117, Dutton, 1923: Ellenberger, Macgregor, 1912:238 and Matšela 1979:122-123 and Rakotsoane, 2001:148-150).

Various ceremonies related to ancestors were observed during my fieldwork. Irrespective of the nature and purpose of the different ceremonies, it can be stated that mainly male members of the specific lineage participated in the prayers, rituals and sacrifices. Women were relegated to minor activities, such as serving food and beer. However, given the importance of the ancestral cult in Basotho society with regard to the natural world (in making public decisions and regulating access to resources), female informants were not prepared to speak out critically against the patriarchal nature of the ancestral cult.

4.6 CONCLUSION

When presenting an overview of the status, role and position of women in Basotho family life, it would be an oversimplification (useful as it might seem) just to classify these aspects as subject to “patriarchy”. There is no doubt that women suffer under the constraints placed upon them by their husbands, while trying to maintain some independence under their powerful mothers-in-law. The rules, etiquette and prescriptions that the Basotho must learn and obey in order to be an acceptable member of the husband's lineage are extensive, well developed and clear. In order to survive, however, women have, in the first place, also learnt how to appear as if they are abiding by them and how to manipulate them without seeming to do so. Secondly, their relationships with other women and activities outside the walled courtyards of their husband's household served as support mechanisms which could counteract their powerlessness and vulnerability.

Chapter 5 will provide several reported experiences, life stories and views of the communities in terms of how the institutions, clubs, associations, and cooperatives work. The purpose is to see how patriarchy has implanted itself and to display what I observed in this regard. The chapter does not discuss the structural organizations; rather the aim is to focus on the role of power-sharing between men and women in the institutions and associations.

CHAPTER 5

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PATRIARCHY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

For Malinowski (1953:25) the concept of an institution is linked to human needs – he has listed seven basic social institutions, which respond to biological or psychobiological needs. A looser usage of the term in Anthropology, according to Seymour-Smith (1986:1530), refers to forms of standardized action or behaviour linked to a set of complex and interdependent norms and roles. The frame of argumentation of this chapter proceeds from the former viewpoint. The focus of the research data that will be presented in the following sections includes the participation of women at grassroots level in institutions in decision-making through active involvement in formal structures, and their experiences at personal level.

5.2 THE CHURCH AND PATRIARCHY

It is said that Moshoeshoe commissioned a certain Adam Krotz (who is described as a so-called coloured Christian) to persuade a missionary to visit his fortress (Stevens 1967:17). However, three French missionaries from the Paris Evangelical Society were already on their way and reached Thaba Bosiu in June 1833. Two of them were accordingly settled at Morija, while the third one, Casalis, who became a close friend and confidant of Moshoeshoe, was permitted to found a mission at Thaba Bosiu. Moshoeshoe's desire was to invite various denominations to his country. In 1850 he invited Bishop Gray from the Church of England. The Church of England, however, was not in a position to take up the offer until 1876 (Gay, *et al.* 1995:11) and Ntimo-Makara 1990:50). In 1862 two

members of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), a French Roman Catholic missionary order, were received by Moshoeshoe. They settled south-east of Thaba Bosiu in a valley, which became known to the Basotho as Roma (Epprecht, 2000:39).

Today Lesotho is predominantly a Christian country, with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) claiming more than 60% membership (Letuka, *et al.* 1997:27). The Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) and the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL) are next in line, and these constitute the three mainstream denominations (Epprecht, 2000:39). The primary goal of these three mainstream churches is/was to convert as many Basotho as possible to their denominations, while in the process condemning the traditional beliefs and proclaiming them to be anti-Christian. The church is/was at pains to stress to an exaggerated degree to the Basotho people the values of their (European) beliefs, lifestyles and morals. The Basotho are/were taught to model themselves on church-invented traditions that were upheld as paradigms for good behaviour.¹⁹

According to authors like Matsela (1979:135), Rakotsoane (2001:73), King (1995:165) and Lindsey (1997:288) the traditional Basotho belief system was not founded on the principle of gender disparity. It was the institutionalising of Christianity by the church that was responsible, on the one hand, for the creation of hierarchical, patriarchal religious structures, and on the other hand, for the glorification of women as mothers and happy homemakers (Stroebe 1995:107). According to Epprecht

¹⁹ It is the impression that the church in Lesotho upheld and practised these traditions with far more vigour and attention to detail than is the present day situation in the mother countries like Canada, France and England. Furthermore, it should be noted that the education system was introduced by nuns in the RCC schools who came from Quebec, Canada in North America. In Quebec women were restricted legally as minors until 1964. Women were denied voting rights till 1940 (Epprecht, 2000:169, 1992:131). The priests belonging to Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an organization which believed in the teaching that women should be good homemakers, facilitated the discrimination of women. The white sisters (nuns) passed this doctrine of male domination on to Basotho nuns and girls at schools. According to this dogma, the sisters were to have a "docile submission to the father" (Epprecht, 2000:169).

(1992:224) women are primarily perceived by the three mainstream churches as “the queen of the home and the educator of the children”. The RCC, for example, emphasized that women should be humble, modest and trustworthy. In counselling sessions for girls preparing them for marriage the Reverend Granger, cited in Epprecht (2000:169), is believed to have upheld the opinion that “once a woman had become a wife, her ‘obligatory’ conjugal ‘debt’ demanded that she not only ‘fear her husband’ but learn as well ‘to hide certain feelings of repugnance against him ...’”.

In contrast with the rigid views of the RCC (as is reflected in the above-mentioned statement), it could be said that the LEC and ACL are more liberal and modest and have made some strides towards gender equality. Female ordination is legally approved by the synods of the LEC and ACL. However, women mostly serve at junior level, while general attitudes and experiences, which make up women’s everyday church life, indicate that the ideology of patriarchy strongly prevails. *“Although we men are not advocating it”,* an ACL priest frankly admits, *“We enjoy our patriarchal authority.”* Sisters/nuns in general testify: *“At present the priest in charge of the Mission has his own residence. He joins us here for his meals. Sometimes he will require us to cater for his visitors. This is out of our budget. We do not mind because he conducts mass for us.”* Some had this to say: *“It is not only the preparation of meals for priests, but we also sew and do the laundry for his priesthood clothes.”* Other nuns indicated that in the whole hierarchy of the Church priests are in charge, while they are under their patriarchal authority.

I observed and participated in the LEC female pastor ordination at Peka. A male pastor led the Church service. I joined the women and participated in the cooking and serving of food. In this ceremony there were eight female and fifteen male priests. The male president of the synod performed the whole ordination process. The male secretary of the

synod overshadowed the female pastor who was assigned to assist the pastor to be ordained in performing certain duties. The female pastor was very clearly left on the periphery of the proceedings.

Lesotho not only claims to be a predominantly Christian society, but the church also plays a central role in the rendering of everyday services like welfare, schools, clinics and hospitals. For them it is possible always to stress their doctrine on gender, be it in the classroom, during church services, or in the hospital ward. Views on the ordination of women, for example, illustrate how it is possible for the church to exercise power to the detriment of 'ordinary' people. A male traditional healer expressed his feeling in this regard as follows: *"I prefer a male priest personally, because even Moshoeshoe I, the founder of the Basotho nation, brought male priests to this country. Let us follow this pattern. Women are not fit to be priests. According to the Bible a woman was created from the rib of man. You know God named man "monna" and in Sesotho language it means mo-'Na', the one like me, so a woman comes behind according to Sesotho language: 'mosali', the one coming behind who should be looked after and should stay at home taking care of the family. A man should take a leading role and deserves to be ordained. A woman should never become a priest lest we defy God's instructions. A man was created to head the family and institutions such as the Church and to be respected by his patriarchal lineage."*

One old woman, a member of the RCC, was in agreement with biblical arguments regarding the non-ordination of women. *"I do not like a woman priest; I feel she does not have the power similar to that of men. We have been taught this from time immemorial. I am still of the opinion that men will lead us in preaching the gospel, the same way as Jesus Christ with his disciples, who were all men."*

Most of the nuns from the RCC had a commonality of explanations about the ordination of women to the priesthood. They were against the

whole idea. For example one nun informant states: *“Personally, I do not buy the idea of women becoming priests. I am against it. I have seen women with difficult characters. A woman fails to keep confidential information. The priest’s life in the church needs a well-mannered person. We cannot cope with women priests. Jesus Christ lived with his mother Mary, but he never chose her to be a priest, instead he chose his disciples who were men. He did not nominate a woman. Sometimes women fight each other in the village; if some of these bad things are done by women, we are not going to succeed.”*

5.2.1 Women’s organizations within church structures

The most common church organization is the Mothers’ Union, which operates under various names, depending on attachment to one of the three mainstream churches. There are Mothers of St Ann, *“MASANTA”*, Mary’s Mother, and *“MAKEMOLO”*, all belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. In the LEC the Mothers’ Union is known as *“Bo-’M’abana”*, meaning ‘mothers of children’ while in the ACL it is simply known as the Mothers’ Union. For the purposes of this section all of the organizations will be referred to as Mothers’ Unions.

Mothers’ Unions are important organizations within the three mainstream churches. Members give advice to one another, pray together and visit the sick and the elderly. Within these organizations, women receive advice about “good” home-making skills, the bringing up of their children and children’s behavioural issues (Epprecht, 1992:274). One RCC informant who belonged to the Mothers of Saint Ann, gave the following account: *“We are the children of Mother Ann, Mary the Virgin’s mother. We follow her ethics of taking care of the children, teaching them good manners. Our main duty is to practise the good manners of the Catholic Church and purity. We do elect the committee, but we are answerable to the priest in charge of the Church.”*

LEC's "Bo-'M'abana assists members with Bible studies and family problems. The same applies to the ACL. The LEC and ACL Mothers' Union are administratively in the same boat. Priests' wives are *ex officio* members of these organizations. Most of the informants pointed out that priests, by virtue of their administrative powers, possess authoritative patriarchal power over these organizations. In the LEC and the ACL the hierarchical patriarchal structures place mothers' unions under these structures, even though women priests may be in charge of them.

5.3 PARAMOUNTCY (MORENA E MOHOLO) AND CHIEFTAINSHIP

In Chapter 1 the process of the foundation of the Basotho Kingdom was cited and it was indicated that in one way or another the following elements directly stimulated the foundation of the kingdom: economic reasons (which include land and resources); political unrest and war; increase in the population and a process of assimilation and the adoption of symbols of authority, like the Basotho institution of the paramountcy. The Basotho nation came under the hegemony of Moshoeshoe's clan, the Bakoena, to which all but three of the country's major chiefs historically belong.

Lesotho, under the paramountcy of Moshoeshoe, was a male-centralized kingdom: it was/is headed by a hereditary male king who was/is succeeded patrilineally within the ruling clan. The British colonial administration acknowledged the paramountcy as a political institution and helped develop Moshoeshoe's predominant position as "*Morena-e-moholo*" (Machobane, 1990:6; Stevens, 1967:31). When Lesotho became independent on October 4, 1966, it was a constitutional monarchy under a male descendant known as Motlotlehi of the late *Morena e Moholo* chief Moshoeshoe.²⁰ The title of Paramount Chief was changed to His Majesty

²⁰ Moshoeshoe I was called Morena e Moholo.

the King (Machobane, 1990:274). After the death of Moshoeshoe II, his son became the King and is known as Letsie III or Motlotlehi Letsie la boraro (III) the current King of Lesotho.

Presently, His Majesty King Letsie III is the undisputed symbol of Basotho national unity, although he is without political significance or character. The king is the constitutional monarch and head of the state. Informants in general are very happy with chieftainship and the kingship. They said: *"In Lesotho we are lucky because whenever we have problems or some developmental issues, we easily address them to chiefs, who are on the alert day and night. We do not know if the Government removes them or their powers vested in them to take care of us."* *"We love our 'Motlotlehi,' he is our father and we Basotho are his nation as the late Motlotlehi Moshoeshoe II stated "Basotho ba Moshoeshoe, phahamisang lihloohho, elang fats'e la lona hloko hofihlela qetello. (Moshoeshoe's nation is aware, lift up your heads, safeguard your country until eternity)".* Informants continued: *"The same applies to His Majesty King Letsie III. He knows the maxim 'Morena ke Morena ka Sechaba', (A chief is a chief by the nation), he loves his nation, however, the politicians prevent him from working for his nation. We hate politics especially the ruling party LCD because it does not like chieftainship and our Motlotlehi. LCD separated from BCP used to call chiefs bloodsuckers when canvassing prior to independence in 1966, stating publicly that they will abolish paramount chief and the whole institution of chieftainshi. We remember all this. Motlotlehi Letsie III protected us when the South African Defence Force attacked us at the palace gate ("Freedom Square") as we protested against the election results of 1998."* Some informants stated: *"This present government always tells us that they are working in accordance with the constitution. Some of us do not know how to read and write; we are ordinary Basotho men who grew up under the protection of chiefs, we respect our Motlotlehi and chiefs but LCD does not want the King and chiefs"*.

Different chieftainships exist and are all allocated to men. Under the system known as indirect rule the administrative responsibility for internal affairs was left overall to these chiefs, who continued to exercise their traditional political and judicial authority and in addition regulated the economic life of their people. Women can, under certain circumstances, act as regents on behalf of their husbands or sons. Two women, 'M'apatso and 'M'alikotiko for example, are acting as regents at the Peka villages that were included in the research – their husbands are in full-time employment. Both of them, however, have men as their advisors. They will preside over issues, but will send their councillors to settle disputes. Enquiring about this state of affairs, informants indicated that: *“Men are tough in administration. They exercise their patriarchal power if the subjects act contrary to the law.”*

Men are the major role players in chieftainship affairs and perform most of the duties. The point is to establish whether in a political or in a ritual context, kingship and chieftainships are gender insensitive. Authority was, and still is, for all practical purposes, allocated exclusively to men, who occupy all the positions of power.

5.4 WOMEN AND POLITICS

Various factors, according to Mothibe (1998:3-17), Makoa, 1999:83-109, Milazi, (1999:1-5), Thabane (1998:24-58), Machobane (1990:296-306) and Stevens (1967:53), have affected the politicizing of Basotho national life. However, in none of these did women play any significant role. Actually, it can be argued that Lesotho's constitutional development (and democratisation) has been associated in an over-simplified way with the slogan “one man one vote”. Neither did democratic elections dramatically change the position of women (in political, civil or

economic society)²¹, nor did it stimulate the growth of feminist movements within the framework of Basotho nationalism.

The reasons for this state of affairs, firstly, are the dominant role that traditions and customs still play in everyday life. Makoa (1997:8), for example, points out that the traditional role of men in “*khotla*” meetings has easily been transferred into modern politics. Secondly, according to Makanya (1999:56-58), politics are generally viewed as an arena for men in which women are ineffective, a view that fully supports patriarchy. Women vote for men, organize “*pitsos*” for them, and make ululations and applaud them. Most political women activists are relegated to women’s wings (leagues), supporting men. Once in the decision-making seats, men look for other men to join them. Matashane-Marite (2001:2-3) holds the opinion that women are socialized to accept background positions in political issues and issues related to decision-making.

Thirdly, (especially rural) women are to a certain degree politically apathetic and passive. As one female informant observed: *“These people (male politicians) suffer a lot of humiliation and insults; no women could stand this ridicule. If it is a married woman, it will be difficult to tolerate the situation, not to mention the amount of travelling all over the country explaining the manifesto and campaigning. Personally I cannot allow this; who will take care of my family?”*

In the fourth place, female informants indicated that they perceive politics as war, and this is perceived as the exclusive terrain of men. The years of political turmoil, a coup d’état and the Southern African

²¹ Parliament has recently passed a bill for Local Government elections (to take place on 30 April 2005). The bill specifies that there should be councils reserved for women. Every 3rd electoral division should be left for women to stand either as political electorate or independently (National Assembly, Hansard 31 March, 2004). There is a debate from Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organization (LCN) regarding the quota bill (see Public Eye Newspaper Vol. 9 No 9 Page 6,2005).

Development Community's military intervention in Lesotho (1998) have confirmed this view.

From the interviews, it became clear that there is a growing, albeit slow, awareness amongst male political leaders to recognize the influence, services and value of women and for that matter the potential role they can play in national movements and organizations. Moreover, the more important women become, the more they will press their claims for the removal of the disadvantages they suffer as women.

5.5 WOMEN AND THE LAW

Basotho women are beginning to fulfil many of the roles and functions previously held by men, especially because men are away for long periods as migrant labourers. The tendency which is developing amongst women, namely to think of themselves as individuals and not only in terms of their relations to families and kinship groups in which men play the leading part, is considerably held up by conflicts between these facts of social change and the legal system which operates and regulates the status of women.

Two different legal systems are operative in Lesotho. The first system is the customary law. The head of the traditional judicial community, as well as the counsellors, were (and are still today) only men. Most of the customary rules are not desired by women, whether they stay in the rural areas or not. Women are discovering through education and their arduous experience as breadwinners, that they suffer disadvantages as women under the customary legal system.

Secondly, there is the common law of Lesotho, which is Roman-Dutch law. Various discrepancies (as indicated in Chapter 1) exist between the status of women and men as is legally recognized and defined under the common law. Men solely head the administration of common law, though

women are appointed in some capacities. Men form the majority in decision-making positions, such as the judiciary. It can be concluded that the justice system in Lesotho is not really accessible to or affordable for women.

From the research data, it is evident that:

- Under both customary and common law, women are treated as perpetual minors. They may not own, inherit or bequeath property. They cannot exercise rights of guardianship over their children even if unmarried, widowed or divorced (cf. Mamashela, 1985:166; Maqutu, 1992:57).
- The justice system is not really accessible to or affordable for women.
- The vast majority of women are suffering under the traumatic consequences of the (customary and common) law. Apart from 'big' issues like loans or the inheritance of property which are governed by the law, various female informants have, for example, recorded experiences where even ordinary everyday issues like the health of a child, or school fees could not be dealt with by the mother when the father was away, because it is prohibited by the law. The orderly functioning of the family is often jeopardized by the stipulations of the law.

Legal processes and institutions have lately come under reform. In discussing the Married Persons Equality Bill (2000), Letuka, Mapetla and Matashane-Marite (2004:25) and Kimane (2001:5-7) for example, explain that the Lesotho Law Reform Commission (LLRC) has drafted the bill ready to be presented to Parliament. The Draft Bill advocates social changes with vast implications. The passing of the bill and its acceptance into law should go a long way towards addressing gender equality.

The Government has passed the Gender Development Policy. The Cabinet approved it in 2003. However, it is still in draft form regarding its

objectives and strategies. Lesotho as a member of the United Nations and SADC, has signed and ratified some of the conventions, for example:

- The Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD);
- The Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 (WCW);
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR);
- The SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997);
- The Lesotho Constitution and the government's principles on democracy and rule of law;
- Lesotho Government Vision 2020
- New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The above instruments are meant to attain equality in all UN and SADC member states, Lesotho included. However, not much has been done to implement these international instruments, or even national ones. This is window-dressing and decorating shelves at the expense of the nation.

The Government passed the Sexual Offences Act, No. 29, 2003. The communities at Peka are not familiar with the provisions of the Act, yet it protects women against domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape.

The law leaves women to suffer traumatic consequences and is completely overshadowed by patriarchy with its various 'patchwork quilt' practices (Bozzoli 1983:149). Most of the women informants had this to say: *"Me', really all these laws which discriminate against us and give men marital power over us women should be abolished."* Although women are making some strides in this institution in various areas and are holding important positions such as magistrates, prosecutors, chief

magistrates, judicial commissioners and judges of the High Court, men still outnumber them.

5.6 THE STATE (SERVICE-PROVIDING INSTITUTIONS) AND GENDER TRANSFORMATION

Sexism, repressive migrant labour policies, poverty, degradation, and underdeveloped rural areas without basic infrastructures have dominated Lesotho's colonial history. After independence, prospects of foreign aid increased and hopes of improving the rural areas were given a boost with announcements of financial support from the International Development Association, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations General Assembly (Morrison, 1995:166-175, Ferguson, 1990:21, Stevens, 1967:95).

It was one of the new state's development objectives to convert the rural Peka into a town. Accordingly various service-providing institutions (health centres, a police station, nursery, primary and high schools, a post office, a judiciary court, etc) were established and roads were built. The question of whether or not the state plays a successful role in the transformation of a society depends, according to Le Roux (1996:264), on a wide variety of factors, among others the nature and power of the bureaucracy. In the case of the service-providing institutions of Peka, the power of the bureaucracy is in the hands of men. It is the well-known dichotomy: women are marginalized while men are centrally defined. Female informants described their experiences in this regard as follows: *"In the case of promotions to the senior levels, men who are holding these positions nominate other men. Women are heavily discriminated against in work situations. Most of the bureaucratic institutions are governed by patriarchal hierarchical structures, which favour men to hold decision-making positions. I am sure you have noticed that men head most of the schools. Some service-providing institutions such as the judiciary and police force have men at the apex of bureaucratic rule."*

5.7 CIVIL SOCIETY AND PATRIARCHY

According to Atkinson (1996:288), many different interpretations of the term civil society' exist. Authors like Motebang (2000:2) and Popenoe (1983:342) emphasize in this regard the voluntary nature of such organizations, while Pillay (1996:351) reserves the term for those organizations that seek to serve the society. The same viewpoint is endorsed in this chapter – the term is used to distinguish those organizations which promote justice, rights and equality. Under the umbrella concept of civil society “profit-making” (businesses) and “non-profit” organizations (trade unions, agricultural groups, development organizations, community-based organizations, stokvels, sport clubs, religious groups, etc) are normally included.

Civil society in Lesotho is not well developed. The dominant reason for this is the absence of a strong, independent middle class. This kind of middle class provides an indispensable basis for the development of civil society. Although there are distinct groups of individuals with a middle-class lifestyle (especially in Maseru), their income is to a great extent derived from positions within the state, and not from independent productive activities. The Lesotho government is not exceptionally hostile to civil society. However, the ‘empty’ democracy of Lesotho is largely responsible for most of the difficulties which civil society experiences. Another reason is the failure of civil society itself to establish (apart from the SADC context) any international/global links worth mentioning.

The most commonly found civil society organizations in the (rural) research area are burial associations, grocery clubs, homemakers associations and the Manka Agricultural Cooperative.

Burial associations are known in the language of the people as “*mpate Sheleng*” – which literally means, “a shilling buries me”.²² The two most common burial associations in the research area are Likoena and Ratanang Manka. The vast majority of members are women – a fact confirmed by Lephoto (1995:11) for the whole of Lesotho. Women are the ones who have to struggle to pay the required fees from their scanty income; they must attend the monthly meetings, assist fellow members with burial arrangements and support the bereaved. To the question as to why they join the associations in such great numbers, all female informants have the same answer: *“We know the whole family will be looking to us for the burial, emphasizing that ‘you are married to this man in this lineage. He is your husband.’ In order to make the burial easy for us we join the burial associations.”* Women join these burial schemes to please their patrilineal lineages to which the children belong. Furthermore, there is the fear that the deceased might participate in some horrible and disturbing rituals if not buried properly by the wife. For example, an informant said: *“If an ox is not slaughtered, the deceased will appear telling a wife that he is experiencing cold, he wants a blanket. We please the lineage.”*

Although men are not keen to join burial associations, they demand a full share of the benefits. *“I know my wife will bury me in a beautiful coffin and there will be food at my funeral. If she neglects me, I will haunt her. The ancestors of this lineage will be angry with her.”* Others said: *“My children and my wife will bury me. You know women are very sympathetic. These days women pay for beautiful coffins for us, called caskets or baskets. They are shaped like wardrobes, not ‘mahetlana’ (shoulders) or ‘mokholitsoane’ (lizard shaped) – these are oblong shaped like shoulders or lizards. I want to sleep in basket (casket). I know she*

²² It is believed by informants that historically these associations were started by members who contributed one shilling (ten cents) each. Matobo (1998:53), however, rejects this view.

will be ashamed to leave me. Moreover, the children will demand that she give me a decent funeral, stating that I am their father.”

Grocery (also known as Christmas) clubs serve as money-saving and lending institutions. Members contribute a monthly amount; they can borrow money at a certain rate, while all savings are distributed among members at the end of each year. During the first week of December 2001, I travelled to Durban with 60 members of one of their clubs to observe and participate in their shopping. Some were teachers from various schools; others ran small businesses, and there were ordinary Basotho women and homemakers. The items to be purchased included children’s clothes for Christmas, groceries, kitchen utensils, dishes, blankets, linoleum carpets, floor tiles and underwear, depending on the needs of individuals. Most of the informants explained that the money-lending club and Christmas club assist them in meeting their needs. Some of the informants mentioned that they are unable to open accounts with financial banks because of their meagre resources, and they cannot afford the collateral required by the commercial institutions. Some informants have this to say: *“We are happy with these clubs; they are helpful because we easily borrow money and pay tuition fees for our children and meet other needs.”* The clubs are more development-oriented and they loosen the economic dependency of women on patriarchy by allowing them loans without the consent of their husbands.

Most men in the rural areas claimed to have a direct economic and subsistence interest in agriculture. However, even in the case of agricultural cooperative societies (e.g. Manka Agricultural Cooperative Society), women are in the majority, while men retain the key positions on the executive committee. According to female members: *“We women do not want to take decision-making positions. Women elect men whom they perceive as vocal and exercising their masculine strength. Really it is disappointing to be under male dominance all the time yet we take a*

leading role in agriculture.” This supported the point that women were aware of male dominance and that they were adversely affected by the sexual discrimination into which they were socialized. In every sphere of work, they view men as superior to them, while they are inferior.

The Lesotho National Council of Women (LNCW)²³ with its motto *“Ntjapeli ha e hloloe ke sebata”* (united we stand divided we fall), is the umbrella body for most of the women’s non-governmental associations, like the Homemakers Association. The Homemakers Association was established in 1934 and the major purpose is/was to teach women good home-making skills such as the preparation of good food, making their homes attractive and making nice clothes (Epprecht, 200:156-159). In Peka, informants stated that: *“During the life of our chieftainess ‘M’aseoehla our Homemakers Association was alive and she was a very active member of the association. She taught us activities generating income such as weaving, candlemaking, poultry production, bee-keeping, and planting of sunflower plants for the extraction of oil and gave us several recipes for the cooking and preservation of fruits and vegetables. We develop our families; development was the norm of the late chieftainess. We really tried to give our husbands a good service; we also tried to keep alive the knowledge of indigenous crafts, such as making items out of grass and Basotho ‘litema’²⁴ on the walls of the house and on the outside. The idea was to provide for a good life. The nursery schools you see operating are some of the results of the Homemakers Association.”*

The Homemakers Association assists the patriarchal home; hence, the wife in pleasing herself also pleases the husband and children. Children were socialised in this way and girls, in particular, were taught how to take

²³ Lesotho National Council of Women was founded on 24 August 1964. The following is its mission statement: To encourage women to work together to share ideas and urge do-operation. Those who know how to impart it to those lacking in it (Mosala, 1995:2).

²⁴ Litema are Basotho decorations used in smearing of the floors of houses or the outside or front of the house using soil mixed with cow dung and water.

care of their families in marriage; the emphasis is always, however, on the husband, who maintains the patriarchal power.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on patriarchy within the domain of various institutions at Peka. All these institutions operate in a specific socio-cultural context – a context that was constructed by colonialism, history, beliefs, and customs, economic-political considerations and different forms of government. Given this legacy, institutions are not functioning in a context which is gender neutral or where concern for the welfare of all the citizens receives equal attention. This common factor creates, on a practical level, certain research problems; it is difficult to deal with the analysis, description and assessment of these institutions without repeating oneself too much. Variation in the nature and contents of the different sections seems to be part of the solution.

Church institutions generally are very conservative and often discriminate on dogmatic grounds against women. Women operate in these institutions under hierarchical patriarchal structures. Although women are being ordained as priests in some denominations, this is generally just window-dressing. Male priests still possess full authority. It was shown that nuns appeared to have a high degree of autonomy, yet they are still under the authority of male priests who maintain the patriarchal power. Most informants, however, aligned themselves with the system of patriarchy and were against the ordination of female priests.

Patriarchy is very strong in politics, especially where decision-making positions are concerned. The majority of informants preferred to be led by men. Women are regarded as being weak and shy.

Lesotho operates under a dual legal system namely, customary law and common law. Both of these systems of law regard women as minors. Because of this, married women operate under the patriarchal power, which influences every aspect of their lives. They are denied their fundamental human rights and are required to obtain the consent of their husbands before any undertaking is possible. The development and progress of women (and children) is hindered socially and economically. Many of their life experiences showed some evidence of repression and even cruelty.

Women operate under various structures of patriarchal power in service-providing institutions as well as in various associations where they take a leading role. In the burial societies, for instance, women wish to give their husbands a good burial when they die in order to show respect towards the lineage of their husbands. In some associations, women play a leading role but still depend heavily on their men in a financial sense.

The following chapter will discuss deconstruction of culture in the family and the institutions outside the family. This chapter will be an attempt to uncover certain themes, and to elucidate their meanings.

CHAPTER 6

DECONSTRUCTION OF PATRIARCHY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There are various ways of arriving at the meaning of a set of ethnographical data. Emphasis could be placed on the structural conditions of cultural customs and practices, and social relations, for example, surface structures and deep structures. Lèvi-Strauss (1969:24) in his study of myths and ritual beliefs, for example, posits a “universal mind” as the origin of all structures, so that all surface varieties of the world’s cultures will yield certain deep regularities and patterns, which can be analysed structurally. In accordance with this model of structuralism, one can view the recording of distinguishable regularities in narrative (life histories) as leading to the construction of a number of principles of structural organization, complete with rules for combination and functioning, which could eventually lead to the production of ethnographic ‘facts’.

It was decided, however, not to deal with life histories in the above-mentioned structural way. A post-modern/structural point of departure was selected for this study. Accordingly, the term ‘deconstruction’ was perceived as a way of gaining access to the mode in which patriarchy is/was constructed or constituted in Basotho cultural customs and practices and social relations. In the deconstructive ‘reading’ of cultural and social texts, the discrepancies between what a text sets out to say and what it is constrained to say, are normally pointed out. And that is the purpose of this chapter – to detect the shifted, deferred and concealed meanings of cultural and social texts.

In Basotho thinking there are certain concepts, which have assumed such great importance that they can be regarded as “transcendental signifiers” (cf. Derrida, 1981:19). The assigning of meaning in terms of these concepts will subsequently be examined according to the following ‘symptoms’: logocentrism, binary-oppositions, multivocality and otherness.

6.2 “KOAĒ”: ‘PLEASURES OF PATRIARCHY’

The notion of womanhood in the Basotho culture is closely linked to marriage. The Basotho marriage is a rite of passage from unmarried status to married status. However, most female informants mentioned the welcoming custom, that of “*koaĒ*”, which is a welcome to the husbands’ home as one of the more important ones.

In everyday usage “*koaĒ*” can, firstly, refer to any kind of tobacco. Interviewees informed me that tobacco is not a westernised product of Basotho culture. Long before Western contact the Basotho planted tobacco called “*Marakoaneng*”. The smoking of tobacco was supposed to enrich the mind, and it was regarded as a therapy for nervousness. Many smoke it for pleasure, while traditional healers use it to communicate with the ancestors when diagnosing a disease from which a patient may be suffering and when casting the divine bones to detect the cause of an illness. In most of the rituals where offerings to the ancestors are involved, among the items offered was a certain form of tobacco called “*Mohlothi*”. This is sniffed and people sneeze as a sign of contentment; for those who do not want to sneeze, BB tobacco is substituted, which is smoked through a narrow tube with a bowl at one end. According to informants “*koaĒ*” or tobacco snuff is also taken as medicine for headaches. Elderly women will also use the metaphor of tobacco as a play with young naked male children; they will touch the little one’s penis and imitate snuffing it and say: “*Oh, this is nice and fulfilling*”, meaning it is very good. The ‘pleasures’ associated with the use of tobacco are thus assigned to or

assimilated with the male genitals. The sexual undertone subjacent to the meaning of “*koae*” is foregrounded more clearly in the second usage of the word.

“*Koae*” refers also to the sheep that is proffered by in-laws on the arrival of a new daughter-in-law (“*ngoetsi*”) and shows that the husband and his new wife are beginning a new life. They are now officially allowed to have sexual intercourse, but it is expected of them not to eat the meat of the “*koae*” sheep. It is believed that the two might not have children if they eat their own “tobacco”. The act is seen as having the power of weakening their genitals.

During the “*koae*” ritual the mother-in-law or other female relatives will clothe the new daughter-in-law with new attire as required by her new status. The new clothes symbolize that the daughter-in-law has undergone a change in status – she is now a married woman. Part of her new outfit is a blanket with which the daughter-in-law must cover her body in order to keep it warm. There is much symbolism involved in the putting on of the blanket by the new daughter-in-law. It is associated with the *labia minora* which, it is believed, act as a ‘blanket’ for the vagina and keeps it warm, while the elongated *labia minora* are designed to cover a man’s genital organ to keep it warm (like a blanket) during sexual intercourse. This will give more pleasure to the man.

The new experience of sexual intercourse is a painful one for the virgin, to the point that she might be unable to work or walk properly. She must hide this discomfort from people, especially the father-in-law and the paternal uncles, by wearing the blanket below her knees. This takes place for some time, depending on the particular lineage. After some time the woman replaces the blanket with a light shawl, indicating that she is warm all the time – not so much her body as her vagina, and is therefore ready for sex at any time with her husband. Female informants revealed that it

was difficult to bear the pain they experienced the first night of married life. However, they were told to bear the pain because as women they would meet with some problems in marriage, which they would have to endure and be patient, for that was the beginning of marriage. They declared: *“Marriage is tough. This is a sign that you were well behaved and a man should be proud of being the first one to meet with a virgin”*. They declared unanimously: *“Do not shout at the top of your voice, this is the stage of bearing pain; it shows that you are a woman. You are making fun of your husband who should enjoy sex with you. Stop crying and shouting, we have all passed through this stage. Your married equals will laugh at you. A woman should show perseverance in experiencing this pain”*. This prepared a wife for childbearing.

Most of the older female informants mentioned that it was a disgrace to find that a girl's *labia minora* were not elongated. The man would complain of the wife being cold, meaning that his genital organ is not covered during sexual intercourse and that the woman takes time to become warm because her vagina lacked a “blanket” to keep it warm. The man would complain to his mother, and this was a form of disgrace for the new daughter-in-law. This was taken so seriously that girls would work on elongating their *labia minora* and old women would chase them in a form of play to find out whether they had done so.

Each rite of passage can, anthropologically speaking, be divided into three ritual stages, of which the final one is that of ‘incorporation’. *“Koaë”* is not only the welcoming of the new daughter-in-law, but her incorporation to a new position, that of readiness, availability and receptivity. When women were asked to respond to this new position, the simple answer came forth time and again. *“Ke Sesotho”* – This is the Basotho way. The *“koaë”* mode of assigning meaning to the married woman's role and position, thus represents a ‘logocentrism’ in Basotho culture.

6.3 'BONYATSI': 'SPICE OF LIFE'

"*Bonyatsi*", as indicated in Chapter 4, refers to a concubine in an extra-marital affair. It is a general phenomenon in Lesotho²⁵ although supposedly frowned upon. In addition, while the term "*bonyatsi*" (which is derived from the verb "*nyatsi*") means to reject, it is on the contrary seen as a soothing and therapeutic mechanism for a miserable partner, or a break in the monotony of living with one partner. Accordingly, it is believed that a long period without sexual intercourse (for example, when the husband is away due to migrant labour) will cause serious illness, like the disturbance of the woman's menstrual cycle. The point is that although an adulterous affair can severely harm a marriage, it also fulfils a specific sociological function.

In the "*bonyatsi*" relationship the man's (otherwise) patriarchal power is shifted away from the centre, as it is decentralized by the creation of a binary opposite –the female "*nyatsis*". Stated differently, although a man may maintain his 'normal' authority and power over his married wife (bonded in a social system), that is not the case with the "*nyatsis*". She is not the repressed, ignored, marginalized 'other', while he has for obvious reasons, to be polite and kind, patient and loving, respect her wishes and so on. This situation confuses men. Male informants, for example, state: "*Those in the "bonyatsi" affair (women) have fascinating powers, we men become very stupid, to the extent that we forget our wives and our own children*". The men have no adequate explanations for such powers wielded by women, thinking that "*some women use 'muti' (traditional medicine) such as sheba-'na feela (meaning 'pay attention to me alone') and seletjane (hermannia depressa) which is believed to be a traditional*

²⁵ Most female informants saw it as a retaliation strategy against their abusive husbands, while men's justification was patriarchal: "There is nothing wrong with "*bonyatsi*" practice. I also want to be loved and taken care of economically". This emphasis on extra-marital affairs gave them status and added masculinity. Some female informants found it to be a sophisticated type of survival strategy that seems to be an important aspect of the whole practice.

aphrodisiac medicine prepared by women. Others state that: “*These women give us some medicine called phehla*”, (“*phehla*” means a man follows the instructions given by a woman to hoodwink a man, diligently and without any questions).

The power of women in a “*bonyatsi*” relationship is vested in the concept of taking and giving. The woman is satisfied because she gains love, security and material things. In most cases, it usually serves as a safety valve or a survival strategy for abused, deserted, and sometimes even ordinary women. To show the power of “*bonyatsi*” women will sing songs²⁶ at shebeens or during the “*litolobonya*” ceremony (welcoming of the new baby). Women will sing these songs denoting the power of love; they are proud that they have taken the husbands of other women and that they “own” them. A few of these songs are cited:

- “*Mong’a monna ha a loana a nke chefo a impolae, na ke ikentse ka mahetla*”. (The owner of the husband should fight and take poison to commit suicide because I am carrying him with my shoulders). In singing this song a woman shows that she is deeply in love with the man, and the wife of the man can do whatever she wants, even to the point of committing suicide. The woman is in control not only of his love, but also of the man’s economic resources.
- “*Mong’a monna o teng, taba liteng ha ke mosheba oa ntšonyetsa taba liteng*”. (The owner of the husband is around; when I looked at her she becomes sulky).
- “*Helehele, ngoana moshanyana o ntšale morao ke mo nkile ha ke etsa tjena ke etsa motho famo*”. The woman implies that the man is completely hers and should follow her and she is going to enjoy sex with him to the fullest. “*Famo*” is a game in which the woman turns around quickly to make her dress show her underwear in order to entice the men.

²⁶ Sesotho songs sung at beer halls or at social entertainment occasions relating to love affairs have got thrilling, comforting and vengeful words as well as appealing ones, for those who have been disappointed in love.

In the same vein men have a song addressing the love affairs attached to women's extra-marital lovers. For example, one of the songs goes as follows: *"Ha ke ea nka mosali ke nkile lerato, lerato ke la ka mosali ke oa hau, nkutloele bohloko"*. This means, "I have given the woman love which is mine, however the woman is yours, please bear with me". In essence the male *"nyatsi"* in this song is explaining that he is providing the woman with abundant love, while the woman is still the property of another man. The man should thank him and bear with him because the prospective husband has failed to give the woman love, now he is providing her with what she misses.

Informants comment that songs are a powerful mode of communication. For example, if the man has often reported the wife's *"bonyatsi"* to the family council or if he has been talking to his wife about the issue in vain, the words of his song will say: *"Ntate mpitsetse bana ba ka mosali oa ka o nketsetsa mathaithai. Ke buile le eena maobane, tsatsing lena u nketsetsa mathaithai"*. This means: "My father, call my children. My wife is misbehaving. I talked to her very often about this – even yesterday, but she continues cheating on me". The man is morose about the bad behaviour of the wife, and he appeals to his father to call his children because he wants to inform them of the situation. He thinks that the children will confront the mother and in turn, the mother will be ashamed to realize that her children know about her *"bonyatsi"* affair.

In praising his *"nyatsi"*, the man will utter phrases such as *"mothepa oa ka banna lijo tseo a mphang tsona ha ho mosali a ka mphang tse joalo"*, which literally means: "My lover *"nyatsi"* is satisfying me with good food and no woman can compete with her". The actual meaning of this, however, is: "My *"nyatsi"* satisfies me sexually and there is no other woman who can compete with her, she is my beloved one, her sexuality is under my control". Sexual intercourse is regarded as a form of food which

satisfies a man's appetite, and it is said that a man's blood should be healthy and he should be ready to service a woman regularly.

In the "*bonyatsi*" relationship binary oppositions are created: The woman gains power and controls the man socially and economically to the point that he submits to all her demands. The patriarchal power of men in "*bonyatsi*" relations in most cases is suppressed and marginalized (Balking, 1996:38-39; Powell, 1998:102). In the "*bonyatsi*" relationship, men who otherwise are considered more powerful than women reverse their super-ordinate status and thus find themselves in a subordinate relation to women.

6.4 "BOHALI" - CONFIRMING THE LOGOCENTRISM OF PATRIARCHY

Over many years the topic of bridewealth has been the focus of considerable anthropological discussion and debate (cf. Bouwer, 1953, Cortez, 1935:219, Comaroff 1980:167, Goody, 1973, Holleman, 1960:94, Lèvi-Strauss, 1969:61 and Mathews, 1940:1-24). For the purpose of this study it is deemed unnecessary to deal with this debate here. Authors like Letsitsi (1990:36), Maqutu (1992:23) and Mosito (1997:359) confirm that bridewealth in Basotho society complies with the general structural and functional explanations and interpretations: e.g. it is compensation for the transfer of a woman or the rights vested in her from one kin group to another; or for the granting of rights through offspring; and so on.

The Sesotho word for bridewealth, '*bohali*', is a combination of the prefix '*bo*' = denotes singular + the suffix '*hali*' = which either means 'the place of residence of the husband's parents', or it indicates that the sex of somebody/something is female. The concept '*bohali*' thus has a symbolic meaning (home), as well as a referential one (sex).

Traditionally “*bohali*” was paid with cattle – and even where money or goods may be used nowadays in response to new socio-economic demands, it will still be seen symbolically as ‘cattle’. The taxonomy ‘*bohali* cattle’ is based on the ideational notion that the cattle represent male as well as female animals. A cow is regarded as a noble animal: “*khomo ke Molimo o nko e metsi*” (A cow is God with a dewy nose). In “*bohali*” a cow is an animal which expands the relationships among people, because it provides food, it reproduces and serves the needs of Man (e.g. used for ploughing the fields). The same kind of qualities, duties and functions are expected from a married woman.

Notwithstanding the changes that Basotho “*bohali*” practices have undergone, it remains intact and continues to provide a powerful means of control over women. Irrespective of how much “*bohali*” a Mosotho man has exchanged for his wife, he obtains exclusive and absolute rights in/over her.²⁷

6.5 “MALOME”: A PILLAR IN BASOTHO SOCIETY

There is a Sesotho maxim which indicates that: “The “*malome*” is the one who bites from both sides”. Indeed, he possessed multiple voices/speaks with two quite different voices. He, on the one hand, fulfils in his own family / patrilineage the ‘normal’ patriarchal roles and duties, and enjoys the privileges associated with and ascribed to a male person. His influence, on the other hand, extended into his sister’s family-in-law where he safeguards her interests, and thus directly those of his patrilineage. He:

- has to be informed about events that take place regarding his sister and her children;

²⁷ In various African societies, according to Scheider (1981:87), the number of rights a man receives varies in accordance with what is given for “*bohali*”.

- conducts, or is involved in various rituals and ceremonies on their behalf (e.g. contributions to their *'bohali'* and initiation, as well as during times of sickness and misfortune);
- is the one who introduces the newborn children of his sister to his/her lineage's ancestors, who appeases the ancestors, who calls upon them for the well-being of the children, and who will firstly be called upon during the pouring of soil in the graves of his nephews and nieces as a sign of beating farewell to the dead, and to inform the ancestors that their child is back with them; and
- is the one who makes sure that there is frequent contact with the mother's kin.

Although the Basotho is a patrilineal orientated society, the *'malome'* ensures that the 'story' of the mother's side is also told; that the married sister has a firm link with her natal lineage through her brother; and that the importance of the matrilineage is not being underplayed by the in-laws.

In the elementary Basotho family the relation between a father and his children can be described as formal, strict, while the frequency of contact is low and the children have to pay the necessary respect at all times. As *'malome'*, the same person will stand in a completely different (warm, intimate and close = mild joking) relationship to his sister's children. Although the *'malome'* will act as a kind of father for his nephews and nieces and must be respected by them because he is from a senior generation, he is forbidden to punish them, because it will offend the ancestors. Nephews and nieces, from their side, will acknowledge the involvement of the *'malome'* in their lives, as well as the contributions he has made on their behalf over the years. For this reason the nephew will give his first salary to the *'malome'*. This gesture is called *'masalio'* (*mosali* = woman + *eo* = that one), meaning: "I am doing this to show *'malome'* that when the time comes for my marriage, he is the one who will help me."

6.6 POWER CORRUPTS: THE MULTIPLE VOICES OF THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

Every mother-in-law has experienced what it means to be a daughter-in-law: marginalisation, alienation, loneliness and oppression. However, when the time comes for a new daughter-in-law to be introduced into the husband's family, the mother-in-law does not serve as a cushion. She is the one who will instruct the newly arrived daughter-in-law; she will act on behalf of her son when he is absent due to his working as a migrant labourer, or has passed away; and she will make sure that the daughter-in-law does not secretly use contraceptives/pay surreptitious visits to the clinic, or become involved in an extra-marital affair.

The mother-in-law thus supports and maintains the patriarchal power to which she herself is subject and about which she complains. Control over economic benefits, such as a salary or the pension of a late/retired son, seem to be a very strong incentive for the mother-in-law's behaviour.

6.7 CEREMONIES AND RITUALS: RAMIFICATIONS OF PATRIARCHAL LOGOCENTRISM

The ceremonies and rituals summarised here, only affect women. In the Basotho (cultural, social and ritual) context these stylised performances all serve the same purpose, namely the reinforcing of patriarchal power.

6.7.1 'Bipa'

During the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy of a first child, the daughter-in-law is sent back to her natal home to perform the "*bipa*" ceremony, and to deliver the baby. According to Basotho legend one of the wives of a polygamist was at loggerheads with another co-wife and

decided to give her millet to eat, with the intention of murdering her. This was not eaten. However, the woman who was given the millet enjoyed it very much and gained weight. The people began regarding the millet as an important grain; the seeds could be sown for making porridge (“*motoho*” and “*papa*” meal-pap) and it could be used as yeast for making Basotho beer. It is the latter use of millet that gives rise to “*bipa*”. After the millet is softened in water, it is put into a sack, covered with blankets, to germinate, while it is stirred from time to time. After germination, the millet is spread out in the sun to dry, whereafter it is ground into the flour (“*mela*”) that is used as yeast in the making of Basotho beer.

A baby is seen as being similar to millet; first it is the seed which is ‘germinating’ inside the uterus. In order for it to ‘germinate’ well, the mother is provided with the following clothes: a loose pink flannel shirt and a half skirt of traditional Basotho dress. These clothes are meant to be loose to allow the child to move freely. The mother’s hair is shaved and a mixture of butterfat, or Vaseline, mixed with red ochre (*letsoku*) is applied to her body, and she has to go barefoot. The mixture applied keeps the body warm and it allows the child to grow well, while the mother must go barefoot, with her head shaved, to resemble the baby in the womb who is covered by a membrane only. The red ochre must be collected from the east, implying *Ntsoanatsatsi*.²⁸ It is said that the child moves in the mother’s womb with the amniotic fluid membrane surrounding the placenta like water snakes from *Ntsoanatsatsi*.

Lesitsi (2002:37) asserts that a visitor can easily identify the clans in a village by identifying the mark (“*khoetsa*”) on the necklace (“*rempi*”) that

²⁸ *Ntsoanatsatsi* is regarded as the place of origin (the home) of the Basotho. It is a place with dams, water snakes, swamps, marshes, reeds and good vegetation. The eastern cardinal is the rising sun; it is a place of peace and sunshine and all the ancestors reside there (Rakotsoane, 2001:30). In the past children were told that babies come from *Ntsoanatsatsi*. After delivery, other women might tease the mother who has just delivered by asking her: “How were the snakes? Were they wild?” This is in reference to the severity or mildness of the labour pains. If the pains were very severe, it denotes that the snakes of *Ntsoanatsatsi* were wild. In order to calm the snakes (pains) and to ease labour different medicinal herbs were used.

expectant mothers of firstborn babies wear during the “*bipa*” period. Informants explained that, for example, in the case of the Basia clan (whose totem is the wild cat) a turned softened skin – in which the foot of a wildcat and the end of its tail are worn, and which is decorated with black and white beads – is worn around the neck. It is alleged that the wildcat prevents evil spirits from attacking the expectant mother and the foetus. The black beads show that the child is living in the dark inside the mother’s womb and should be well protected, while the white beads are used to represent light and symbolize the child’s eventual departure from the darkness of the womb and its life on earth where there is light.

After the birth of the firstborn at her natal home, the nursing mother sleeps on the floor next to “*Ba faatše*” (ancestors) who is believed to be taking care of her and the baby. The same applies during her bereavement after the death of her husband.

6.7.2 Bereavement and ‘*Thapo*’

When the corpse of a deceased husband is laid out, the head must face east (in the case of a deceased wife, she should face the opposite direction, in other words, west). As a sign of respect, the mother of the late husband will lie during the night-watch opposite the feet of the corpse. Informants suggest that the mother’s position shows that she is the one who kept his baby feet warm and took care of him. The ancestors will be very pleased because they notice that the mother is at the feet of her son – acknowledging his seniority.

During the period of mourning the widow is, out of respect, supposed to speak softly, not to undertake any journeys and to perform the “*thapo*” ritual. The name “*thapo*” refers to a plaited grass rope made from grass called “*loli*” or “*moli*” that grows near the marshy areas of *Nsoanatsatsi*. There is a Sesotho saying that a bereaved woman “*o ithoetse meli hloohong*” is putting “*meli*” (in other words the plaited grass rope) on her

head, meaning that she is mourning her beloved husband. The widow also wears a softened sheepskin and applies black clay, called “*moking*”, daily on her body to denote her sorrow.²⁹ The black colour indicates that life within the deceased’s family has been disrupted because of the loss of the husband.

The implication of the wearing of “*thapo*” is to please the dead and the ancestors, and to show that the family cares for their departed son and husband.

6.7.3 Cleansing period

The cleansing of a widow takes place when the late husband’s “*thapo*” is removed. This ritual takes place at the widow’s natal home, so that bad omens are left there. The natal home is the place where the widow’s impurities after the birth of her first child were hidden at the ash-heap (for example, the umbilical stump and the first hair which was cut). Cleansing at the natal home denotes that it is the home of the mother’s ancestors who have to take care of their child and to bestow good fortune on her.

During the cleansing period a sheep or a cow is slaughtered to appease the ancestors. Part of its blood is mixed with the chyme from the small intestines, its bile and pieces of aloe maculata “*lekhala la bafu*”. According to the informants the chyme of the small intestine of an animal and the substances from the bile purify the blood of an animal. The Basotho value the bile because its bitter taste is believed to expel evil spirits. It is used for most of the rituals, for example the ancestral ceremony, the purification of orphans after the death of parents – either the mother or the father. The mixture is put into the bathtub in which the widow takes a bath with the help of one of the older women. The following

²⁹ With the coming of Christianity the wives of white priests introduced the black cloth which they wore in their home countries during bereavement. Western traders introduced black fabric cloth which was purchased as a “*thapo*” cloth.

words are uttered while bathing: *“M’antsang our child we thank you for respecting your husband and his blanket (“thapo”). Today you are a new person. The bath you have taken removes all impurities. You are entering into new life”*. The woman’s parents have to bear the cost of

the cleansing ritual. She is thereafter thought to have regained her purity and virginity and her social status reverts to what it was before she married. Relatives give clothes and blankets as gifts. She will be praised for having met the demands of the mourning period.

6.8 UNMASKING THE NATURE OF PARAMOUNT- AND CHIEFTAINSHIP

The center (truth/essence) on which all Basotho thought is based, and which guarantees all meaning, is the institution of chieftainship. Without it the Basotho cannot operate, function or exist. Machobane (2001:10) emphasizes the power and meaning of the Paramount Chief as follows: “In Basuto eyes he is at once the custodian and embodiment of Basuto national aspirations. He is regarded as the head of the Basuto Government to whom all Principal Chiefs, Ward Chiefs, Chiefs and headmen are subordinate. No Chief, however powerful, can claim to share authority with him, once his status has been recognized and declared.”

All land (whatever the purpose may be: grazing lands, forests, graveyards, allocation of sites for initiation schools, etc) belongs to the King (His Majesty, King Letsie III). Chiefs (Principal chiefs, area chiefs and sub-chiefs and headmen and their committees) represent the King at village level, and work on his behalf for the people. Basotho chieftainship is a mark of security of the nation hence the villages in Lesotho are named

after or related to their chief, for example Peka ha Lechesa, Peka ha Leburu.

The nation belongs to the King, and all are answerable to him, he is the father of the Basotho nation, the head of the Lesotho state and the mark (*"khoetsa"*) of the nation. Various Sesotho proverbs confirm and uphold the importance of the King and his chiefs: *"Morena o matsoho a malelele"* (the King's hands are long, which implies that chiefs work for the good of the King); *"Morena ke khomo e tjicha"* (the King works in different ways for the good of the nation); and *"Morena ke morena ka batho"* (a chief is a chief by the people).

Although chieftainship is still a very strong patriarchal institution in Lesotho which capitalised on male-domination, it is not unfamiliar for a woman regent to act as a chief (In a certain way one can think of this as the development of a binary opposition). For example: chieftainess 'M'antsebo Seeiso is still remembered for her efforts to prevent the passing of a law against women to forbid them to sell home-brewed beer. Chieftainesses 'M'amathe Masupha and Makopoi Api were articulate in fighting for the women's franchise. These developments have assisted the nation at large. The late Queen Mother, 'M'amohato Seeiso, acted as regent during the absence of her husband on several occasions. She performed well, making a valid contribution to the nation's well-being.

6.9 CONCLUSION

To a large extent this chapter represents the crux of the study, namely the intention to deconstruct Basotho ethnographic 'texts' on patriarchy. Derrida proposes certain procedures for the deconstruction of literature texts (cf. Powell, 1998:106). In Anthropology the study of meaning involves more than the decentering of a hierarchy. To make an

ethnographic text means the opposite of what it originally appeared to mean. To begin with, there is the unique and particular interpretative dimension that resides in all cultural and social expressions. And although the researcher must focus, for example, on the binary oppositions within an ethnographic text, (s)he must at the same time remain aware of the problematic and interpretative dimension of the other culture. Society reaches further than merely taking on the point to show how these opposites are related, and how one is regarded as central and privileged and the other ignored, repressed and marginalized. Cultural and social experiences cannot be understood simply as a free play of meanings in which the researcher could wallow at any given time or manner.

The real issue of this chapter is more than merely one of exploring patriarchy. Because the histories of gender relations were not used as linguistic texts, but as social history which is always transmitted through cultural meanings and social practices, the central (hermeneutical) question of the accessibility of subjective experience and the understanding of sense via ethnographic texts, presented itself anew in this study. For example: Is the produced ethnographical knowledge on patriarchy and the Basotho's everyday experience of it (in)compatible? Is there a paradox between the method of analysis and interpretation used here and the self-interpretation of one's own life histories? Did deconstruction after all, given the translation problems of life histories which intend to articulate and present the otherness of everyday experiences and modes of behaviour, provide any new insights into patriarchy?

There is no simple 'yes' or 'no' to the above-mentioned questions. It must be remembered that all anthropological enquiries have their own intrinsic limitations when it comes to translating another culture and way of life. Despite the reductions which are found in the presentation of the discourse on Basotho authority and gender power relations (which will, for

example, not stand up to testing concepts like “uni-sex’, or gender relations in an industrial-capitalist, commodity-producing society – which Lesotho is not), deconstruction has substantial validity. The approach, for example, leads to a fundamental questioning of the centralist, unilinear way of seeing, understanding and experiencing patriarchy in Basotho society. Although the deconstruction of ethnographic texts is not a common practice in Anthropology with its clear, prescribed guidelines and is thus not without its problems and difficulties, it was possible to uncover different meanings and to indicate how these meanings can change and shift.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the underlying meaning, philosophy and orientation of patriarchy in Basotho culture and society. The Basotho commonly believed in, and accepted patrilineal descent, hence patriarchy is directly 'vested' in/through beliefs, customs, views and practices. However, the issue of gender and equality does not constitute much of any discourse in Lesotho – especially not in the rural communities. Women are resigned to an awareness of gender discrepancies and power-related conflicts, but their daily focus is primarily on the difficulties of creating viable livelihood strategies in a country which is characterised by massive unemployment and rural poverty. This negatively affects the quality of women's lives and increases the severity and trauma of their patriarchal experiences.

The anthropological study of culture and cultural practices is generally taken to be pre-eminently interpretive in nature. The search for meanings, hidden connections, and deeper saliences than those presented by the surface evidence of ethnography, are often presented as obvious, prevalent or even fashionable modes of enquiry. Interpretation, however, in itself is fraught with difficulties, some perhaps ultimately intractable. Cultures, after all, do not simply constitute 'webs of significance' or systems of meaning that orient humans to one another and their world. Cultures also constitute ideologies which disguise human perceptions and views; culture as texts is differently read and construed by men and women; cultures can even be webs of mystification. When asking informants, for example, to explain the meaning of something, the simple answer quite often was: "*Ke Sesotho, ke moetlo oa Basotho*" – This is the Basotho way and the Basotho culture. Others would state: "*Mosotho children are not supposed to ask lots of questions. They should conform*

to the instructions of their elders. That is why we can't explain the meanings of some cultural practices and ceremonies”.

In this study it was argued that for finding deep values, we need to go beyond interpreting the mere rational explanations of the cultural meaning of patriarchy in Basotho society. Put differently, the notion wasn't to try to develop a 'Grand Theory' or a 'Grand Narrative' of Basotho patriarchy – rather to acknowledge the plural ways in which the Basotho people experience and understand it. The basic assumptions of post-modern discourse, which espouses the plurality of descriptions, discourages closure and affirms complexity, therefore formed the epistemological frame for the understanding of this study. Many, and even opposing, approaches within post-modernism can be distinguished. Although efforts to define post-modernism are offensive to many post-modernists, my own approach can best be typified as 'affirmative' – in the sense that I am/was willing to make moral choices about patriarchy in spite of its complexity. I also feel that my work is directly relevant to Basotho life and politics and that will thus help many women in their struggle against sexism in their society.

The study proposes that the positive contribution of post-modernism to Anthropology lies in the way in which the deconstruction of ethnography opens up new avenues of meaning. The deconstruction of ethnographic text posed a major methodological challenge, especially when the overwhelming majority of informants believed that there could be only one, 'correct' Basotho meaning, way or explanation for things. However, the deconstruction of Basotho ethnographical texts proved the value of a second reflection (information which was assumed to be unproblematic in the first place, exposes new categories); the fact that everything in Basotho culture and society consists of a set of interrelated signs which stands in need of re-interpretation; and the importance of differences with regard to the experiencing of patriarchy.

Basotho people are brought up to see, feel, experience and understand their world in a very culturally determined, dichotomised way. Through a deconstruction strategy, however, it was possible to demonstrate that binary oppositions (such as *monna/mosali* (man/woman)) are not merely neutral Sesotho linguistic distinctions, but express power relations and are part and parcel of patriarchy and its politics of male domination in Basotho culture. Deconstruction also confirms that concepts such as “*koa*” and “*bohali*” are not neutral or innocent instruments of cultural practice, but are value laden and indicative of power relationships.

The process of differentiation constitutes an important principle in deconstruction – namely the emphasis that the otherness of the other penetrates self-understanding. In Basotho society, culture, kinship and institutions it is completely out of the question for men to think of, see or understand female otherness as a precondition for their self-awareness and their understanding of it. Basotho chauvinism does not require, recognise or acknowledge female otherness to open up male selfness. The relationship between the male self and female other is, generally speaking, not a harmonious or a romantic one – it is one of intense tension, often violent in nature. It is set on conquering, exploiting, silencing and converting the female other.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first indigenous anthropological study on the Basotho. Indigenous Anthropology possesses unique problems of its own. This was also the case with my study in Lesotho. Informants, for example, were quite often reluctant to assist with the uncovering of meanings: “You are a Mosotho woman. I am sure you know the meaning of this”, was the kind of attitude most informants revealed. I also had to avoid concepts like ‘oppression’, ‘domination’ and ‘domestic violence’ – it could easily derail conversations because informants generally perceive these concepts as harsh and impolite. Talking to strangers about private matters could be viewed as

inappropriate behaviour. The life history-technique proved to be useful, because it enabled me to use specific examples for purposes of explanation.

What is the value of this study? Certainly, it does not discover or invent, or uncover or describe patriarchy for the first time in the field of Anthropology. However, it contributes towards our understanding of it in African society; it illustrates how meanings can shift and change-; it provides new ethnographical insights into the functioning of Basotho culture. Triangulation, especially through the use of a deconstructive strategy, enhances our understanding of fundamental aspects of Basotho culture.

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

**WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY
IN LESOTHO:**

A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY

GUIDELINES FOR FIELDWORK

MAY 2005

**E.L.M. MOLAPO
Ph.D.**

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN THE VILLAGES OF THE STUDY AREA: PEKA AREA IN LERIBE DISTRICT

Date..... Commencement Time:

.....

Time of Conclusion:

.....

Name of interviewee

Title of the study:

WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY IN LESOTHO: A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

My name is 'M'aseoehla Molapo. I am conducting research on women and men's lives experiences. The study aims at gathering information that would enable people to have a better understanding of patriarchy, how it works, and its impact on society. In this village, men and women are selected to participate in the study. I believe that their ideas, opinions, experiences will provide me with the valuable information I need. If you agree to take part, I will ask you to answer the questions. Your name will remain anonymous and the information provided will be treated confidentially.

1.2 Interview Guide – Life histories and experiences some guiding Questions.

- Can you tell me about your life history in several aspects within the family?

- Your relationship with your husband/wife in the:
- Family
- Ceremonies (concerning the culture in the Basotho Society and rituals)
- Rituals.
- Relationship with your in laws

All your life histories should try to give meanings attached to patriarchy.

- What importance do you attach to male leadership and its perpetuity?
- What are your opinions about it?
- Given the chance, would you prefer matriarchy? Why?

2.1 INSTITUTIONS

2.1.1 Church

- What are your experiences of patriarchy in the church?
- Do women have a role in the church as men?

3.1 CHIEFTAINSHIP.

- What are your experiences of patriarchy in chieftainship institution?
- Do women have role there at all?
- Do women have a leading role in politics?

4.1 POWER

- In decision making within the family and public sphere
- Property rights inheritance

5.1 REACTIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF PATRIARCHY

- What are the meanings attached to patriarchy or male leadership in your community?
- How do you see such meanings?
- Give your own interpretation of what male domination means?
- Do some people react negatively to it?
- Do you suggest it should be strengthened? Alternatively, weakened?

6.1 GUIDELINE FOR CHURCH INSTITUTIONS

- Are you a Christian? Which denomination do you belong?
- What role do you play in the church vis-à-vis that of men?
- Are women taking a leading role in the church?
- Are women priests or pastors in your church?
- Do women serve the Holy Communion?
- Do you see patriarchal system in the church? For example, symbols or practices?
- What does the attire by priests, mothers unions and men's clubs symbolize?
- Do women justify the patriarchal hierarchical structure of the church?
- In your opinion, how do you define your position as a woman within the church?
- What is the relationship of priests and nuns within the church and mother's unions and the priests/pastors?

7.1 GUIDELINE INTERVIEW TO CHIEFTAINSHIP

- What are the meanings attached by women to patriarchal structure of chieftainship as symbolized the:
 - The status.
 - The robe and shrine
 - The paraphernalia?
- Why do you think women chiefs act as regents instead of being the substantive holders of the position:
 - What do you think of the system?
- What are the values attached by both women and men towards this? For example:
 - Succession
 - Authority
 - High status
 - Finance gain and government recognition.

8.1. OBSERVATIONAL GUIDE

- Age
- Mode of dress, interaction between men and women and children
- Respect given to the head of the household
- Type of food given to the head of the household
- Set-up of the houses/or allocation of accommodation
- Mode of sitting arrangement at public gatherings (pitsos) in the church and the family meetings.
- Observations at family courts or at judiciary courts, health centers, police office etc. on matters related to power, property inheritance and spouse abuse or children (violence in the family) and rituals.
- Any other things that the researcher thinks are pertinent or related to patriarchy to get the values and meanings attached to it.

9.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND QUESTIONS

- Rituals
- Funeral services, burial rites, morning period and the cleansing process
- Ancestral offerings
- Self help projects or any community development taking place in the village
- Police cases
- Court case
- Health centers.
- Family meetings where permissible.
- Marriage feasts.
- Church attendance all the major three denomination (Lesotho Evangelical Church, Anglican Church of Lesotho and Roman Catholic Church.

APPENDIX 2

MANIFESTOS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

(a) Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) 1998

The manifesto states that the “BCP is willing and interested to uplift the status of women to acquire gender equality. It is the BCP mandate to work hard in order to achieve gender equality. It is the intention of the BCP to stop this state of affairs, and to ensure that women become vocal in development issues as well as taking an active part in these issues. The new BCP government will ensure that women take leading roles in politics and decision-making by equipping them with proper training. It will fight hard for women to take decision-making positions, if they have the desired qualities. The government, in its endeavour to promote gender equality, will be in line with the following key aspects:

- Will protect women, the poor and those discriminated against in families, work and national politics.
- Will strengthen the laws and repeal those discriminating against women in all aspects of life; and
- Will examine the roles taken by men and women”. (Kolisang, 1998:45)

(b) Basotho National Party (BNP) 1993 elections

“The policy of BNP is to respect the fundamental rights of women and the elimination of any form of discrimination, which tends to debase the person of a woman, be that the law of marriage, in business rights, or allocation of soil. Consequently, a Law Review Commission will be established to review, among other things, and recommend appropriate legislation that would protect the rights of women, children, the blind, the deaf, the dumb and physically handicapped person.” (Sekhonyana, 1992:25)

(c) BNP Manifesto in 2002 prior to 2003 elections

“Women all have the right to serve in all positions regarding the Lesotho National Constitution, even to get and take the parliamentary seats. The BNP prior and after election will try by all means to assist women in taking a leading role in decision-making positions of government. BNP will be transparent in encouraging and making sure that women stand for elections and are elected for Government local elections.” (Lekhaya, 2000:10)

(d) Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD): 2000

“There is nowhere in Lesotho where women are denied decision-making positions in transparency. This is an indication that LCD is considering women to undertake any position as long as they are confident about their positions and they have the know-how. It is the LCD mandate to see to it that all international instruments regarding women and children are ratified and implemented.” (Mosisili, 2000:10)

(e) Social Democratic Party (SDP) Manifesto 2003

- “1. To examine poverty, which affects women heavily and to implement new policies to make sure that they have equal rights with men economically.
2. All the laws which discriminate against women should be reviewed or repealed. New laws should be formulated which will empower women politically, economically and socially.
3. There should be an easy path for women to take up decision-making positions.
4. There should be a structure established for dealing with domestic violence cases.
5. To strengthen women’s organizations with political associations or women’s wings (leagues); these should deal with international organizations fighting for women’s rights; some links should be forged with feminist working groups of international unions of socialist youth,

socialist women of socialist international with women in politics in the Middle East, Europe, Scandinavia, Asia Pacific Region, Latin America and Caribbean Islands.

6. To empower women's rights in decision-making and health facilities
The party's manifesto covers gender equality." (Seleso, 2000:30-31)

(f) National Progressive Party (NPP) 2002

"We are the party which is for equality, we are going to examine and reform all the laws that discriminate against women or repeal some of those laws. The party will aspire to empower women so that they take a leading role in politics and decision-making in all sectors of party and government. We advise that women should be elected to the Senate house according to their good achievements in life. Coming to the proportional representative model, the party encourages that this should be done according to democratic principles.

The party, if elected as Government, will take responsibility to promote the rights of women as they appear in the Lesotho National Constitution and even in United Nations and Commonwealth countries, which fight for the rights of women. We from the NPP take women as equal to men as part and parcel of society without any discrimination" (Peete, 2002)

Note: These manifestos were at my disposal during my research. Some of the registered parties do not have offices. The secretariats are based at residential homes and are without staff. Most of the time when visiting their homes I could not find the leaders because they were always out. Some of them have their homes outside the city and, due to time constraints and meagre resources, I could not manage to get them to these places. However, during their campaign, gender equality was at the forefront. There were sixteen registered parties which participated in the 2002 elections. Some candidates were independent.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF PHOTOS



Photograph 3.2 The couple with me is my deceased guide Matšukulu's parents. This photograph was taken posthumously.



Photograph 3.3 The photograph portrays a pig and a cow at ‘M’e ‘M’alikeleli’s home. Pigs are called “women’s cows” because women rear them as part of their survival strategy. ‘M’e ‘M’alikeleli also made a living from brewing and selling Basotho liquor.



Photograph 3.4 The above photograph is a single lady who lives alone at her late parents' home. However, she is under the patriarchal control of her brothers.



Photograph 3.5 This is the front view of Ha-Leburu. The three institutions in the background are the LEC primary School and the LRC Church. The chief's court (*khotla*) is in the center of the village and constitutes *pitso* ground.



Photograph 3.6

In this photograph, some of the men at the “*khotla*” place are playing the “*moraba-raba*” game, which keeps them busy. I am in the background, observing the game.