

**A STUDY OF RITUALS PERFORMED AT TWO SACRED SITES IN THE
EASTERN FREE STATE**

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DECLARATION

I, M. S. Mensele, hereby declare that the dissertation 'A study of rituals performed at the two sacred sites in the Eastern Free State' is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have, to the best of my knowledge, been acknowledged by means of complete reference.

.....

Signature

(Student number: 1995698204)

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late mother, 'Malenkoe Elizabeth Mashinini who passed away during my first visit to the sacred sites in February, 2008. Also, to my one and only child/son, Thabo Mensele for his support, care and understanding even when I could not be there for him when he needed me the most.

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ABSTRACT

Oral tradition and diverse literary sources in Sesotho indicate that African peoples have for centuries been performing rituals for different purposes at the sacred sites, such as caves within their communities as well as their families. Ritual performance has served the Basotho well as a means of celebrating their religious beliefs and communication with God through ancestors (Machobane and Manyeli, 2001: 4). This study, therefore, takes its cue from this common African ritual tradition and aims to examine different rituals performed at the two sacred sites in the Eastern Free State, namely, Badimong near Rosendal and Motouleng near Clarens. These two caves were selected because of their prominence within the Basotho cultural tradition and history. The study mainly highlights the classification of rituals and the use of local language as a mode of typification of different ritual performances. The Sesotho names given to rituals and their meaning have been communicated in Sesotho and in English. Variations in the structure of rituals have been examined and highlighted including how and where as well as when the given rituals are performed. The significance of each ritual performance is also dealt with in the study. Interpretation of the Sesotho language used in ritual performance is important as interviews were conducted in Sesotho and later translated into English while still serving the purpose of the survey in classifying the major kinds and Sesotho names given to ritual performances at the two sacred sites. In this way, the study retains its aim to categorize and classify types of rituals performed at the two sacred sites specified while examining the role of language in ritual performance together with the structure and significance of rituals.

The major research questions were: What is the extent and nature of rituals performed at sacred sites in the Eastern Free State? How can the rituals at the sacred sites be classified so that the local user community's conceptualization is fully acknowledged? The major research questions directly relate to a survey and clarification of rituals performed at the sacred sites mentioned. Notion was taken that the classification of rituals cannot be done without an exploration of the different rituals in terms of their space, time, actors, audience, structure and materials. All in all, the research design is basically an explorative survey of rituals performed at the two sacred sites mentioned in the Eastern Free State. This study, therefore, employed a qualitative-explorative

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approach. An increased popularity of the two caves also provided an ideal opportunity to explore a wide range of rituals within centralized geographical localities.

The research findings indicates that ritual activities at the sacred sites need to be taken seriously due to their association with ancestral and religious Basotho beliefs which have been an integral and is still said to be an important part in the cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs of most local user communities of the sacred sites under study. The recommendations made are that more literary sources should be made available in which ritual activities at sacred sites are not merely elaborated upon as superstitious or traditional African dilemma but as healthy, informative, religious and valuable practice that should be acknowledged and contextualized with the respect that it deserves. It is also recommended that the two major sacred sites mentioned should be preserved and maintained as sources of African Traditional Indigenous Knowledge in the Eastern Free State.

GLOSSARY

- **Badimo (ancestors):** Those who have died but continue to exist in the land of the dead.
- **Baphehisi/bafodisi (ritual audience):** Individuals and groups of people who take part in ritual performances at the sacred sites. They may not be actively involved as the main participants but they play a very important role in ritual activities such as the singing and dancing part, helping with the musical instruments, slaughtering of an animal and of course the eating of the food.
- **Basebedisi ba mahaha a badimo (local user community):** Individuals or groups of people visiting Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites on regular basis to perform ritual activities.
- **Ho kopa thari (fertility ritual):** A ritual performed by individuals who visit the sacred sites to ask ancestors to cure them of their infertility or barrenness.
- **Ho kopa Tumello (permission ritual):** A ritual to ask for permission from the ancestors.
- **Ho phahla (ancestral summon ritual):** A ritual performed by a traditional healer at the sacred site where the training took place to summon the ancestors and to take them home with him/her.
- **Ho thwasa (ancestral calling):** It is referred to as (*ho thwasa*) in Sesotho. A special ancestral instruction for an individual to become a traditional healer.
- **Ho tlosa senyama (purification ritual):** A purification ritual is performed in order to protect or cleanse a person off some negative forces or powers surrounding him/her.
- **Lefehlo la ho tswa (graduation ceremony):** A ritual performed for a traditional healer trainee on completion of the training.
- **Lethwasane (traditional healer trainee):** An individual undergoing the process of training as a qualified traditional healer or diviner. Also referred to as 'Motjholoko.'
- **Mokete wa badimo (ritual):** A set of actions mainly performed for their symbolic value prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of each community... occasions for people to communicate with ancestors, gods and spirits.

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- **Mokete wa Lewa (harvest thanksgiving ritual):** Ritual activities held every year after all the winter crops have been reaped successfully from the fields and the harvest is so good that granaries are full. To appease and mostly to thank the ancestors.
- **Mokete wa Phekolo (healing ritual):** Ritual activities performed for or by individuals and groups of people who come to the sacred sites to be healed from their different illnesses.
- **Mokete wa Teboho (thanksgiving ritual):** It is performed to appease and to thank the ancestor for whatever gift/s, good luck or fortune they might have given to a person or group of people.
- **Mokete wa Thapelo (prayer ritual):** A ritual performance at the sacred sites to ask or thank God, through the ancestors, for something.
- **Mokete wa Tumello (invocation):** A ritual performed to announce and to make known to the ancestors or to invite them.
- **Mokgethuwa wa badimo (ritual leader):** Ritual specialists such as the traditional healers/doctors/diviners, priests, prophets, kings and chiefs; servants of the community who are always keen to play their role to meditate the sacred to the people.
- **Ngaka ya Sesotho (traditional healer/doctor/diviner):** Also known as ‘Lethuela’ or ‘sangoma’. They are people who, by virtue of extra sensitivity to the spiritual reality and years of training are able to see the past, the present and the future. They are also able to uncover the human and the spiritual causes of events or illnesses and the possible solutions and cure.
- **Sebaka sa badimo (ritual or sacred site/space):** A sacred space is where one can find oneself again and again...(peace of mind)... probably a place in nature, near a rock, a stream or lake, or under an old tree. A place one would find it ideal to feel a strong connection with nature, ancestors, gods and spirits; mostly with God.
- **Sesebediswa sa badimo (Ritual material):** The necessary properties or materials (objects, animals, food or clothing) acceptable and recognized as sacrificial by the ancestors.
- **Setjheso (burnt offering):** Any offering to the ancestors is burnt in performing this kind of ritual.

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- **Sewasho (healing soil/clay):** It is a sacred soil used in healing purposes of different illnesses; including cleansing one from evil contacts, chasing away and protecting one from evil forces.
- **Sewasho sa mollo (fire soil/clay):** A red hot sacred soil used for healing purposes and to start fire.
- **Taelo (ancestral instruction):** Known as (*taelo ya badimo*) in Sesotho. This is an instruction from the ancestors.
- **Tumelo ya Basotho ho badimo (Basotho religion):** Activities and ceremonies denoting Basotho tradition and culture.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Oral tradition and diverse literary sources in Sesotho indicate that African peoples have for centuries been performing rituals for different purposes at sacred sites such as caves, within their communities as well as their families. Major functions in life are either observed or celebrated through rituals to the extent that traditional African life may be reviewed in ritual terms. The environment or the physical geography has always been an integral part of ritual performance. This study takes its cue from this common African ritual trend and aims to examine different traditional practices at the two sacred sites in the Eastern Free State, namely: Badimong, near Rosendal and Motouleng, near Clarens. These two sacred caves are selected because of their prominence within the Basotho cultural tradition and history. Increased popularity of these caves provides an ideal opportunity to explore a wide range of rituals within centralized geographical localities. The study will mainly highlight the classification of rituals and the use of Sesotho as a mode of typification of different ritual performances. The Sesotho names given to rituals and their meaning have been communicated in Sesotho and in English. Variations in the structure of rituals are also examined and highlighted, including how and where as well as when and how the given rituals are performed. The significance of ritual performance is dealt with in this study.

1.2 Background of the study

The study has been prompted by the fact that very little has been recorded or written up by way of scholarly analysis of the performance of rituals at sacred sites and what they communicate to different communities and individuals in South Africa and the neighbouring country, Lesotho. South Africa is a typical post-colonial country rich in Western/modern cultures and beliefs. It also bears a legacy of ignorance and downplaying the importance of indigenous rituals to the extent that even Africans (black people) themselves are in denial of their own spiritual tradition.

The explosion of literature on ritual signals the importance ritual studies have acquired over the last decades. Renewed interest has been kindled to explore ritual beyond its typical religious or spiritual context, and to investigate all ritualized social and individual behaviour within all spheres of life. In relation to this, Finnegan (1976: 43) maintains however, that the study of African oral literature “*has recently gained momentum as there are a number of scholars engaged in serious study of African oral literature (ritual study included).*” African religion or spirituality is known for its centre-staging of ritual and wide-ranging studies about African ritual have been published; initially focusing strongly on religious ritual, but currently also on the spectrum of socio-cultural rituals beyond mere ethnography. It is on the basis of the current resurgence of the importance of ritual and the lack of specific recordings of rituals at sacred sites in the Free State that the researcher has undertaken this study to provide the reader with necessary information to enhance and strengthen the essence of rituals among South Africans, especially the Basotho people, and to strongly support and strengthen the notion of ‘African Renaissance,’ popularized by Thabo Mbeki (28-29 September 1998), as the existing literature (oral and written) indicates that it is long overdue.

Throughout the researcher’s years of childhood in the Lowlands, North Western escarpments of Lesotho, in one small village lying alongside the Mohokare (Caledon) River; not far from Clarens, she used to listen to different stories from individuals who had been to sacred caves, she witnessed groups of young and old people, sangomas/ mathuela/traditional healers, even church leaders and their congregations visiting the sacred site in Motouleng near Clarens, in the Free State. Apart from the childhood experiences, the researcher is now at a tertiary institution responsible for the teaching of the Sesotho language and the culture and history of the Basotho. The study of ritual at sacred sites is an ideal opportunity to contribute to the lack of knowledge of localized rituals as well as to record the language of the user communities and individuals as indications of their conceptualization of ritual performances. It has become extremely important to capture the indigenous language expressions in order to break the tradition of westernized verbalization and classification of ritual in Africa. It is further important to study ritual in its specific locality, in this instance within sacred sites. This approach would also avoid oversimplification and undue generalization, the major pitfalls of much of the work done on African religion and culture.

The study also forms part of a broader project designed to develop Africa studies in terms of: ‘Religious Integration at South African Sacred Sites’ founded by both the South African and Netherland governments (SANPAD) to promote academic programmes designed to incorporate the dimensions of knowledge appropriate to an advanced study of Africa, her people and institutions. This project also focuses on building research capacity of the learner as an expert and subject specialist in one particular field pertaining to Africa Studies. Hence, in this particular research focus is directed mainly on the two sacred sites mentioned earlier in this Chapter. Among other things the project aims at promoting the proclaimed ‘Africa focus’ motto of the University of the Free State as well as to enhance its contextualization of the disciplinary content for African realities. The research will also promote community service activities and training by emphasising on the indigenous knowledge and rural communities in South Africa especially now that the 21st Century has been proclaimed ‘African Century.’ [http //www.ufs.ac.za/ faculties/ content.php?id.](http://www.ufs.ac.za/faculties/content.php?id.)

1.3 Problem statement

The introductory paragraph makes it evident that the research object is rituals at sacred sites in the Free State, in particular at the two sites, namely Motouleng and Badimong (Mautse). Rituals are constitutive aspects of the religious and cultural expressions of local African people. A large volume of work has been done about African ritual and ritual performance. These studies, however, manifest a weakness in the sense that localized data cannot easily be matched with the generalized compilations. A general lack of data exists pertaining to localized ritual. *“They tend to concentrate on the provision and analysis of texts, some on a large scale, but with perhaps rather less concern for social background and imaginative qualities”* Finnegan (1976: 44). It has, therefore, become increasingly important to study ritual in this localized context.

The major research question is therefore: What is the extent and nature of rituals performed at sacred sites in the Eastern Free State? How can the rituals at the sacred sites be classified so that the local user community’s conceptualization is fully acknowledged? The major research

questions relate to a survey and clarification of rituals performed at the sacred sites mentioned. These questions may be unpacked thus:

- What is the meaning of ritual?
- Why and how a ritual is performed?
- When and where a ritual is performed?
- What is the outlined structure of ritual?
- What is the significance of ritual?
- How does the local user community conceptualize and language the different rituals?
- What is the role function and importance of language in ritual performance?

1.4 Research design and methodology

Given the research problem explained above, it is obvious that the design of the research will be basically a survey of rituals at sacred sites in the Eastern Free State. The survey will necessarily include elements of exploration and description. The classification of the rituals cannot be done without an exploration of the different rituals in terms of their space, time, actors, audience, structure and materials. The descriptive element will only serve the aim of proper classification. In depth description of all rituals is not intended. The research design will basically be an explorative survey of rituals performed at the two major sacred sites mention in the Eastern Free State.

Research design refers to the way the researcher plans and structures the research process (Seaman and Verhonick, 1992: 149). In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 14) also describe research design as a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical materials. Moloi (Phd Thesis 2010: 7) shares the same view as it is contained that research design refers to an arrangement of procedures and methods of a research study that includes sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results.

This study will employ the qualitative-explorative approach that will focus on interpretation of the language used in ritual performance as information will be given of interviews with respondents in Sesotho, which will later be translated into English whilst serving the purpose of the survey in classifying the major kinds of rituals performed at the sacred sites identified.

1.4.1 Mode of data collection

The research conducted for the study was done through interviews and observations, including participant observation, by the researcher that would take place either during convenient ritual ceremonies at the caves or through contact with the inhabitants of the sacred caves. The sites were regularly visited to collect information from visitors who come to perform rituals in the caves. The researcher made use of informers comprising of the local user communities of the two sacred sites.

1.4.2 Ethical consideration

Anonymity of respondents is a very important principle that guides the researcher in this study. The participation of all the informers in the completion of this study is based on the principle that: the respondents would be anonymous and that specific references to the traditional healers and '*sangomas/mathuela*' and all other ritual performers at the sacred caves would only be made to ascertain scientific value for the research and the study that is conducted. All information received from the informers would be treated with the utmost care and sensitivity. However, the researcher managed to get permission from some of the informers to make known to the reader their willingness and readily available assistance by way of mentioning their names. These devoted senior traditional healers and ritual leaders at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites, the traditional healer trainees and other local user communities (pilgrimages) visit both sacred sites on regular basis pending the ancestors' instruction. The names are only mentioned without thorough or any in depth overview of the life histories of the informants: Monica Mangenengene (senior traditional healer and ritual leader at Badimong-Mautse); Masechaba Mokoena (senior traditional healer and ritual leader at Maseeng/children spot in Badimong); Ntate T. R. Mokoena at Tempeleng ya Modimo – Badimong; Ntate Lwandle Serome at Dirontaboleng – Badimong;

Ntate Tabatsabadimo Tjama (most senior figure in Motouleng); Lydia Mokhethi - Motouleng; Mahapa Semela - Motouleng; Nomsa Tshabalala 'Lala' as nicknamed by fellow traditional healers trainees in Motouleng; and many others, most of whom would not want their names to be mentioned purely out of respect for their ancestors as they were not granted permission to do so.

1.5 Aims of the research

The aims of this research are mainly:

- To categorize and classify types of rituals performed at the two sacred sites specified.
- To determine the structure and significance of rituals at sacred sites/caves in Badimong and Motouleng.
- To examine language use and its role in ritual performance.
- To prove that rituals have been, they are and hopefully will remain important, if not integral part in the cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs of most of the Basotho people.
- To respond to implications suggesting that rituals are papistical superstitions, shallow, unreasoning and thoughtless actions by outlining the structure of rituals performed by the Basotho people at sacred sites/caves and their significance to the community.
- To determine what rituals are as well as if they are static/fixed.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This study focused only on ritual activities performed at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites in the Eastern Free State; even though there are other sacred sites/caves known to be existing in this Province such as Lehaha la Morena Wetsie (Makgolokoe tribe ancestral sacred site/cave - QwaQwa); Lehaha la Nkgono Mantsopa Makhetha (Mantsopa sacred site/cave – Modderport) and numerous others. Therefore, the need still stands for further research to be conducted at these other sacred sites in the Free State to discover differences or similarities in ritual performances and activities as compared to the two sacred sites of this study.

1.7 Value of the research

In the first instance the study should provide data of local performed rituals, thus narrowing the gap between generalized discussions of ritual and local performed ritual. The study should help to enhance the importance of rituals socially, spiritually, medically, academically and economically for a ritual carries cultural aspects that sometimes guide people in their day to day life experiences. Rituals are in many ways an embodiment of the Basotho customs and beliefs. Medically, it is expected that findings of this research should contribute to the well being of individuals and groups of people who have been struggling to overcome uncertainties about coming to perform rituals activities at sacred sites. This could either be physical, psychological or sometimes spiritually. Academically, it is expected that the study should conscientize academics about the skills contained in ritual performance as students will learn the meaning and use of different Sesotho words and terminology. They should learn different language techniques in speaking and writing Sesotho. During this unbecoming period of high unemployment rate the study should economically serve as an eye opener to most people as they realize that rituals could be used alternatively as a healing process for many diseases. This research should impact positively on public attitude about the performance of rituals at sacred sites. It should enable the reader to view rituals as a means through which they can reconnect with their roots, culture, identity, ancestors, their inner selves and their origins.

1.8 Conclusion

The problem investigated in this research has been posed in this chapter. It has been indicated that the study should enable the reader to view rituals as a way through which they can reconnect with their roots, culture and identity. Chapter Two elaborates in a much broader sense the context of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with information regarding the importance of rituals to Basotho people. The chapter also mentions some of the sacred sites located at different places in the Free State where a variety of Sesotho speaking people live. This, however, does not change the fact that the study is solely concerned with ritual activities performed only at the two caves mentioned in the previous chapter. Definitions of some key terms used in this study are dealt with in this chapter.

2.2 The Meaning of Ritual

Rituals are relatively described as the “*use of good magic by specialists, mainly the traditional diviner-healers and rainmakers who use their knowledge and manipulation of the mystical power for the welfare of their community*” (Mbiti, 1969:198). On the other hand, Boyer (2001: 321) maintains that rituals can be defined as occasions for people to communicate with ancestors, gods and spirits.

Tolbert (1990) describes ritual on Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual> as “*a set of actions mainly performed for their symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of each community. He contends further that a ritual may be performed on specific occasions by a single individual, a group of people or the entire community. It may also be restricted to a certain place and time; either in private, in public or before specific people or audience and it in most incidents enables the passage between religious or social states.*”

An example of this information is seen at both the sacred sites under study for their numerous spots reserved strictly for a different set of ritual activities within one sacred site.

In accordance with the above explanation, Ray (1976: 16) maintains that African religions are part and parcel of the whole fabric of African cultural life. Ray further identifies rituals as the

sphere where the world as lived and world as imagined become fused together and transformed into one reality for it is maintained that man transcends himself and communicates directly with the divine on almost every ritual occasion.

Bell (1992) <http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/ReligionTheology> also defines ritual as a culturally strategic way of action, a mode of paying attention and a process of marking interest. In this explanation, the role of place as a fundamental component of ritual is strengthened since a place directs attention. Emphasis is made therefore of the preliminary understanding of ritual and its relation to sacred site.

Anja Heij (2001) <http://realmagic.com/articles/64/1964.html>, describes rituals as:

“...a second way of easing into a higher state of consciousness. Rituals are formed by predetermined actions which include certain gestures, chants, recitation or invocations, visualizations and meditation.” Heij also emphasizes that the same ritual can be used again and again, or people can choose to change rituals from time to time according to their own needs and ideas, because what really counts is the meaning a certain ritual has to individuals.

In addition to the various explanations already given to ritual, my working definition and understanding of ritual is simple in the sense that it is portrayed and based on daily life experiences of Basotho tradition and culture. Hence a ritual is a series of actions and beliefs in a ceremony to acknowledge, summon or welcome, plea, introduce or bid farewell and in most cases it is performed to mark or approve and to commemorate particular events. Most importantly, the sole purpose of every ritual activity among Basotho is to appease the ancestors so that they do not turn their back on anyone *“badimo ba se ke ba mo furalla”* or *“ho halefisa badimo”* meaning to avoid the wrath of the ancestors; be it one’s own ancestors or those of another person or family to whom one has shown disrespect. Traditionally a ritual is there to ease and to harmonize the situation.

2.3 The importance of cave ritual in Basotho religion

Basotho communities have always performed rituals in order to communicate with their ancestors as well as to acknowledge their existence or to demonstrate their willingness to appease them. Thus, Ray (1976: 16) explains that almost every African ritual performed is a salvation event in which human experiences is recreated and renewed because in traditional African context a ritual cannot be a purely personal affair as the relation to the 'sacred' is communal.

In addition, Wilce (2006) on Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual>, contends that: *“rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all human societies, past or present.”* The idea which strengthens the notion that Basotho communities are not exceptional as they, like other African societies, realize that rituals form part of their tradition and culture. Hence, alongside every social activity among their communities there are ritual activities lined up to be performed. The fundamental belief is that rituals have a more basic social function in expressing, fixing and reinforcing the shared values and beliefs of a society. Hence rituals can serve as a major tool in creating a firm sense of group identity among Basotho communities.

Thus, among Basotho groups and many other African communities, rituals are associated with supernatural powers. They are perceived to be man's route of access to their ancestors. In this regard, Basotho often use caves and mountains to perform their most prominent rituals such as the initiation rite which is one of the most sacred ritual activities among the majority of African communities.

Basotho tradition and culture have always regarded natural caves as a dwelling place for ancestors as well as that of religious rites because of *“the manner in which they are situated on the sides of the mountains and as entrance into the earth they are believed to be most useful and appropriate for different religious rites and activities that are practiced and deemed in a most respectable manner”* (Thompson, 1975: xiv). Thompson further outlines the following general uses of caves in order to draw attention to the fact that human existence, culture and religion have since regarded caves as peaceful, secluded places which are ideal for meditation and reflection of a true existence of supernatural powers surrounding human nature and existence:

- “sources of drinking water
- sources of ‘virgin’ water
- a place to perform religious rites
- burials, ossuaries, and cremations
- art galleries, in connection with religious rites
- deposition of ceremonially discarded utensils
- mining of red earth/clay for ceramics”

In light of the above, Brady (1989: 40) explains that:

“In areas where ancestor worship is important, the ancestral spirits are invariably seen as living in caves or sacred mountains in which caves are the means of access.”

It is also important to mention that the caves are usually associated with nearby springs, pools or rivers; as is the case in Eastern Free State sacred sites where according to local user communities and the Basotho tradition, ancestors are closely associated with water. Therefore the water sources close to Badimong and Motouleng are extremely important – also for the performing of certain rituals. Basotho people and communities have always regarded rituals not only as meaningful but also as helpful to people who are dedicated in their performance of different ritual activities. It is through performances of different rituals that they express important messages about themselves, their relationship to each other as well as their existing connection with the ancestors. Rituals always have particular effects on the participants in that they (participants) can also receive ancestors’ protection. They (rituals) turn boys into men and girls into women. Receiving abundant rainfall and a good harvest is another effect signalling the involvement of supernatural agents or powers for which Basotho people have so much respect.

Majority of African or Basotho communities at large are known for their respect for ancestors. In a similar fashion, Belanger (2003) also mentions on <https://www.sacred-text.com/goth/vrb/vrb05.html>, that respect is a very important thing to consider among those who participate in a ritual in that while some rituals, such as celebrations of community can be open to all individuals; other rituals deal with much more profound ideas and beliefs. The respect mostly includes

recognition and acknowledgement for the living dead, the ancestors. These ideas and beliefs hold great significance for the people celebrating them, or else they would not be celebrating them in a ritual at all. People who either cannot show respect for those beliefs or do not understand them may usually not be allowed in such ritual activities as their actions and behaviour may only anger or provoke the wrath of the ancestors.

Wilce (2006) on Wikipedia <http://en.Wikipedia.or/wiki/Ritual> and Ray (1976:17), respectively stipulate that rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all known societies; that rituals play an enormous role in African societies for in Africa and elsewhere, ritual activities are a way of communicating with the divine for the purpose of changing human situation (Ray, 1976: 78). In this regard, Basotho people are therefore, known for their staunch solidarity in performing series of different types of rituals in their quest to appease the ancestors. Rituals play a pivotal role in the life of every Mosotho individual if not all. Thus, Basotho rituals have a social functional character. These include among others not only the various worship rituals but also the rites of passage of certain societal status, coronations, marriages, even funeral rites are characterised with symbolic actions prescribed by tradition. Even common actions like hand shaking and saying ‘dumela/ng!...o/le tsohile jwang?’ hello!...how are you?’ are common rituals used to create social bonds and to enhance interpersonal relationships among Basotho groups; not an intrusion into someone else’s well being as it is perceived to be in other societies or cultures.

2.4 The Functions of Ritual

According to Mbiti (1969:198), the traditional healers, diviners and herbalists use rituals in the treatment of diseases, in encountering misfortunes and in diluting and destroying evil spirits and powers. They are performed to protect homesteads, families, fields, cattle and other properties as well. In this instance a point is raised of how in most African communities babies are made to wear amuletic coils round their neck, wrist or waist in order to protect them against evil powers (Knappert, 1995: 25). Although, from the researchers’ experience the practice does not apply to small babies because even with the elderly people, it is especially women and young girls who are made to wear amuletic objects around their waist to protect them from evil powers that may lead to barrenness. The practice is not the same with Basotho men to whom this ritual is rarely

applied; when the coil is worn by men, it is only on the wrists – for example, goat skin for Zulu communities. It is also true that rituals are performed from time to time to renew these coils as the belief is that they lose their effectiveness after some time.

Rituals and ceremonies feed the human spirits, making it richer and deeper even though modern culture tends to downplay this, but rituals remain as important as ever; according to Zaratyst on <http://wuzzle.org/cave/s-rites.html>. Tolbert on Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual> also maintains that the purposes of rituals are varied as they comply with both cultural and religious obligations and ideals. They include satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, social and moral educations, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

Below are some of the functions of rituals as indicated by Belanger (2003) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/goth/vrb/vrb05.html> and Hultkrantz (1981) <http://mbsoft.com/believe/txo/primitive.html>:

- To mark a rite of passage: which is a transition from one state or level to the next. These include rites such as that of birth, puberty, marriage, baptism, even funeral. They vary in form, importance and intensity from one culture to another because they are at times tied to several other meanings and rituals in the culture.
- To commemorate an event: which builds the sense of unity within the community that perform it.
- To recognize planting and harvest time in agricultural societies
- To commemorate occasional events such as catastrophic and extraordinary events like war and drought.

In addition, according to Post (SANPAD workshop, 12 February 2008) the following dynamic features of rituals can also be outlined as their communicative and working functions:

- Rituals dimensions involve both symbolic and technical acts that elicit associations and beliefs that transform experience as well as physiological responses, enhancing positive expectations and commitment.
- Rituals discharge function by means of controlling and channelling human feelings and emotions.
- They provide cohesion and order as well as shaping the outlook of the past life.
- They act at symbolic and social level to affect all levels of human functioning.
- They protect local user communities during vulnerable, dangerous and ambiguous periods of adjustment reducing the uncertainty and stresses involved.
- Rituals are means of constituting society through re-establishing group cohesion and reducing social tension; they resolve conflicts.
- They mandate certain care for and protection of the sick individuals while providing cleansing and sterilization as well as changes in diet.
- They have general health effects through enhancement of social solidarity and integrative social effects.
- Ritual consequences for psychology, emotions and physiological responses constitute basic and technical effects of rituals which causes changes in the patient, ranging from adjustments in social relations to the alteration in the balance of the automatic nervous system (ANS), which has direct implications for health.

2.5 Ritual and space

Although the spiritual power of God is everywhere, there are some places that are recognized as more sacred, places where rituals are often performed. The importance of mountains, graves, cattle kraals, the main hut, shrines, certain rivers and forests as sacred places, depends largely on the particular ethnic group. By nature, all space is created by God, including natural caves. Artificial caves dug into mountains are considered man-made and not respected reverence. In Basotho culture, the belief is that sacred caves are naturally formed caves, such as those at Badimong and Motouleng in the Eastern Free State. These are sacred sites which because of their

natural formation have been identified as significant location for the celebration of diverse cults and mysteries among Basotho communities as well as for dwellers and visitors to the caves.

2.5.1 Motouleng sacred site -Location and site description

The mountains of the Eastern Free State and Lesotho have for a long time been associated with sacredness by many African religious Basotho. Motouleng “the place of beating drums” is located between the Clarens and Fouriesburg not far away from the Lesotho and South African border at Caledonspoort/river. It consists basically of a huge cave created in the lime stone mountain by a rock-fall. Below the cave is a small river with pools which are also locations for ritual performances. Inside the cave are different and identifiable ritual performance localities, to be witnessed later together with the survey or presentation of data.

2.5.2 Badimong sacred site – Location and site description

Badimong “the place of ancestors” is a complex sacred valley with different locations of caves and outside dwelling spots. It lies between the small towns of both Ficksburg and Fouriesburg, not very far away from the Lesotho – South Africa border at Maputsoe/Ficksburg. Unlike Motouleng, Badimong comprise numerous rock shelters that are believed to be possessed with powerful spirits. A significant sacred medicinal clay site (*Nkokomohi*), ‘the swelling place’ is in close proximity of the valley.

Both these sacred sites carry rich meanings and symbolism with regard to religious beliefs, not only for the traditional Basotho but also for a sizeable number of Christian individuals and groups who regularly visit the sacred caves to conduct special ritual ceremonies.

2.6 Agents of ritual (experts of ritual)

Ritual specialists such as the sangomas/traditional healers, priests, prophets, kings and chiefs are the servants of the community and are always keen to play their role to mediate the sacred to the people. Their lives are bound up with the lives of the society they serve; in this way, rites which

strengthen these ritual specialists also strengthen the nation as a whole. It is important to mention at this point that not everybody can become a ritual leader because traditional healing is a calling from the ancestors. *“They do not choose this profession for themselves. They experience a calling from the ancestors, which comes to them in their dreams or vision. They are powerless to resist this call for if they do, they will be punished by their ancestors for being disrespectful, they become ill and sometimes even die”* (Boon, 2007: 13). The majority of them are not commissioned, instead, they accept whatever it is that a person is willing to give them (as a token of appreciation) for their service. Even when they do sometimes expect payment, it is only according to the monetary scale given to him/her by the ancestors and it is named (*sekgantsho/ho kgantshetsa badimo*) – *“a token humility, plea to the ancestors.”* In a way (*sekgantsho*) forms the core of ritual materials. Another example is that of the role played by the king/chief among African people. A king/chief is born as there is no amount of money that can buy kingship/chieftaincy in traditional African societies.

The sacred sites at both Motouleng and Badimong are occupied by traditional healers who provide service to the pilgrims who come to the caves for advice and for cure for which there has to be (*sekgantsho*) or else the cure is not going to work. Christopher (1998) <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/mountains.html> mentions that: *“traditional healers at sacred caves provide training and guidance to upcoming traditional healer trainees, young and old who are called to these sacred caves to pursue ancestral calling.”* At both Badimong and Motouleng training takes place, but Motouleng in particular has a strong tradition of healer training. It is also worth mention that at both the sacred sites, one witnesses that the ritual agents display a fair amount of freedom pertaining to ritual repertoire and structure of ritual. Ritual performance, despite stylization by tradition, reveals flexibility and ingenuity on the side of the ritual leader. A prominent ritual leader at Badimong is quite ingenious in the way in which she can integrate ritual aspects from various traditions.

2.7 Ritual audiences

There are varying degrees of beliefs among ritual audience as to who the ancestors are, and what their role and powers are, despite the fact that ancestors may be fundamental to each of them in

their daily life experience. In their quest to know and understand more about the existence and deeds of ancestors, individuals and groups of people visit Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites on regular basis. These audiences often do take part in ritual performances at the sacred sites. They may not be actively involved as the main participants but they surely play a very important role in ritual activities such as the singing and dancing part, helping with the musical instruments, slaughtering of an animal and of course the eating of the food because all the food has to be finished right there and then.

For others, however, it is an act of religious devotion and faith as Boon (2007: 9) acknowledges that:

“There is also a general acceptance and accommodation of traditional and religious concepts among many pilgrims who are Christian and who attend church regularly. They accept the presence of ancestors despite the missionaries attempt to eradicate this view of life, erroneously believing that the ancestors compete with God. Examples of such groups can be seen in the African Zionist Church, the Shembe, the Methodist, Anglicans and Muslims. Ancestors, they say are like saints are to Christians – good people who have gone before.”

These groups of people or church denominations visit the sacred sites almost yearly to perform prayer rituals for various individual purposes or church endeavour.

2.8 Ritual material

While it may be true that ritual is not static, it is also true that rituals must be performed in the manner which is acceptable and understood by our Basotho ancestors. The only one way to ensure this is through employment of all the necessary properties or material acceptable and recognized as sacrificial by the ancestors. Ritual material consists of different sets of objects such as – animals which often get slaughtered (spilling of blood) and well recognized in this regard for usage of various parts of the slaughtered animal, and to provide meat for food to the ritual audiences. It could be a cow, goat, sheep even a chicken is acceptable. Other food include some African or ‘Sesotho’ home-made and well fermented brew (*jwala ba Sesotho*) and brandy,

mealie meal, (*motoho* and *tshweukoto*) which is ‘traditional sour porridge,’ vegetables, beans and grains, (*dipabi*), snuff and tobacco varieties and many other traditional food.

Ritual material in terms of objects include musical instruments such as the drum, (hence Motouleng – “the place of beating the drums”), gong, bells, horns, whistles and many others. Clothing includes ceremonial regalia for traditional healers, their trainees or different church groups, sometimes even African or Basotho ritual masks are worn and also amulets. African incense (*mokubetso*) is also important. Even candles, fire, soil, clay, stones and plants of different kinds fall within the category of ritual objects. Again, some traditional (*muti/moriana*) medicine from different fierce and wild animals such as snakes (*nyooko/mafura/letlalo la noha*), wild cats etc.

2.9 Literature review

It is emphasized that due to the symbolic nature of rituals, there are hardly any limits to the kind of actions that may be incorporated in their performance. The rites of past and present societies have typically involved special gestures and words, recitation of fixed text, performance of special music, song or dances processions, manipulation of certain objects, use of special dresses, consumption of special food, drinks or drugs, animal sacrifice, human sacrifice, ritual suicide and much more, (Tolbert) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual>.

In summarizing ritual traditions and systems, Bell (1992: 118) contends that: “*ritualization invokes dynamics of contrast with other forms of cultural activities and with other ritualized acts as well; that the full dynamics of rituals can be adequately portrayed in the larger context of ritual traditions and systems. There are several interrelated dimensions of ritual context including a historical dimension in the sense of traditionally ritualized activities thought to have been handed down from previous generations.*” It is also noted that there are territorial and calendrical dimensions that include annual cycles of regional ritual activities involving overlapping groups from the domestic to the national; and an organizational dimension provided by the presence of ritual experts, their standardization of ritual activities, codification of texts, and

elaboration of a discourse on ritual, (Bell) <http://www.questia.com/reader/action/gotoDocId/91883198>

Basotho culture may differ in beliefs and religion but there is always one or other elements of common interest/knowledge among Africans at large. That is, most African communities believe in ancestral powers, in the hidden/divine powers of their Almighty and Creator whom they use different names to refer to. Thus, various African communities and cultures use different names to refer to their Creator, such as Basotho people who refer to Him as Tlatlamatjholo, Zulu people call Him Nkulunkulu, Xhosa people are referring to Him as Thixo, just like the Western cultures refer to Him as God. He is one and the same Him/God, the Creator.

Literature reveals that there are volumes of written material of scholarly analyses of Western cultures and their religious beliefs such whereas very little in-depth scholarly analyses of African traditional beliefs exist. As Finnegan (1976: 54) points out that *“the difficulties of appreciating African religious beliefs arises from the unfamiliarity of much of its content and context, that African religion is not totally different from that of better known cultures, and that much remains to be studied regarding its significance.”* It is for this reason that there are scholars who really try hard to portray African religion the way Africans experience it without prejudice – and there certainly are still scholars with a biased approach mainly influenced by the colonial missionary views, portraying in an appalling manner just how stupid and barbaric African traditional religions are and how African people worship gods and ancestors. For instance, Finnegan (1988) in his preface further maintains that *“there is plenty of written African literature which has received publicity of a rather speculative kind of either primitive mentality of African people or their mythopoeic imagination ... much less is said or studied about the oral literary products of such primitive minds, of such great variety of religious activities in Africa which include hymns, prayers, praises and songs of varying conventions, content and function ranging from one or two line songs with their many ‘nonsense’ words”* Finnegan (1988:167).

The oral literary products referred to in the above statements include traditional ceremonies and rituals performed by Basotho and other African communities; as they (Basotho) people form part

of many different African communities with their own traditional beliefs and customs. Hence, the intention of the study to elucidate that as Africans, Basotho traditional beliefs and religions are not just barbaric and nonsensical but are symbol of their values, and their identity. Also, to bring to light, the fact that the traditional ceremonies and ritual performances do not mean that Basotho people worship gods and ancestors; instead, they ask their ancestors to pray for them; speak to God on their behalf, ask God on their behalf whatever it is that they wish God to provide for them. Basotho people and communities believe that their loved ones who have passed away have moved on to another world, where they are closer to the Creator of humankind. They believe there is life after death just as most Western religions also believe. To highlight this belief among Basotho communities ritual performances function not only to convey religious ideas but also lead to maintenance for social order and structure. Hence it is through oral literature that people learn of how Basotho and other African people have for centuries been performing rituals for different purposes within their communities and their families at sacred sites such as the caves.

In his explanation to the question of why people spend their time and resources performing rituals, Boyer (2001: 231) explains that it is because rituals are said to communicate profound meanings about ancestors, so that the real significance of the supernatural concepts is conveyed through some specific experience. Rituals seem to be the occasions for people to interact with ancestors, to ask for help and to demonstrate respect and loyalty such as the wedding ritual which takes God or the ancestors as witnesses and the sacrifice being directed to the spirits. That is, “*in many different communities people have some confidence in the actual efficacy of their own rituals*” (Boyer, 2001: 236). Basotho groups and communities are therefore no exception in this regard.

2.10 Concept clarification

2.10.1 Ancestors

Ancestors are referred to as (*badimo*) in Sesotho. In the Basotho context, ancestors are those who have died but continue to exist in the land of the dead. However, it is noted that death alone is not a sufficient condition for the dead person to be given the title of being an ancestor because

the notion of ancestor implies the idea of selection. An ancestor is someone who has reached a great age and who, during his lifetime has acquired a vast experience of life, human beings and things and must have left descendants on earth in order to become a mediator between God and human beings. It is indicated further that ancestral belief does not differentiate gender as both males and females could become ancestors (Khathide, 2007: 330-331). However, the researcher feels that indepth discussion is needed around this issue as it has emerged during contact sessions with some informants that death alone is sufficient for a dead person to be regarded as the ancestor, irrespective of age or experience. Zulu (1998:182) as quoted by Khathide (2007: 328) indicates that ancestral belief is a living tradition among many tribes in Africa; that most African (Basotho) people have been exposed to the issue of ancestors either directly within their own families or indirectly from their neighbourhood. In relation to this, the study highlights that ancestral issue is something that almost every Mosotho is conscious about; even if he/she may not be directly involved therein, as (Turaki 1999: 34; Zahan 2000; 10) maintains. Below, a poet, Birago Diop in Sonyika (1975: 44-46) attempts to capture the reality of ancestral belief among most African people:

*“Those who are dead have never gone away,
They are at the breast of the wife;
They are in the child’s cry of dismay
... The dead are not under the ground.
They are in the fire that burns low;
They are in the grass with tears to shed,
In the rock where whining winds blow.
They are in the forest, in the homestead;
The dead are never dead.”* (Khathide, 2007: 328-329)

Mbiti (1969: 108) highlights further that it is due to this awareness in the African’s mind that ancestors are referred to as ‘the living dead.’ The notion that ancestors are in a special position, near to God strengthens the belief that they have mystical power, they are taken as natural guardians of their relatives on earth and can act as mediators with God (Khathide, 2007: 333; Mbiti, 1969: 83; Setiloane, 1976: 43). In summary, as Setiloane contains: *“the role of ancestors is basically parental as – protective, corrective and aimed at the welfare of the family and whole group/clan”* (1976: 65).

2.10.2 Sacred space

Attention needs to be drawn also to the fact that there is a link between a ritual and space. Space is another most important feature of ritual (cf.2.4.2), “...as in many different African cultural environments there is an obsession with the marking of ceremonial space or spot within a sacred site as special,” (Boyer, 2001: 237). Further, Smith (1987:33) explains that the role of space as “a fundamental component of ritual is that place directs attention.” According to Smith, it is what takes place or being performed that signifies the sacrality of the space. In this sense, the performance of ritual renders a site holy or sacred, hence the close association of a particular space with a particular ritual. In the area of the Eastern Free State the sacred sites are significant because of the calling of the ancestors to these particular sites. For many user communities of the sites, they embody what they believe and what they understand their ancestors expect from them.

Campbell, http://Realmagick.com/article_64/1964.html) clearly indicates that “... a sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again... probably a place in nature, near a rock, a stream or lake, or under an old tree. A place one would find it ideal to feel a strong connection with nature.” It is indicated further that setting a sacred space and a ritual performance are ways to attune oneself on a greater reality than daily life.

In addition, Boyer (2001: 337) mentions that another common feature for rituals in different cultural communities is the marking of some part of the ceremonial space as special or ‘sacred.’ The concept of sacred space and objects indicates just how important place is to ritual activities.

2.10.3 Traditional Healer/Diviners- sacred people or ritual leaders

Traditional healers are known to Basotho people as ‘*mathuela/sangoma/dingaka*.’ They are people who, by virtue of extra sensitivity to the spiritual reality and years of training have become fathers and mothers of secrets (Setiloane, 1976: 54-57; Imasogie, 1983: 60) as quoted by Khathide (2007: 354). Khathide (1976: 354) further reveals that traditional healers and diviners are able to see the past, the present and the future. They are also able to uncover the human and the spiritual causes of events and the possible solutions to their problems. Their aim is to ‘make known what is unknown’ (Turner, 1968: 43).

Danfulani (2008: 87) contends that traditional healers are supposed to have the ability to move about between the spiritual and human/physical worlds as an intercessor, mediator and a bridge of communication. They are supposed to have the ability to stand as agents between the human and the spiritual world to explore and exploit the mystical world to normalise, ameliorate, restore and reconcile estranged relationships to harmonious and habitable universe (in Khathide, 2007: 355). Particularly, in cultures where ancestral belief is central, traditional healers act as agents between the living and the living dead (Ndwandwe, 2000:216).

Mnyandu (1993: 107) outlines duties of traditional healers in (Khathide, 2007:355) as follows:

- To diagnose illness in their clients.
- To prescribe methods to heal them.
- To establish cause of misfortunes.
- To settle conflicts.
- To predict future events.
- To mediate between community members and their ancestors.
- To intercede for the community to the ancestors.
- To warn clients/community about problems to come.
- To give counsel to the chief of the area as for example did Ntsikana, Mohlomi and Mantsopa of the Basotho people (Hodgson, 2003: 218).

2.10.4 Traditional Healer Trainee

Generally, a traditional healer trainee is referred to as (*lethwasane*) in Sesotho and ‘as the name indicates,’ they are traditional healers in the making or training. They are undergoing the process of qualifying as trained diviners and traditional healers. A trainee sangoma (*lethwasane*) trains under another sangoma, usually for period of years, usually performing humbling service in the community because a period of training includes learning humility to the ancestors, purification through steaming, washing in the blood of sacrificed animals and the use of ‘*muti/moriana*’ medicines with spiritual significance. At times in the training, and for the graduation, a ritual sacrifice of an animal is performed (usually a chicken, a goat or a cow). The spilling of its blood

is meant to seal the bond between the ancestors and the sangoma as well as to call to the ancestors and to appease them, (Wilce) 2006, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangoma>.

2.11 Conclusion

The context of this study has been posed in this particular chapter in terms of literary views from various sources of ritual and its performance, its meaning and functions as well as other related terms used in the study. The importance of rituals among African people and Basotho in particular has also been discussed. Chapter Three deals with the research methods applied in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology and design used to collect and analyse information. It comprises the methodology chapter and included herein are: research design, research population, sample and sampling technique, research instrument validity, data collection and data analysis methods.

3.2 Study design

In design, this study is basically an explorative survey of rituals at sacred sites. The research methodologies used in this study involved the following:

3.2.1 A qualitative assessment of research done on rituals to arrive at a working model to classify the rituals. This was achieved through descriptions of events and activities that appear important to the research question.

3.2.2 Qualitative interviewing and participant observation

The study is basically an explorative survey of qualitative nature. To this end, interviews were conducted with visitors and pilgrims to the sacred sites. The informants were identified at the sites as well as outside. Participatory observation was also conducted during regular field work at the sacred sites.

3.2.3 Qualitative consultation with informers

Qualitative information reflects the true feelings, beliefs and perceptions of the respondents (Modisana 2007: 35). The researcher preferred this method as it would reflect true understanding of ritual activities on the part of the informers or the local user communities at the sacred sites.

In view of the above, the nature of this research is survey oriented. Methodological approach to data collection was qualitative. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993: 340 - 343), in a survey study, “*a researcher is asking a large group of people questions about or related to a particular topic or issue of interest.*” In this study, which is also a survey study, information was collected through asking questions and the answers to the questions by selected members of the targeted group constitute the data of the study. Most importantly, the information collected from this selected people is used to describe aspects and characteristics such as opinions, attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of the topic or issue of interest which in this study comprise rituals at sacred sites.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection in this study was maintained through use of the following research instruments:

3.3.1 Questionnaire (through interviews)

The first questions were about the profile of user community and required general information about informers. The remaining questions focused on ritual activities in terms of the following: genres of ritual, functions, qualities and properties of ritual, language use and meaning as well as significance of rituals.

3.3.2 Structured interviews (through questionnaire) as well as unstructured in depth interviews

Structured interviews consisted of a series of formal, verbal questionnaires designed to elicit specific answers from the respondents or informants. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993: 385), these interviews are used to obtain information that can later be compared and contrasted hence they provided information that could be used to support the categorization of rituals performed at the sacred sites. On the other hand, unstructured interviews were less formal and resembled casual conversation pursuing both the interest of the researcher and the respondent at the same time as they did not involve any particular type or sequence (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993: 385). The researcher intended to find out what the respondents knew or thought and

compared their views to one another. In other words, formal and informal interviews were conducted personally or face to face with the informants who possess necessary information regarding the ritual performances and activities at Motouleng and Badimong (Mautse).

3.3.3 Participant observation

According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:1), participant observation is a method of research in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture. In this way data is being collected “by observing and taking part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied” which in this research would be the ritual leaders at the sacred sites, the traditional healer trainees and regular visitors.

The participant observation employed to collect information in this study enabled the researcher to take part in ritual activities and events of ritual performers; which in this regard serves to the betterment of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of ritual performance. The researcher observed the people present, costumes, how each responds to what is said by others, listened to conversations which took place and interpreted the meaning of language used. In view of these, (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002: 1) explain that researchers’ participation enhances the quality of data obtained during field work as well as that of data interpretation. They further outline key elements of participant observation as it is important that the research acquires specific skills of becoming both an observer and a participant. The key elements include:

- Living in the context for a period of time;
- Learning and using local language and dialect;
- Actively participating in a wide range of daily, routine and extraordinary activities with people who are full participants in that context;
- Using every day conversation as an interview technique;
- Informally observing during leisure activities;
- Recording observations in field notes and using both tacit and explicit information in analysis and writing (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002: 5)

It is also true that the researcher could not observe all the activities and hear every single word made by every individual in the group being observed. However, fulfilment of the above key elements often enhances the quality of information obtained during field work and that of the interpretation of data. In this study the researcher regularly visited the two sacred sites and participated in ritual activities which took place or interacted as often as possible with the user communities involved.

3.3.4 Data from informants

There were regular visits to the sacred sites to collect information from different visitors and local user communities who came to perform rituals in the caves. Individuals and groups of ritual participants were observed and interviewed with regard to naming of different rituals, the meaning thereof and its importance to different communities and individuals. Audio and visual recordings devices were used. Information was analysed qualitatively and descriptive interpretation was central to the study to enable interviews to be conducted in Sesotho so that information could later be analysed both in Sesotho and English.

3.3.5 Fieldwork at the sites

Fieldwork included participating and observing through recording and taking pictures, using video and audio recordings of ritual performances of all the people and communities (user communities) with whom the researcher was working at the sacred sites. In this way information was gained which would later be analysed and interpreted by the researcher. Field notes were also essential in this sense.

3.3.6 Fieldnotes

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993: 397) “*The accuracy of researcher’s observation lies in the quality of his/her field notes.*” In this study the researcher kept detailed notes of the activities going on at the sacred sites under study. Field notes are the notes the researcher takes in the field

through research techniques such as recording of observations, formal and informal interviewing or the use of questionnaire.

3.4 Study Population and Selection process

The study population comprise user communities (occasional and regular visitors or pilgrims) of the sacred sites/caves in Badimong and Motouleng caves mostly traditional healers and the traditional healer trainees (both males and females). Selection was done randomly in order to accommodate different groups of people and individuals (young and old) who came to perform rituals at the sacred sites. They included religious and non – religious people alike. Some important persons were purposely targeted such as, leading ritual leaders staying at the sites as well as regular sangomas. The researcher interviewed self-appointed authorities at the different spots within the sacred sites together some acquaintance whom the researcher came to know through regular visits to the sites and through the SANPAD Project (South Africa – Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development).

3.5 Study sites

These are two of the most important sites in the Free State and by measure of their user community they are certainly representing space for the most diverse ritual performances. This study was carried out at the two sacred sites located in the Eastern Free State province of South Africa that are situated about 90 km apart. They are: Badimong sacred site near Mautse (Rosendal) and Motouleng sacred site near Kgubetswana (Clarens). These two sacred caves are a true reflection of how caves are thought to represent sacred space among the ‘other’ uses of caves. They are believed to have special use and meaning to most African cultural and religious groups and are usually associated with supernatural powers. In most African cultures which strongly believe in ancestors such as the Basotho people, the ancestral spirits are sometimes seen as living in caves in the sacred mountains.

Thus, Carlson and Eachus maintain that: Therefore, caves as entrances into the earth are thought to be man’s route of access to ancestors through ritual performance and activities” (1977: 38-40).

3.6 Validity and reliability

The research questions were pre-tested to check whether the language and interpretation would convey the same message as intended by the researcher in this study as well as ensuring that there was no repetition of questions. Bailey (1987: 187) states that almost all interview studies use structured questionnaire and interviews to ensure validity of the questions. The researcher intended to employ the same technique as informants would be asked the same questions to enable comparison of answers from respondents which would later be analysed to reflect the true views, perceptions, beliefs and understanding of different individual and groups about rituals, such as respondents agreeing on the use of certain words and language during particular ritual activities.

The researcher, as the natural local language speaker of Sesotho had the advantage of in depth questioning as well as the cultural background shared by most of the local user communities of the two sacred caves.

3.7 Ethical consideration

Anonymity of respondents was a very important principle that guided the researcher in this study. The participation of all the informers in the completion of this study was based on the principle that: the respondents would remain anonymous and that specific references to the traditional healers and ‘*sangomas/mathuela*’ and all other ritual performers at the sacred caves would only be made to ascertain scientific value for the research and the study that is conducted. All information received from the informants was treated with the utmost care and sensitivity. However, permission was granted by some of the participants and informants referred to by names in the previous sections of this study.

The researcher first gained permission from the senior authorities at the sites (the sangomas, senior men/women and their trainees) regarding audio recording and the taking of pictures during this research project. The researcher also carefully explained the purpose of the research to the people who would be consulted to understand beforehand to avoid being “*assigned to inappropriate individuals.*” (DeWalt, 2002: 37)

3.8 Conclusion

Chapter Three outlined the research design and methodology used in this study which was eye opening to the researcher in terms of research methods and techniques used in most social research and investigations. Presentation of data is carried out in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

TYPES OF RITUAL PERMANENCES AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents information with regard to types or genres of ritual activities taking place at the sacred sites under study, their function and structure as well as their qualities. Mention will be made of the names given to different ritual performances and the cycles involved as well as the properties within each ritual process. Names are given in Sesotho of ritual activities people come to perform at the sacred caves as well as the meaning attached to that name. The process of how a certain ritual is performed is looked at, its significance to the individual/s involved as well as to the surrounding or particular communities. This chapter aims to clarify to the reader whether there are specific times when certain rituals should be performed or specific places and most certainly if there are any specific instruments or special attire for participants. In this chapter, information is shed on whether everybody is allowed to participate in all the ritual activities performed at Motouleng and Badimong. The researcher, therefore, spoke to prominent cultural figures such as traditional healers/diviners residing at the sacred caves under study and the traditional healer trainees who were also staying there at the time. Another target group pertaining to the kind of information needed was that of individuals and groups of people who only visited the sacred sites to perform certain rituals and leave the place thereafter. As a result, major categories of rituals are mentioned and discussed below along with their different sub-categories.

4.2 Kinds of ritual activities performed at Motouleng and Badimong (Mautse) sacred sites and their different Sub – Categories : Mekete e phethwang mahaheng a badimo a Motouleng le Badimong (Mautse) le Mekga e fapaneng ya ho e phetha

In societies in which the ancestors are a feature of life, ritual forms the core of daily living process among the people who live in such areas. There are various kinds of ritual performances, ritual materials, ritual songs and dances as well as other ritual activities that form an integral part of life for the majority of people living there such as the healing ritual, thanksgiving ritual,

invocation ritual, cleansing and purification or protection ritual, ancestral summon ritual, ritual of good fortune or good luck, restorative ritual and initiation or passage ritual. These ceremonies are performed to appease the ancestors as they (ancestors) are thought and believed to serve as mediators between God and humanbeings by providing spiritual guidance and power through ritual ceremonies. As it is, a ritual performance often marks a particular or certain transition between physiological stages of life (such as puberty or death), a change in social status, a healing process or a medicinal ceremony to different ailments.

4.2.1. Healing ritual - Mokete wa Phekolo

Ancestral healing involves all dimensions of health and growth on psychological, spiritual, physical and social levels. Individuals and groups of people come to the sacred sites to be healed from their different kinds of illnesses. A different sickness requires a different instruction from one's own ancestors as well as a different healing procedure. Mention is made below of sub-categories or different names given to healing ritual activities at both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites and the performance thereof:

4.2.1.1 A ritual for a traditional doctor/healer trainee - Botjholoko/Ho kena lefehlong

A ritual for a traditional healer trainee (ho kena lefehlong) functions as the first stage or step on the road to becoming a fully-fledged Sesotho traditional healer or doctor (*ngaka ya Sesotho*); as they are referred to by local user communities. For the purpose of this study, the term 'traditional healer' will be used or accommodated; although a number of our informants have emphasized the use of the term (traditional doctor) as they say that (traditional doctors/*dingaka tsa Sesotho*) are individuals that have undergone formal (*Sesotho*) traditional healer training ritual (*ho thwasa/ ho fehlelwa*). They refer to traditional healers as (*dingaka tjhitja*) and it is said, they (*dingaka tjhitjha*) are those that only happened to gain knowledge of traditional herbs and their use mainly because of their close relation with someone who is a traditional doctor for example, grandfather or grandmother, etc. In other words a traditional healer (*ngaka tjhitjha*), according to local user communities does not have formal training hence is not a traditional doctor.

“They have not undergone training (lefehlo) because they have not experienced the calling (ho thwasa).” (Traditional doctors/healers explain)

It is therefore a fact that quite often a traditional doctor or healer trainee initially falls ill by turning a blind eye to the Sesotho clarion and ancestral call to join the traditional medicinal and healing world; or something very strange will just happen to somebody who is ignoring the dreams and visions sent to him/her by the ancestors. Normal symptoms for the ailments of such people include the inexplicable coming out of all one's teeth, painful legs which render one immobile or aching arms which become dysfunctional and sometimes, even blindness occurs.

“(Ha ke na meno kaofela hona jwale...bona! A ntshuwe ke bonkgono ka ha ke sa ka ka ba mamela ka nako eo ba mpitsetsang bongaka, ke ne ke bo tshaba bongaka bona...meno ana a itswetse feela a se bohloko hape a sa bola hohang...ke ne ke ye ke bone feela ke se ke tshwela leino le tswileng ke sa tsebe hore ho etsahalang)”... “I have lost almost all my teeth ...as you can see for yourself; due to the wrath of my ancestors because it took me long to listen to and respond to their calling. I was scared of the unknown and especially of the huge responsibility that comes along with this kind of work as it is not an easy one. My teeth just came out without any pain or decay.” Says (A middle aged female traditional healer trainee in Motouleng sacred site as she opens her mouth for me to see her widely scattered teeth)

A ritual for a traditional healer trainee is performed after an individual has had constant dreams and visions from his/her ancestors instructing them to come to the sacred site at Motouleng or Badimong. The instructions do however differ from individual to individual.

“For some people, like myself, I was told by my ancestors to come to Motouleng sacred site to mostly ‘pray’ for myself and for other people (I just include everybody in my prayer), whilst awaiting further instruction from them. I have only been here for two months and I am praying day and night. To be more specific I pray three times a day and I wake up every midnight to pray at the alter (ka ho bonkgono) which is ancestors’ special sacred spot here in Motouleng. If I don’t do that, I will wake up sick the following day and they will come and warn me in a dream. They would tell me to keep on praying like I have been instructed to...(Pheella ho rapela). I really hope that one day they will tell me exactly what to do besides just praying.” (Says a female traditional healer trainee in the picture below)



MOTOULENG: A traditional healer trainee from Botshabelo in the Free State - (Picture by: Mensele, M S)

Another traditional healer trainee who came from (Teyateyaneng District in Lesotho) said she had been instructed to come to Motouleng sacred site to collect the corner stone/s (Lejwe la motheo/majwe a motheo) for her people. After several dreams of this nature indicating the place where she had to collect the cornerstones; she consulted an elderly traditional healer back home in Lesotho who told her that the ancestors had chosen her to serve the people by way of traditional healing processes and medicine. She had not been shown or sent to any particular senior traditional healer at this sacred site. She was there by herself and she kept on having dreams and visions on what she had to do next. She says: *“The most important thing is to wait until they tell me where the stones are in this sacred cave because I cannot just pick up any stone without being instructed or shown the exact place where I will get the stones...”* (Picture not taken because ancestors did not grant permission)



MOTOULENG: Traditional healer trainee from Leribe District in Lesotho - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

The traditional healer trainee in the above picture explains how she experienced her calling: *“In my dreams, I would see myself wearing the same red gown that I am wearing right now and carrying (Kepa)... an iron tool used by traditional healers for collecting traditional herbs...but now I only carry (Kepa) when I am instructed to go out in the veld to collect some medicinal traditional herbs... As for my stick (Kotjane) or wooden knobkerrie, I carry it all the time because it helps me connect with my ancestors...with this woolen, red thread (mehala e mefubedu)...it works wonders; it is soaked into some special traditional medicine instructed to me by ancestors. The stick (kotjane) is more like a messenger between me and my ancestors.”*

At Badimong sacred site, a young female traditional healer trainee from Dobsonville in the Gauteng province said she was very ill before she accepted the calling. She claimed that she had been in and out of different hospitals in Gauteng and Durban since 2006; until last year (2010) when a (Sangoma) in Kwazulu Natal told her that she would not get healed unless she obeyed the instructions from her ancestors.

“She was not the first one to tell me this as I had already consulted a number of traditional healers due to my illness and they had also said the same thing.” (Says the trainee)



BADIMONG: From left – A traditional healer trainee from Odendalsruus (I thought I was dying before I came to the sacred sites), one from Qwaqwa; behind, another from Dobsonville (I was diagnosed mentally ill by different hospitals in Gauteng and Durban). Lastly, a young male traditional healer and ritual leader from Botshabelo who could not finish his Grade 12 education in 2006 because of ancestor’s calling. (Picture by Mensele, M S

The young traditional healer and ritual leader carrying (*kepa ya badimo*) on the above picture has been staying at Maseeng sacred spot since 2006 as a traditional healer trainee under ‘Masechaba’

and on completion he was instructed to build a house for healing (*Dirontaboleng*) ‘as it is known;’ for local user communities who are instructed by ancestors to visit this special spot at Badimong sacred site.

The traditional healer trainee from Dobsonville further agreed to having had numerous dreams and visions which she ignored until such time that she was diagnosed mentally ill by doctors in different hospitals. She started taking treatment for the said illness but would not get better; until her aunt forcefully accompanied her in a journey to search for this place which she kept on being told about in her dreams and visions. They came to Badimong sacred site with the help of fellow passengers and taxi drivers as they did not know the place. They arrived at a place named the Temple (Templeng) at Badimong sacred site which she immediately recognized as her grandfather would always in her dreams take her on a journey to such a place and when she woke up she would remember the place as if she was really there. She said she had never swallowed a single pill since her arrival at this sacred spot in Badimong and yet she felt healthier every day. She was then undergoing (lefehlo) ritual and she took instructions (ditaelo) anytime of the day or night from her ancestors to get into the sacred waters/lake at Tempeleng where she said she communicated directly with them.



BEHIND: The sacred lake at the Temple (Templeng) in Badimong – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

“The ancestors sometimes awake me at 12 o’clock midnight to get into the sacred water behind me so that I can receive some more instructions and guidance from them whilst in the water. I am also shown how to use sacred or traditional herbs for healing. I do not know when they will tell me to go home because everything that I am doing here is because they have instructed me or my traditional healer and ritual leader to help me do it.” (She continues)



The Temple (Tempeleng) site at Badimong-
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

In the picture above are traditional healers and traditional healer trainees who had all come to this sacred site because of (*taelo*) ancestral instruction and calling – For instance, a male traditional healer and ritual leader at the Temple said he was earning a lot of money in the mines at Witbank, but he had to abandon his job to come and fulfill his ancestors’ wish to take care of this sacred spot and to help the trainees and sometimes other traditional healers who got sent here by ancestors. He is originally from Kolonyama in Lesotho. Another lady from Odendaalsrus said she could not walk when she first came to this sacred site. Many others (mostly female) were from different places in and outside South Africa.



BADIMONG: Inside the sacred cave at the Temple – (Picture by Mensele, M .S)

One of the trainees (wearing a blue gown in the above two consecutive pictures) says she could not walk when she first came here; but she was as fit as a fiddle, at the time.

At another sacred spot in Badimong, known as (*Maseeng*) meaning ‘fertility or the children’s place,’ I spoke to a senior traditional healer and ritual leader at this spot named Masechaba. She comes from Diepsloot in the Gauteng province. She said this sacred site had been her home for close to twenty years then. She has in the past received ancestral instruction (*taelo*) to preside over ritual activities and religious rites for the sick and other people in need of spiritual attention in countries or places such as Lesotho, Botswana (*moo batho ba bangata ba fumanang majwe a motheo a dikereke tse fapeneng*). Botswana is where many priests and ritual leaders are instructed to go and collect cornerstones for their different churches – mostly the Apostolic Church leaders who most of them are traditional doctors/healers/diviners.

This senior female traditional healer and ritual leader at Maseeng went on to list numerous other countries and places inside and outside South Africa where she visited; countries such as Swaziland, Congo, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania; and places in South Africa such as Sea Point -

Table Mountain, Modderpoort Chapel (Lehaheng la Nkgono Mantsopa Makhetha) and many others to perform healing rituals for people.



BADIMONG AT MASEENG
(Fertility/sacred spot for Children –
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

The picture above portrays a group of church members (Apostolic) as they prayed and sang ritual/and church songs at Maseeng sacred site with their church leader standing right behind the woman who is carrying a baby.



BADIMONG: A senior traditional healer and ritual leader at a sacred spot known as (Maseeng) ‘fertility or children’s place inside the sacred cave – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

In the picture above, this senior traditional healer explains that she will only leave the sacred site (particularly this special spot) upon instruction by ancestors; as they are the only reason why Maseeng sacred spot in Badimong became her home for such a long period of time.

“People come to Maseeng from all over to seek for ancestral help. I only act as a leader and guide them through their journey; I help them to understand and follow their ancestors’ instruction properly in order to complete their healing processes or training.” (She indicates)

At the time, there were two female traditional healer trainees staying with Masechaba at this special spot, one from Mhale’shoek District in Lesotho and another from Leribe District, also in Lesotho. She hosted them at this sacred spot in Badimong whilst undergoing their traditional healer training processes under her guidance and leadership.



MASEENG SACRED SPOT: Traditional healer trainee from Mohale's Hoek District in Lesotho showing us how she has learnt one of the most important lessons in traditional healer training - the beating of the drum – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

While speaking to the lady in this picture, she explained to the researcher just how difficult it was to be chosen by ancestors to become their agent and messenger to the people:

“It was hard for me at first; it still is, but what can I do... I do not have a choice. It has been two years now that I have left behind my husband and my children. I eventually became very sick because the ancestors were becoming angry with me for not obeying their instruction. They came to me in my dreams and sometimes even when I was still awake... for instance; they would come to me during day time, in a vision (Ka pono, ke sa robala) I would see, listen and speak to them regardless of whether I was with other people...and people were starting to spread rumours that I had gone crazy.”

Whilst at Badimong sacred site I also spoke to one of the most senior traditional healers and a ritual leader who has been residing at the sacred caves in Badimong for longer than thirty years, namely Monica. At this special spot there were two female traditional healer trainees from Soweto in Gauteng and another from Virginia in the Free State. They both had come to undergo (ho thwasa/ lefehlo) ritual under Monica's leadership and guidance. On the other hand there was this gentleman from Quthing District in Lesotho who had come all the way just to consult healers due to his illness.



BAREFOOTED: A man from Quthing District in Lesotho is kneeling down (a sign of respect towards ancestors) to receive his traditional medicine from one of the assistants at Monica's – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

“For me, there is no better place than this one to get help because my ancestors are here, that is why I come all the way to this sacred site... The traditional herbs and medicine I get at this sacred site are very helpful to me, yet they are not expensive.” (Explains the man receiving traditional medicine in the above picture)



BADIMONG: One of the most senior traditional healers and a ritual leader at Badimong sacred site says she was a nun at one of the Roman Catholic Churches/ Missions before she accepted the calling – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

She tells us that not so long ago there was also a white man from Capetown undergoing his traditional healer training and processes or (Ho thwasa/Lefehlo) training.

“He only stayed for three weeks and had to leave as was instructed by his ancestors; now he only comes regularly to perform certain steps or undergo certain processes of the ritual and he goes back home thereafter; he will keep on doing that because that is how his ancestors want him to undergo his training... You must remember for some people, ancestors can instruct that they stay at the sacred sites for just one day, some people may take one week. It all depends on the ancestors’ wish (ditaba tse etsahalang mona ke tsa badimo, ke thato le taelo ya badimo); hence their instruction prevails.”(She confirms)

This senior traditional healer and ritual leader mentioned the following steps as the ones that constitute the traditional healer training ritual; she however also repeatedly pointed out that the ancestors’ instruction (*taelo*) to both the trainee and the traditional healer who serve as the ritual leader is of utmost importance throughout the process of this training. One other important thing is that, not all traditional healer trainees underwent exactly the same steps during the (*lefehlo*) training.

Stage 1: A traditional healer trainee puts on a green gown; a sign that she is at a beginning stage, cut from a specific cloth, according to the instruction. Two grey doves (not white) have to be killed and burnt to get rid of the evil forces that might hinder positive progress for the trainee. He/she (trainee) also has to wear some white beaded amulets around her/his wrists and ankles; and on the head as well as around the neck in a form of necklace; ropes (*mehala*) around his/her waist woven from some red or green wool; sometimes a red and green wool has to be interwoven and this happens when training is focused on both using traditional herbs (*bokoma*) and sacred water (*seprofeto*). Further, some two white chickens have to be slaughtered (*ho kgantshetsa sefaha*) for ancestors to recognize the trainees at this stage of the ritual. The bile of these two chickens are mixed with some traditional herbs and (*lekwele la jwala ba Sesotho*) and smeared from head to toe on the trainees’ body by the traditional healer in charge, so as to wash and purify the trainee.



BADIMONG (At Monica's): Traditional healer trainees from Virginia in the Free State and Soweto in Gauteng Provinces of South Africa wearing their green gowns at Stage One of their training – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Stage 2: A trainee now puts on a pure white Nazarenee gown (*Monasaretha o mosweu, ho bula seprofeto*) or blue and white, accompanied by a pure white or blue and white cloth on the head and a bible. This attire is especially for the trainee who uses the sacred water to heal people. At this stage, the following animals are needed: a sheep, two chickens, two doves-one white, which is let free to fly away to summon supernatural powers and spirits of the ancestors. One grey dove is burnt together with (*diphiyo, mohatla le mohlehlo wa nku*). The ash is collected and mixed with (*sewasho se sesehla sa Nkokomohi*) a yellow sacred soil from Nkokomohi sared spot within Badimong. The mixture is used by the trainee as a soap when taking bath and also for (*ho kapha*), a traditional, medicinal vomiting practice meant for healing purpose among the Basotho people.



At Monica's: White gowns indicate the second step of the training - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Stage 3: A red gown accompanied by a white cloth and a necklace made of some black, white and red beads together with a blue (*mohlomi*) which is said to be a very rare kind of beads. Two white goats and three chickens, two cocks; one cock (*mokoko o kgwarahla*) to summon the ancestors, another cock (*mokoko o mofubedu ho ntsha bonkgono/bontatemoholo metsing/mong'a metsi...o kena moo letsheng mme ha a tswa moo o kgutla le thepa eo a e laetsweng hore o tla ya e fumana ka moo...*) to appease the sacred huge snake in the sacred water where the trainee is instructed to enter for him/her to get (*ditaelo*) on how to use the sacred water to heal people, all of which he/she will find in that sacred lake as indicated by ancestors and a white hen to unite and bring together all the ancestors.



BADIMONG: A sacred lake named: Letsha la Dingaka le Baprofeta – with its wall bare as it is winter - the centre does not go dry no matter what season: small as it may look now; it is the entrance leading to the dwelling place of the king (*morena wa metsi*) of this sacred water/spot - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Stage 4: A traditional healer trainee puts on a yellow or red trash gown (*seaparo sa mokotla se sesehla kapa se sefubedu*) to humble him/herself and to show respect to the ancestors and also has to carry around a metal/wooden knobkerrie (*kotjane*) which helps in communication with the ancestors. The trash gown (*seaparo sa mokotla*) and the knobkerrie (*kotjane*) serves as an indication that the trainee is approaching the end of his/her (*lefehlo/ho thwasa*) ritual or training.

Stage 5: This stage is where a trainee's hair is shaven; (except for the hair at the centre of his/her head (*ho fora*)). He/she is now waiting for a signal, a dream, a vision or an instruction (*taelo*) from the ancestors showing him/her the correct animal to be slaughtered for the graduation ceremony, which should always be a cow. It is only when the ancestors have revealed this to him/her (especially the colour of the cow) that a graduation (*ho tswa lefehlong*) ritual will take place.

Traditional healers and ritual leaders in both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites agree that some traditional healer trainees live in those sacred caves without ever going home from arrival day until they graduate, depending on the instruction of the ancestors. Others, however, come to the sacred caves only for a limited period of time to perform certain steps of the necessary ritual and return home according to the wishes of their ancestors for further training on the use of indigenous herbs necessary for traditional medicinal matters.

*“While they are undergoing this ritual, traditional healer trainees learn how to communicate with their ancestors through prayer and use of traditional herbs and medicine. They learn how to send a pleading message to ancestors through ritual songs and dances and (*ho opa diatla*). They learn how to sleep facing the East; due to the fact that the ‘East’ is where the sign of light (*lesedi*) comes from, hence we as traditional healers or ritual leaders and the traditional healer trainees greet one another using the word (*lesedi*) meaning ‘light.’ We are appeasing and praising our ancestors by greeting one another in this way; everybody also greets us in same manner as a sign of humility and respect towards our ancestors so that they can listen and respond to our requests.”* (Recounts a traditional healer and ritual leader at Maseeng sacred spot at Badimong sacred site)

A ritual for a traditional healer trainee is a nocturnal activity for which no other animal but a goat is slaughtered for it is widely believed among local user communities of Motouleng and

Badimong sacred sites that there is a strong connectivity between the ancestors and a goat (*podi ke yona e kopanyang motho le badimo ba hae hobane e a lla ha e hlajwa...sebaka sa podi se fetisetsa ditaba ho badimo*). One of my informants (a female traditional healer) at Montsha village in Qwaqwa said she graduated at Motouleng. She maintains that the preferred colours (by ancestors) of a goat meant for this purpose is pure white (*podi e tshweu*) or white with brown colour (*podi e rolo/rolwana*). The colour of a goat is an instruction from the ancestors and it signals the direction as to what specific attributes of traditional healing and training a particular trainee is destined. In this way it (colour) becomes very important as it plays a very important role.



BADIMONG: A pure white goat (*podi e tshweu*) or a white and brown one (*podi e rolo/ana*) (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Another informant explained that: “(*Lethwasane le bontshwa kgutshwane (podi) ya lona ditorong kapa le ntse le shebile tjena. Hangata e ba podi e mmala o mosweu kapa o rolo mothong e motona, e rolwana mothong e motshehadi; jwalo ka nna, ke ile ka bontshwa e rolwana. Mebala ena e bohlokwa haholo hobane nka hlalosa hore: Mmala o mosweu o bontsha hore lethwasane le na le moya o le mong wa sefaha e leng neho ya ho tjheka meriana e le ho phekola ka ditlhare. Podi e rolo kapa rolwana yona e bolela hore lethwasane le fuwe meya e mmedi e leng hore ke motho wa sefaha (meriana), o a tjheka ebile hape a ka sebetsa le ho phekola batho ka metsi a thapelo. Podi e bontshwa badimo pele e hlabelwa haufi le (kgotla), ka hare ho Motouleng.*”

An informant, (a traditional healer who graduated in Motouleng sacred site and who also serves as one of the ritual leaders at this sacred site) further explained: *“A pure white colour of the goat means that training for this particular trainee must focus only on healing people by means of traditional herbs shown by ancestors. The goat is slaughtered at a specific spot, next to (kgotla) the court, in Motouleng after it has been shown to the ancestors by speaking to them “phoofolo ya lona ke ena eo le e bontshitseng mora kapa moradi wa lona). The brownish and white colour (podi e rolo/rolwana) is a symbol that training does not focus only on traditional herbs but also on how to use the sacred water for healing purposes.”*

While on the usage of sacred water, Motouleng sacred site, unlike Badimong, has got only one sacred spring and a sacred river running past the entrance; while Badimong has numerous sacred lakes and springs scattered along the sacred valley. They are located at different special sacred spots within the sacred site such (*Tempeleng, Letsheng la dingaka le baprofeta, Monica’s place, Maseeng, Univesithi and Sedibeng sa Moshoeshoe*) *‘Moshoeshoe’s spring.’*

Another point of interest is that it does not matter where the trainees are residing within the sacred valley in Badimong; there is a strong sense or spirit of oneness for local user communities and inhabitants. For instance, a ritual leader from Maseeng is welcomed to take her trainees to the sacred spot/lake at the Temple (*Tempeleng*) to perform a healing ritual for them using the sacred water from the specific sacred lake at this spot. This has become a norm or culture to all other ritual leaders residing at different sacred spots with their trainees in Badimong.

Elaborating on this practice are (senior traditional healers and ritual leaders) saying: *“Re betsitswe ke badimo ho tla mona mahaheng a bona; ha ho motho ya tlileng mona ka ho rata ha hae...Ke bona ba laelang hore pheko e fumaneha kae ka hare ho sebaka sena sa bona...Jwale ha badimo ba buile ke mang ya ka hanang taelo/thato ya bona.”* ... *“We are all children of God and we have all come to this sacred place to serve the ancestors and not our individual interests.”*

The trainee will dream seeing a goat or will simply be shown the goat of a particular colour in a vision (a trance like situation) not asleep. On arrival at the sacred sites, that goat is hidden from the sight of the trainee. He/she must divine the whereabouts of the goat, its actual colour and tell correctly whether someone is watching the goat or it is by itself. Thereafter, he/she must fetch

the goat independently and bring it to the ritual place to be shown to the ancestors before it can be slaughtered ... “(*ditho tse itseng tsa yona di sebediswa ho tswaka le ho etsa ditlhare tsa enwa ya thwasang. Nama ya yona e phehelwa batho ba tlileng moketeng ona; ba fuwa nama le jwala ba Sesotho bo riteletsweng hona mona mahaheng a badimo hore ba je, ba nwe... di fella mona, ke tsa badimo*)” She particularizes the most essential parts of the slaughtered goat as follows:

- **Blood (*madi a podi*)** – The goat is slaughtered as a sign that the trainee is responding positively to the ancestral calling to become their agent and to introduce him/her to the ancestors as a beginner in this training. The blood is to be sucked by the trainee as it oozes from a gash. The belief is that this blood will assist the trainee to master the divining art during training which on completion will assist him/her to properly and successfully heal the sick people. It is believed also that the blood enables the trainee to communicate with the ancestors as this goat serves as the link between him/her and the ancestors.
- **Tail (*mohatla wa podi*)** – As short as it might be seen, it is from it (the tail) that the divining bones are secured and the trainee will use these bones during the process of training. The trainee also wears it round the neck while it is still hot together with some beads (throughout the training process).
- **Raw bones (*masapo tala a bitswang ditotlwana*)** – A medicinal concoction is applied on them and on a horn. The bones also form part of the attire as they are worn by the trainee round the neck together with beads. The necklaces crisscross on the chest and between the shoulders at the back.



BADIMONG: (Wearing a skin of the slaughtered goat and carrying the stick) A traditional healer trainee from Sasolburg in the Free State – The necklaces crisscrossing on the chest and between the shoulders at the back – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

- **Horns (*manaka a podi*)** – One horn is used at a go. It is stuffed with a mixture of traditional herbs intended to help the trainee during divining art and training process. The other one is stored for future use when the first one has worn out.
- **Gall bladder (*nyooko ya podi*)** – It is applied when the trainee is bathed. The suet is kept for use during the graduation ceremony of the trainee. All the meat is cooked and eaten up before sunrise. As the sun dawns, all the parts stated above are applied on the trainee as indicated. It is the beginning of the actual training.
- **Skin (*lekoko la podi*)** – The trainee wears it and sometimes (female traditional healer trainees) use it as a cradle to carry a stick on her back and they call the stick a ‘baby.’

Stick (*thupa*) – This is a fresh stick just cut and whose husk is taken. Red ochre or white clay is spread all over the stick according to the requirements of the ritual. The trainee carries the stick on her back all the time. It will be stuck into the brush at the end of the tail of a cow slaughtered upon the trainee’s graduation ritual (*ho etsa letjhoba la ngaka ya Sesotho*).



Traditional healer – who graduated in Motouleng showing us *her* (*Letjhoba la Ngaka ya Sesotho*) made from the stick and the tail of a cow slaughtered at graduation ceremony – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

According to another (senior traditional healer and ritual leader) in Motouleng, during the performance of this kind of ritual, training or calling does not involve only different colours of a goat. The pure white goat (*podì e tshweu*) or the white and brown colour (*podì e rolo/rolwana*), also involves the specified special spot and a chosen traditional healer/diviner to provide guidance needed. It is only now that a trainee is accompanied by his/her ritual leader, other older traditional healers and appropriate members of the family to the chosen spot (by ancestors) at the river running past Motouleng. This group of people will start singing ritual songs. Upon arrival at the river, the singing, clapping of hands and beating of drums become stronger as this is believed to appease the ancestors; suddenly, the presence of ancestral spirit allows the trainee to uncontrollably and swiftly walk into the river. Sometimes there comes a sudden wind and he/she is swept away by this wind (*setsokane*) into the water, without people noticing as they will be struggling to withstand this sudden strong wind. He/she disappears into the water for a period known only by the ancestors. *“Let me indicate that this is not just a river...it must be at a spot where the water is deep and dangerous to someone who has got no ancestral instruction or connectivity to go there, where there in (mong’a metsi) the owner of the deep water...who in most cases happens to be a huge and mostly dangerous snake...which in this particular instance will be harmless and sacred because the spirit of the ancestors will be prevailing...as they know and control things which we cannot.”* (She specifically reiterates)

It is of utmost importance that the trainee must have been instructed or dreamt that he/she must visit the deep water at this particular spot to be given all that is needed to learn about his/her particular direction of traditional healing. Others go into the river and come out the same day. In many instances the trainee indeed comes out of the river with everything that he has been instructed or shown in a dream or vision and have been told that it will only be given to him/her during this visit into the deep water.

At Badimong, another traditional healer adds: *“Mona Badimong re mo isa letsheng, kwana ‘Templeng’ kapa letsheng le leng hape le tsejwang ka hore ke ‘Letsha la Dingaka le Baprofeta,’ ho ya lata bonkgono le ntatemoholo metsing. Ke moo a tla fumana le ditaba tsa hae kaofela ho mong’a metsi. Ha a tswa ka moo ka metsing o tla a fumantshitswe dintho tsohle tseo badimo ba*

neng ba mo rometse metsing moo ho ya di fumana ho leqosa la bona e leng mong'a metsi"...

"Here at Badimong sacred site, we usually accompany the trainee to the sacred lake at the 'Temple' or to another sacred lake (Letsha la dingaka le baprofeta) which is one of the huge sacred lakes here at Badimong. His or her attire involves a combination of different set of colours indicating that there is more than just one single direction to his or her calling. One has to wear a coat bearing green, red and white colours; together with beads and ropes (mehala) made from a green, red and white wool and white cloth to always cover the trainees' head."

(Adds another senior traditional healer and ritual leader) at Badimong sacred site.

The green and red ropes (*mehala e metala le bofubedu*) as they are called by local user communities are worn together with beads around the wrist, waist and ankles as indication of the art of healing people by means of (*seprofeto/bokoma*) using only sacred water together with red and green beads. All these need to be acknowledged or presented before ancestors by slaughtering of two grey doves (*ho bula seprofeto*) and to get rid of evil forces; another two white chickens together with (*'sethoto'- ho kgantshetsa sefaha*), meaning to ask the ancestors to provide light (*kganya*) and guidance unto the trainee's life and to bless him/her during the training period.

"Ha a qetile tsena kaofela ke moo a tla qalella ho rutwa kapa ho ithuta ho fodisa ka ditlhare le ka ho rapella metsi. A ithute ho bina dipina tse atametsang le ho thabisa badimo hore ba mo utlwe, ba mo nehe lesedi la ho sebeletse setjhaba le ho se phekola. Jwale e be o tla fora hlooho le ho emela hore a bontshwe kgomo ya hae (ke badimo) ya ho tswa lefehlong" (Further explanation by another informant). The trainee is now ready to learn ways of healing people by means of using different traditional herbs and sometimes even the use of sacred water for healing purposes. His/her hair is shaven except for the hair that is at the centre of his/her head (*ho fora*) as indicated. The trainee learns the music that accompanies his/her training; learns traditional ways of examining the sick; the classification of herbs and medicines and the potency of each kind; plus a myriad of other concomitant issues such as cementing the image of families. The duration of training is not known by anyone. It can range from two days to several months. It is only the ancestral spirits who will inform the trainee and the trainer when the graduation time has

come. That is the time when the spirits are satisfied that all is well. For a traditional healer trainee to graduate, another ritual has to be performed.

4.2.1.2 A ritual for the traditional healer trainee to graduate - Lefehlo la ho tswa

This ritual serves as indication to the local user communities that the training period has come to an end and as it is already mentioned the ritual is performed only when the trainee completes the necessary steps of the requirements or the calling. Thus, known as the graduation ceremony (*ho tswa lefehlong*) because the trainee is now ready to fully serve the ancestors as a trained traditional doctor; to heal people of different ailments. The attire of the trainee also changes according to the instruction of the ancestors as does everything else. The audience involve local user communities from all over; mainly other traditional healers (young and old), traditional healer trainees, the family and everybody else who wishes to be there (there is no discrimination). Three animals are slaughtered for this purpose: a cow for graduation purpose (*ho tswa lefehlong*) and is slaughtered at the sacred site where the graduation takes place, a sheep for putting up prayer flags (*ho phahamisa lifolakga*) at home where the traditional healer will be serving the ancestors and a goat to welcome home the ancestors (*ho kenya badimo hae*) so that they (ancestors) are able to guide him/her all the time as their agent and messenger. It is also slaughtered at the sacred site and the bile is used for bathing as well as a mixture with certain traditional herbs to be carried home with the trainee (taking the ancestors home with him/her).

“Ke mokete o tshwarwang bosiu kaofela ka lebaka la kgotso le kgutso tse renang ha e le bosiu. Ka nako ya bosiu re kgona ho bua le badimo hantle ho se tshitiso ya dintho tse ngata.” (Ho rialo e mong dingaka tsa Sesotho sebakeng sa badimo sa Motouleng) *“This is an all night ceremony at the sacred site, either Motouleng or Badimong due the calmness and tranquillity that reigns at night and therefore enabling us to communicate with the ancestors.”* (Recounts an old traditional healer and ritual leader at Motouleng sacred site)

At sunrise, the next day, a small group of audience (only older traditional healers and his/her traditional healer trainer/ritual leader) have to be at the river waiting for the first sunrays so that the trainee will use the mixture to bath in the river facing Eastward where the light is coming

from. From the river he/she is accompanied straight home with the family now joining the group of audience from the river. Some parts from each of the slaughtered animals are taken to serve special needs. Those are:

- **Cow** – Its horns are filled with an assortment of medicines so that they become the graduate's knapsack. Some bones are used for divining purposes. The brush of the tail is stuck into that stick that the trainee has been carrying on her back during training. The skin of the cow is used for making the drums (*sekupu kapa dikupu*) needed for singing and consulting with the ancestors.
- **Goat** – Its horns and some bones serve as divining bones. The suet is used as a chief ingredient in the concoction of medicines. The skin becomes a resting mat for the graduate. The blood is sucked as it oozes from the goat so that the graduate's avenues of healing are laid bare. It links the graduate with the ancestors. Sometimes it happens that the goat is slaughtered while it is in the middle of a river with the graduate. As the graduate sucks some blood, the rest of the blood spills into the river and flows along with the water. The belief is that just as the river water goes far and near and so will be the fame of the graduate as a traditional doctor/healer.
- **Sheep** – Apart from being slaughtered as a sign to welcome home the graduate and to put up the prayer flags at the particular home/family yard where the graduate will be based; its mutton is served as a special meal for the graduate because throughout training eating it was considered a taboo.

It is for this reason that the sheep is slaughtered when the trainee gets home; welcoming him/her and as an acknowledgement into the community as an agent of the ancestors (*ho bontsha hore ke ngakeng ya Sesotho ka difolakga*). The colours of the flags are also chosen by ancestors. These colours differ for each graduate according to the ability or the healing processes undergone by the graduate (*Neo kapa ditshebetso tsa ngaka*). As it was indicated, the attire for the trainee and the graduate changes as the ancestors will determine a new one through a dream or a vision which will now be a symbol of his/her status. The vision is often characterized by a voice from a speaker invisible to the naked eyes of the trainee or graduate even during daylight.

4.2.1.3 A bead ritual for a child seized by ancestors - Mokete wa sefaha

The belief system of the Basotho has it that if a child is named after somebody, that child will follow the footsteps of that person invariably. If the person after whom the child is named passes on without fulfilling the requirement of the ancestors to train as a traditional healer, then the burden is carried by the child. The child will undergo the same route as everybody else and become a traditional healer as a call from the ancestors. The parents are the ones who initiate the performance of the ritual after they are told by a child of his/her dreams. Resistance on the side of the parents to oblige to the instructions given to the child often results with the child falling sick or showing some pattern of strange behaviour. If the person after whom the child is named was supposed to have gone to the sacred sites at (either Motouleng or Badimong) then the parents will see to it that this child is accompanied to the sacred site for the ritual to be performed.

“Ke mokete wa pholo/ ho fodisa ngwana enwa ya seng a e na le badimo. O apeswa sefaha hohle mmeleng ho tloha leotong ya tswa hloohong hore monga lebitso leo a kgotsofale kaha yena a tsamaile a eso phethise tseo... Ha se ka mehla ngwana ya jwalo a qetellang e ba ngaka ya Sesotho... Ka dinako tse ding ha a qeta ho phetha tsena o a fola mme o boela e ba ngwana ya tshwanang le ba bang ka ha jwale monga lebitso o kgotsofetse.” (Ho rialo Ngaka ya Sesotho)

This is a healing ritual for this child and for the departed owner of the name so that his/her spirit can rest peacefully. The specific attire made of beads is worn by the child (the same colour and every thing) that should have been made for the deceased person whom he/she is named after. A cow or a goat (because of their connectivity with the ancestors) is slaughtered according to instruction (*taelo*) in the form of dreams or vision of the child. A goat symbolizes the beginning of the traditional healer training (*ho kena lefehleng*) and a cow symbolizes a graduation ceremony.

An informant explained that, *“The important aspect of this ritual is for the child to get healing, while at the same time is to appease the person after whom he/she is named. It is, therefore, also important to mention that it is not always that the child will take exactly after him/her because*

the child is not called but the person he/she is named after was the one who was called, but died before he/she could fulfil the instruction. In other words he/she is unsettled wherever he/she is; therefore, the child is helping him/her in a way. It is said that other children get healed and return to their normal life after the ritual has been performed”... “Hantlentle mokete ona ha o etsetswe ngwana enwa empa o etsetswa monga lebitso ya seng a hlokahetse; ho mo phethisetsa ditaba tseo a tsamaileng a di kolota badimo. Ke ka hoo ba bang ba bana ba folang hantle ka morao ho ho phethelwa mokete ona e be ba iphelela bophelo ba bona hape ntle le bothata bofe kapa bofe...ke ka hoo e leng mokete wa ho tlisa pholo ho ngwana enwa.” (A traditional healer explains)

At Motouleng sacred site the ritual is performed at a special sacred spot named (*Kgotla*) after the ancestors have been told the reasons behind the performance of the ritual and the child is introduced before them at their special spot ‘ancestors cottage’ (*ka sekgutlong sa badimo*). The animal also has to be shown to them at their cottage and at (*Kgotla*) before it gets slaughtered saying (*bonkgono le bontatemoholo, phoofolo ya lona ke ena; haholo ho bitswa monga lebitso ya seng a ile hore a tsebe, a utlwe hore mokete ona ke wa hae*).

At Badimong the sacred spot for this ritual is normally the sacred lakes for ancestors (*Matsheng a bonkgono*); a special spot named after the ancestors...the same process is followed. It is just that the instruction (*taelo*) will have indicated to the child that the ritual must be performed at Badimong sacred site.

4.2.1.4 A healing ritual - Mokete wa ho tshwarwa ka matsoho

This ritual is usually performed when all other possible methods of healing (Western and Traditional) have been explored and the illness persists. It is believed that this situation occurs only as indication that the ancestors are not happy about something; perhaps the patient is ignoring them or has in one way or other angered them. The sick person will start having visions and dreams from his/her ancestors which he/she would normally not understand unless they are

interpreted by a traditional healer to whom during consultation the ancestors (of the sick person) will be willing to give (*taelo*) as to what needs to be done for them to cast a healing spell on the sick person. The dreams and visions of the patient together with the instructions given to the traditional healer during consultation serve to guide both the patient and the traditional healer consulted as to which ritual must be performed, where or who should lead the ritual (this particular traditional healer or another one already at the sacred site in Motouleng or Badimong) and how (ritual material). Once the instruction (*taelo*) is clear, this sick person is accompanied by the traditional healer or if not (according to instruction) he/she is normally guided by the ancestors to go to either Motouleng or Badimong sacred cave to be cleansed and sanctified so as to heal. Usually, a plain white chicken is slaughtered for this purpose. The pure white colour functions to bring light and healing in the life of the patient (*ho kgantsha le ho tlisa pholo bophelong ba mokudi*) as whiteness is associated in this case with health, life and power. The patient leaves home for the sacred caves accompanied by one or more people identified especially by the ancestors. The companions will beseech the ancestors to cast a healing spell over the patient. Occasionally, as has been explained, the ancestors lead the patient to a particular person already in the caves who will earnestly ask them to drive away the malady and let the patient recuperate well.

At Motouleng sacred site the patient starts at the graveyard where it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors are prevailing; then to another spot known as the ancestors' place/cottage (*sekgutlwana sa badimo*). Lastly, to the courtyard (*kgotla*) where the belief is that the ancestors are gathered to debate issues surrounding the healing of the sick person. The slaughtering of the chicken takes place at this spot and everything is carried out there.

The bile from this pure white chicken is mixed with the concoction of traditional herbs as well as traditionally brewed beer (*lekwele la jwala ba Sesotho*) to purify the patient. A portion of the mixture is sprinkled over the meat while the rest is meant for those around the patient to each drink a little (without swallowing), they one by one spit it on the patient as they shake his/her hand saying "We wish you good health" (*Re o kopela bophelo*). Thereafter the chicken is eaten up. The patient is only allowed to bath the next day for ancestors to come overnight and realize that all has been done as instructed. Usually, the patient recovers fully after this occasion which

is indication that performance of this ritual can in most cases function as the only option or remedy where all else has failed. The ritual is not nocturnal; it is a daylight activity. Attire for this ritual is optional as long as it shows respect for ancestors (mostly women must cover their heads as a sign of respect and no sleeveless). A churchgoing patient or person in the audience is allowed to wear his/her church uniform.

At Badimong sacred site, there is no specific special spot for individuals who come to this sacred site to ask for ancestors to bring them health or life. Sick people can visit any sacred spot within Badimong; such as (*Maseeng* or *Tempeleng*) or at Monica's place as it is said by different traditional healers. As long as the sacred site is Badimong according to the instruction of ancestors.

"The sick person can come with his/her own traditional healer at any spot here at Badiomong as we are only here to serve and do as the ancestors instruct. But one thing is for sure, the ancestors will guide them towards any special spot which they will by then have already visited the traditional healer or ritual leader in charge to let him/her know that they are coming... that I (if it happens to be this special spot) must welcome and assist them in a way that they (ancestors) will explain to me...Even if a sick person is coming all by him/herself (except family) or without being accompanied a traditional healer, then it means I am the traditional healer chosen to do the rest and I will know beforehand (through ancestors). My ancestors and his ancestors will have met and agreed that I am the right person to lead the ritual. The white chicken in performing this ritual is of great importance as it is supposed to bring life and health." (Says one of the traditional healers at Badimong)

On the other side of Badimong sacred site, not at Monica's, not at Maseeng and certainly not at the Temple; there is a special sport named (*Sefothong*) meaning 'place of extreme heat or hot steam.' This place looks more like a deep, rectangular hole into the ground. Local user communities come to this sacred spot to perform rituals to heal certain parts of the body; especially the swollen hands and feet or any other ailments regarding hands and feet as it is often these parts of the body that are vulnerable to (*Motlopelo*); an illness believed to be deliberately cast on someone by putting evil or dangerous portion (*moriana/setlhare*) on the way or the gate

where that particular person will definitely pass or on an object that he/she is definitely going to touch or use. At this sacred spot, the sick person and those accompanying him/her will light candles and start beseeching ancestors to cast a healing spell on the sick person saying the words “*We wish you well’... (Re o kopela ho fola).*” Meanwhile the sick person puts his/her hands or feet inside the hole as he/she is also saying “*(Ke ikopela ho fola)...I am asking for the illness to be taken away from me.*”

At this healing spot it is not necessary to spill the blood into the ground or slaughter a *chicken*; as the part of the body that needs healing is placed into the ground itself via the hole. “It is important to mention also that because of the size of the hole or the crevice it is difficult for a head to fit in except for that of a little baby. Therefore, it is not often that headaches are healed at this sacred spot.”...“(Ha se hangata bohloko bo hloohong bo phekohehang sebakeng sena hobane hlooho ha e felle ka hare ho sekoti sena... le mmele wa motho e moholo ha o felle... Ntle le ha e ka ba wa lesea.)”



BADIMONG: A sacred spot named ‘Sefothong’- the place of extreme heat or hot steam – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

“*The candles are left burning until they get finished or extinguished by the blowing winds. Some coins or any gifts are thrown into the hole to appease the ancestors.*” (Tells the informants)

4.2.1.5 A ritual to ask for fertility - Mokete wa ho kopa thari/lesea/ngwana

Infertility is regarded as a form of illness amongst the Basotho and other societies elsewhere. Infertile people usually suffer from certain diseases that can be cured by doctors trained the Western way or the traditional Sesotho fashion. Infertile patients normally go to the sacred caves to invoke the ancestors for fertility. Sometimes the invocation focuses on the gender of the children desired, especially in cases where one bears only boys or girls and they want children of both genders. At Motouleng, there are times when the ancestors will direct the patient to a particular pool of water in a river to say their prayers before they present themselves at (*Baneng*) special spot for children inside Motouleng sacred cave. From home, the ancestors can occasionally show the patient to which traditional healer they can go to, who will accompany them to the sacred cave in order to say the prayers together. If the ancestors do not command the patients to go to Motouleng then, they sometimes instruct them to go to Badimong sacred cave where they will find a certain traditional healer from some place or one who resides at the sacred caves for assistance. The traditional healer will take the patient to a part of the sacred site secluded for babies.

In Motouleng the special spot for this purpose is known to local user communities as (*Baneng*) the place for children or babies and it is located immediately after the entrance, on the left hand side in this sacred cave. There, the traditional healer and the patient will start by lighting candles (one each) and introduce themselves to ancestors. They then take turns praying for fertility. The patient will leave pacifiers such as dummies, candies and a single doll or a clay baby or a little rock that children are fond of plus a burning candle to illuminate the area. The belief is that the burning candle will help open fertility ways for the barren woman. It is mostly women who come to the sacred site for this ritual as most Basotho men/husbands are not always willing to openly admit to experiencing infertility problems.



MOTOULENG: Special spot named 'fertility or place for children' (Baneng) – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

The traditional healer and the patient will then move to a revered section of the Motouleng sacred cave known as the sacred spot for ancestors (*Sekgutlwaneng sa bonkgono/badimo/ka makhosing*) where individuals speak or present their case directly to the ancestors as if in 'face to face' conversation. They both continue with their prayers. When they are done, they again leave behind them a burning candle, pumpkin seeds, maize and sorghum. *"They also sprinkle the sacred spot for ancestors with snuff and leave a cigarette or BB/Boxer (tobacco) to appease the ancestors. Another medication for this kind of illness could be the water collected from the sacred spring/well inside Motouleng (sediba ba bonkgono) at the back of the sacred cave. Before drinking the water at this sacred spot the patient has to light a candle and ask for the water to function positively to cure him/her of the barrenness. Sometimes, if the patient has some money (especially coins) they can throw the money into the sacred spring (ho kgantshetsa badimo) to appease the ancestors before collecting the sacred water. The patient leaves the burning candle next to the spring as well the coin/s thrown into the sacred spring, she goes home via the cave part secluded for "babies" (Baneng) to take and carry on her back the doll, the clay baby or the little rock as if that were a real child. From now on, the doll, clay baby (ngwana wa letsopa) or the little rock (lejwe le lenyane) will function or be treated like a real baby (in every aspect) by the patient. If the patient's request for a baby is genuine the ancestors will realize that and often thereafter the woman will conceive and bear a child. Her prayers would have been answered positively. The ancestors would have played their role.*

At Badimong sacred site the patients often visit a sacred spot for fertility or children/babies known as (Maseeng) at Masechaba's place. She is often the ritual leader who guides the patients throughout this ritual performance. She says fertility ritual makes it clear that the patient has to have a strong faith in the abilities of his/her ancestors (male/female patient) although she is quick to admit that most of the time the patients are women as it is not always easy for men to admit that they have infertility problems. "Basadi ke bona ba tlang ho tla kopa bana ...banna ba Basotho ha ba dumele hore ha ba na thari. Monna a ka mpa a felehetsa mosadi ho tla kopa ngwana e seng yena"... "It is difficult for most Basotho men to admit that they are barren..." (She says)



BADIMONG: A young man collecting sacred water at Maseeng - for the wife to take back home in Gauteng – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

The traditional healer/ritual leader at this sacred spot (Maseeng) helps local user communities to introduce themselves, present their illnesses and requests to their ancestors by following almost the same steps as the ones performed at Motouleng especially when they get to the sacred spring to collect the water for healing purpose (their barrenness). *"They sometimes take the water home with them to continue drinking and using for bath (the ancestors do not have any problem with them taking the sacred water home). The most important and functioning tools in this ritual is prayer and respect for ancestors. The patients must also have faith/hope and believe in the*

ancestors' ability to grant their request...otherwise there is no use coming to this sacred place. Sometimes I take the patient to the sacred spot at the Temple (Tempeleng) according to the instructions (taelo) of the ancestors... light the candles and pray together with the patient and (anyone else present can join) next to the sacred lake at the Temple...smear the patient's tummy with the orchre from the sacred lake and pray whilst the audience (inhabitants of the Temple) are singing, beating the drums (sekupu) and clapping hands (ho opa diatla) as the patient gets in the sacred lake or water as if being baptised...(only this time, by him/herself)... I only guide them." (She tells)

The patient also takes home with her some traditional herbs known as (Pitsa) especially for drinking in order to strengthen the blood, clean the womb or unblock the veins of the patient; sometimes even to help stabilize the patients' positive thinking because what/how the patient is thinking also plays a major role in his/her healing processes. Asked whether it is necessary for the patient to take home with her the doll, clay baby or the little stone ... she replied that *"it is not necessary because the ancestors know whether the request is genuine or not and they will answer as they see fit. (Ba bona hohle, ba tseba tsohle ... ba ntse ba na le rona le hona jwale, ba re mametse....they know everything about us, even now as you are interviewing me, they are watching and listening.)"* In most cases, it takes a few months before the patient comes back to report to the ancestors that she has conceived and to pray some more for safety of the coming baby.

4.2.2 A thanksgiving ritual - Mokete wa Tehoho

Thanksgiving rituals performed at the sacred caves take different styles according to the instructions of the ancestors or visions. Different kinds of animals are slaughtered to appease the ancestors in various ways. The gallbladder no longer serves any purpose in matters like these. It is mainly used during occasions at which the help of the ancestors is sought. Thanksgiving rituals have particular names according to the rules to be followed during the performance as well as the ritual materials and objects needed. The sub-categories of the thanksgiving ritual are as follows:

4.2.2.1 A burnt offering ritual - Setjheso

A burnt offering ritual can be performed at the sacred sites by anyone so singled out by the ancestors. A priest/church leader or a traditional healer can be chosen by ancestors to lead this ritual. Sometimes even a head of the family can be chosen only if he/she is a church leader or a traditional healer. If the head of the family does not fall in any of the two categories, there is no way that he/she can lead the ceremony because he/she is not in any position to communicate directly with the ancestors. The ritual is described as a burnt offering because certain parts of the animal slaughtered are burnt on fire outdoors. Sometimes the ancestors call on individuals whose lives are characterized by searing poverty to do a burnt offering ritual. It stands to reason that such people cannot calm the ancestors materially by slaughtering an animal. The individual concerned will simply burn a bundle of wood as it is. It is believed that the ancestors will bear with such a person and accept the offering unconditionally.

Normally a cow or a sheep is central in burnt offering rituals. Two white chickens or three doves can also serve the same purpose. It should have been clear in the foregoing paragraphs that the goat plays a critical role only in matters of trials and tribulations. Only certain parts of the cow, sheep or chickens are used in a mixture as ingredients for the medicines to be concocted by the ritual leader and offered to the individual/s concerned for this thanksgiving ritual activity. Those are the intestines, suet and kidneys. If the doves are used for this purpose, only one is killed and burnt. The remaining two are let go as a present to the ancestors. The freed doves often fly inside the Motouleng sacred caves or do not fly too far away from the sacred sites. This, perhaps, explains why both Motouleng and Badimong sacred caves are infested with doves. They obviously regard the caves hassle-free, as their nesting place and the human beings there as friendly forces.

A thanksgiving ritual activity is of cardinal importance amongst Basotho people if the wrath of the ancestors is to be avoided. It is believed that the ancestors can disposses anyone of their material wealth if they do not perform this ritual. An example was given of a person who was healed completely by the ancestors from a serious illness but reverted to the same problem because he did not thank the ancestors afterwards.

4.2.2.2 A thanksgiving bread ritual - Teboho ya mahobe

According to one of the informants at Motouleng sacred site, a thanksgiving ritual of bread is special because it is yeast-free. The dough is made of bread flour and water only. Round and flat rolls like cakes are baked from the dough. Then the rolls are eaten. Sometimes the rolls can just be burnt on fire. A cow or sheep is at times slaughtered a day before the actual performance of this kind of ritual. It is usually (not always); a whole night function. The food prepared for this purpose must have all been eaten up and finished by sunrise.



BADIMONG (Setjheso sa mahobe at Monica's) – (Picture by Mensele, M S)

In the above picture, local user communities at Monica's place, Badimong sacred site, consisting of traditional healer trainees at different stages of the training (according to various colours of their gowns) are performing a thanksgiving bread ritual and the round and flat rolls like cakes are burnt on fire as it has been explained to the researcher by one of the informants at Motouleng sacred site. A maize meal is also burnt together with the baked rolls as it is a well known fact that maize meal as in (papa) or porridge is a staple food to Basotho people; hence their ancestors.

4.2.2.3 A thanksgiving bead ritual for the departed – Teboho/kopo ya lebitso

A person who has been named after a deceased person thanks the name (teboho ya lebitso) of the departed. *It is bead ritual based on the fact that the departed person 'original bearer of the*

name' must have been someone whose ancestral calling (ho thwasa) had involved beads as a major form or component of his/her training and healing processes hence we see some of the traditional healers wearing their hair long or short, with beads of different colours such as white, red, blue, navy etc; with beaded bracelets around the neck, wrists or ankles and the attire all beaded. These are mostly traditional healers who during their calling; ancestors would in a dream or in a vision reveal to them lots and lots of beads around them or in the water... "(Ho a tsebahala hore motho eo o fuwa sefaha ke badimo; ba batla hore e be motho wa sefaha sa badimo; bongaka ba bokoma/sangoma)"... It is a sign that ancestors want that particular person to become a sangoma so that they can use him/her to heal people. "(Mokete ona o etswa ke motho ya reheletsweng ka motho ya seng a hlokahetse mme motho eo e ne e le ngaka ya Sesotho ya sefaha. Ka mokete ona ho lebohuwa lebitso leo motho a reheletsweng ka lona la motho wa sefaha ya seng a le siyo lefatsheng...ka taelo ya eo; eo e seng e le badimo e seng ka ho rata ha hae feela tjena. Ha e ba ya reheletsweng a ntse a le tlasa tlhokomelo ya batswadi, ho a lokela hore e be batswadi ke bona ba lebohang lebitso leo la enwa ya reheletsweng)"...If the one named after the deceased fully fledged traditional healer is still a minor, it becomes the responsibility of the parents to respect the wish of the ancestors by performing this ritual as instructed." (States a traditional healer)

The ritual takes different forms depending on whether one follows the church way or the traditional Basotho style as dreams or visions leading to this kind of dreams will indicate. It might also be because at times the one who is experiencing these dreams and visions; is a member of a certain church especially (Baapostola) the Apostolic Church. Sometimes one might not even be aware of the fact that he/she is named after a person who was a songoma...or even if one does know about the name; he/she is unaware that something needs to be done to appease that particular ancestor. During the performance of this form of thanksgiving ritual, music is sung, accompanied by the beating of drums, regardless of whether the ritual practice is characterized by "Apostolic" vigorous dancing or the traditional route, it has to be done. Family members are happy as they believe that the deceased former bearer of the name has in a way been replaced. The music is a bridging tool between the living and the ancestors (especially the

one particular ancestor/the former bearer of the name). Special attire suitable for the occasion is worn.

It is at a thanksgiving bead ritual of this nature that a goat is slaughtered. In Motouleng, the goat is presented to the ancestors at a special spot known to local user communities as the graveyard (*mabitleng a badimo*) and at (*sekgutlwana sa badimo*) a special sacred spot for ancestors and at the courtyard (*Kgotla*). At all these three special sacred spots, the ancestors are informed that the goat is theirs and that the chief reason for being there is to thank them for the bead gift (the person who is born to bear the name of the deceased traditional healer in the family is a gift to the family). The people taking part in this ritual must have communicated with the departed at their graves first. Then the goat is slaughtered at a part secluded for offerings. Essential parts needed from the goat are the blood, gallbladder, skin, horns, suet, chyme and fresh bones. Then the traditional healer performing the ritual uses the mixture of blood and the bile for bathing the particular person who is named after the departed. The idea of bile is to cleanse and to overcome and subdue whatever demons are there. The food prepared specially for this occasion can be eaten anytime during the night and day. This applies to the time when the feast can be held as well; unlike other ritual ceremonies done nocturnally at the sacred sites.

4.2.2.4 A thanksgiving ritual for a baby - Teboho ya lesea/ngwana

Once a barren woman has been blessed with a child by the ancestors after her prayers, she must perform a thanksgiving ritual for her baby at the sacred site she visited when asking for a baby; the sacred spot named 'the place of children or fertility' (Baneng) in Motouleng or Maseeng at Badimong sacred site. This ritual is also to introduce the child to the ancestors. This becomes a yearly activity and ancestors determine the time of the year when it should be held. Once active communication with the ancestors has been done and they have been shown the animal for the ritual, some tobacco and snuff are sprinkled on the ground at a sacred spot for 'fertility or children' for ancestors at this particular spot who have been willing to give away this particular child 'boy/girl' to this particular mother or parents. Depending on the material wealth of the parents or the command given, slaughtering a cow or sheep will appease the ancestors. Besides

porridge, traditional beer and a variety of food delicious to children will be brought to the sacred sites. Some is left for the ancestors at that place secluded for fertility prayers when all is said and done about the baby. Even at ‘Maseeng’ spot in Badimong they also come back to thank the ancestors with whatever they have; to show how grateful they are to the ancestors.

The researcher spoke to a group of ladies who were on their way to Motouleng to perform a thanksgiving ritual for the daughter whom the mother explained was a blessing from the ancestors. The lady who refused to be photographed told the researcher that she was a nursing sister at one of the local hospitals in QwaQwa.

“(Ke qetile dilemo tse robedi ke le lenyalong ke sa fumane bana. Yaba ke qalella ho ba le ditoro tse makatsang, tseo ke neng ke sa di utlwisise. Qetellong ka di bolella molekane wa ka le batswadi ba hae esita le ba ka. Ditorong tsena ke ne dula ka hare ho dithaba le bonkgono bao ke sa ba tsebeng ha e se feela mme wa mme wa ka ya seng a hlokahetse. Taba e neng e nkgathatsa ke hore ke ne ke ipona ke sekile lesea leo ho bonahalang e ka ke la ka. Ke be ke thabile haholo, empa e re ha ke phaphama ke fumane hore ke ne ke lora. Ke ne ke dula ke hlorile haholo ka lebaka la toro ena e neng e pheella ho nkgathatsa bosiu.)” (Ho bolela mooki)....“I used to have dreams in which I would see myself at a mountainous place with very old men and women; many of whom I could not recognize except for my grandmother who is late. I would be sitting with them in my dream carrying a baby ... so much was happening in those dreams which I could not understand or even remember well the next day besides that I was carrying a baby and I was very happy. My husband, his mother and my mother had a meeting after I repeatedly told them about my dreams. They advised me to visit my aunt who is a traditional healer to explain to her my dreams. She threw the bones and interpreted my dreams; I was supposed to come to the sacred sites to perform a certain ritual for ancestors to cure me of my barrenness so that I could have my baby. It took me years to listen to my aunt. My husband, his mother and my mother did not have a problem with what was said; I did, because of my nursing profession and my status in the community.” (Explains the nursing sister)

When she later decided to visit the sacred site and performed a fertility ritual at (*Baneng*) special spot for the children in Motouleng; she was cured in no time and fell pregnant with her first baby after she had been married for eight years. Since her daughter was born, up to this day she still

comes to Motouleng every year with her daughter (twelve years old) and other member of the family especially her (traditional healer) aunt to appease the ancestors by performing a thanksgiving ritual.

4.2.2.5 A harvest thanksgiving ritual - Mokete wa Lewa

A harvest thanksgiving ritual is held every year in August after all the winter crops have been reaped successfully from the fields and the harvest is so good that granaries are full. The ancestors are thanked for this. It is the head of the family who is instructed to perform the ritual for the good harvest; together with the chosen traditional healer and other members of the family or community, who wish to (after they have been informed of the ancestors' instruction) be part of this ritual activity. They will accompany the head of the family and visit the sacred site at Motouleng or Badimong depending on the instruction (*taelo*) of the ancestors. This is in every angle, a communal activity as it does not matter if it is the head of the family or sometimes the chief who is instructed to perform this ritual; there are always members of the community accompanying that particular family member; not to mention the chief. After being instructed by his ancestors to perform the ritual as a sign of appreciation to them for providing for him (head of family or chief) and the community with 'good harvest,' otherwise hunger and poverty might strike this particular family or community.

The head of the family needs to approach a traditional healer of the family or the one chosen by ancestors for this particular purpose to guide him. “(*Ngaka ya lelapa ke yona e tsamisang tsohle kapa eo badimo ba e kgethileng ka taelo. Morena le yena a ka bitsa di/ngaka ya hae ya lelapa kapa ya motse e be yona e thusang morena le ho tsamaisa mokete ona. Hangata e be e le ha morena ka boyena a ile a etelwa dotorong ke baholo ba hae hore o lokela ho ya ba leboha ha e le moo yena le setjhaba ba putsitswe ke baholoholo ka tjhai...kgora.*)”... “As for the chief, he also usually performs this kind of ritual with the help of a senior traditional healer in the village (usually, long chosen by ancestors to help the chief with his day to day chieftaincy responsibilities and problems) in the community.” In this instance, the villagers or community, especially prominent farmers in the community accompany both the chief and the senior traditional healer/s together with other traditional healers within the community (depending on

ancestors' approval). *“(Morena o epa pitso moo a hlaloesetsang setjhaba ditaba tsena tsa badimo, ka hoo moikutlwapelo o a dumelleha ho ba teng moketeng wa mofuta ona... le bao ba sa kotulang letho ba ikutlwa ba lokela ho ba le seabo moketeng ona ka tshepo ya hore badimo ba tla ba hopola le bona ka nako e tlang mme ba tla fumana tjhai.)”*... It is further explained that even those members of the community whose harvest is not good believe that by being part of this ritual, the ancestors will in future not leave them behind when they bless others with good harvest; they therefore happily and willingly become part of this ritual activity. As for those who have already been blessed abundantly, with this ritual they thank the ancestors and they ask them not to stop with their blessings.



MOTOULENG: Kgotla – A special spot known as the Courtyard - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Some people normally dovetail this occasion with other achievements in their lives as well. All the kinds of food harvested, including maize, sorghum, wheat and beans, plus porridge, traditional beer and roasted and ground maize are served. A cow or sheep can be slaughtered for this ritual *at (Kgotla) in Motouleng*. *“Jwalo ka ha morena e le yena e moholo setjhabeng sa Basotho le badimo ba baholo ho e ntse e le ba moreneneng, ka hoo setjhaba se leboha tjhai ho marena/badimo ba bona ba baholo ka ho ba fa dijo esita le badimo ba bona ho ya ka malapa le diboko.)”*... *“The court (Kgotla) at Motouleng is therefore the appropriate spot for the chief to slaughter and perform this kind of ritual as (Kgotla) in everyday Basotho life is a special place where the chief, together with elders of the village gather to discuss matters concerning the*

villagers and sometimes the chieftainship itself. At Badimong, this kind of ritual is usually performed at Moshoeshoe's sacred spot as the belief is that this is the perfect sacred spot where the chief/royal ancestors of Basotho are residing at Badimong. If it is several people who perform the ritual activity, more cattle and sheep can be slaughtered. Conventionally, this is a nocturnal practice characterized by Basotho traditional music and dance or church music (for those church denominations that believe in the existence of ancestors) and also, the traditional songs of Basotho traditional healers and doctors.

4.2.3 Invocation ritual - Mokete wa ho kopa Tumello

One of the most important and core aspects of Basotho tradition and culture is respect; to the living as well as to those that have passed away (ancestors). It is not surprising therefore, that this kind of respect is displayed by local user communities visiting the sacred sites at Motouleng and Badimong. They always feel the need to perform a ritual to ask ancestors for permission; a sign of respect, to enter these two sacred sites and to announce their presence to ancestors. They respect their ancestors who are believed to be dwellers and owners of these sacred sites. As it stands, one most important practice or part of invocation ritual activities at both sacred sites of this study is that local user communities always introduce themselves to the ancestors at the entrance. This is also a symbol of humility, as they are in a way asking for permission to enter the sacred sites; a dwelling place for ancestors.

Asking for permission to enter a home, yard or premises other than of one's own (*Ho kokota*) is one of the most ancient or longstanding behaviour and practice among Basotho people and human societies at large. This practice symbolizes the level of 'respect' towards other people, their property and premises. It is due to this practice that there is no way in which one can simply enter another person's house/ premises without announcing oneself at the gate or entrance and ask for permission, before one could enter. The same behaviour is practiced at the sacred sites under study where at each of them there is a special spot at the entrance meant for local user communities and pilgrims to announce their presence to the ancestors and to call upon them for guidance throughout their visit at the sacred sites. In practising this ritual people need to be straight forward and open in telling the ancestors their reasons why they as a group have come to

the sacred sites; there is no beating behind the bush because their belief is that ancestors already know why; they have known long before one could come that this day would come.



MOTOULENG: The sacred spot at the entrance of the cave –
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

Local user communities introduce themselves to the ancestors at this special spot before entering the sacred cave at Motouleng. Ritual materials involved in this activity are gifts in the form of monitory, sweets, snuff, tobacco or anything that symbolizes humility is put and left on the spot for ancestors, a candle or candles depending on the number of individuals performing the ritual need to be lit as a symbol that ‘participants are asking the ancestors to enlighten their way/ journey throughout and chase darkness/problems away as they enter the sacred sites. In performing this ritual individuals often talk to their ancestors using their different clan names. Usually, there is no animal slaughtered.

At Motouleng sacred site the ritual has to be performed at the first, of the two rivers crossed before actually getting to the sacred cave by a candle light and a prayer as well as throwing in the river some coins (*Ho kopa kganya*) as invocation to the ancestors to lead them safely as they are approaching their dwelling place. Another ritual of this kind is performed at the second river, running past the entrance to this sacred site just before entering the cave. This is where, before local user communities could cross the sacred river, they first ask for permission to cross into the other side of the river leading to the actual entrance of the sacred site/cave. According to one of

the informants (a traditional healer), failure to perform a ritual at the river may result in a catastrophe, due to the anger of the ancestors the waters in the river might rise up to its most high levels which will in most cases make crossing the river impossible. At times this might happen when the person/s is right at the middle of the river resulting in a total disaster. The ritual is performed by lighting a candle; for even when it is a group of people coming to the sacred site with the same goal/s, one candle will represent them all... Sometimes even some coins are thrown into the river, snuff and other kinds of tobacco can also be sprinkled on the ground for ancestors.

“Metsi ana a ka kokomoha hore noka eno e tlale, e phophome hore ka nako e nngwe e be koduwa feela e etsahalang moo ka lebaka feela la ho se kope tumello ho badimo ya ho kena ka metsing ao hobane ke sebaka sa bona moo...a ke re jwale ho teng sedimo se dulang ka metsing le seo e leng hore ha se ka metsing. Re lokela ho bontsha hlonpho ho sedimo kaofela se teng mona mahaheng a badimo. Le tjhelete e a lahlelwa ka metsing ka moo ho kgantshetsa badimo, esita le kwae e ka tshelwa fatshe pele o tshela noka/hona ka metsing”... “After lighting the candle and introducing themselves in a manner that shows respect to the ancestors who dwell in this sacred river and they have stated their reasons for coming to the sacred site, it is then that they can safely cross the river; only to introduce themselves again at the entrance of the cave, now to the ancestors inside the sacred cave at Motouleng.” (Confirms a traditional healer)



BADIMONG: Permission ritual just outside the entrance – the candles and grains of maize and a prayer -
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

The same (*Ho kokota*) ritual is performed at Badimong where local user communities have to introduce themselves at the entrance of the sacred site at Badimong. *“(Ha ho kenwe feela mona... Ke mang ya ka kenang feela ha hao a sa kokota...o ka ikutlwa jwang wena?)* “You don’t just

enter, how would you feel if a stranger or a person just enters your home without first knocking at the door?” (A rhetorical question by one of the informants)



BADIMONG: Another sacred spot for introducing yourselves just after entering the sacred site -
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

Even at a special spot for collecting some (*sewasho sa Nkokomohi*) the sacred/healing soil at Nkokomohi in Badimong there has to be a ritual performed (*ho kopa tumello*) for ancestors to give permission to individuals visiting the place to dig up the sacred soil for different purposes which they have to report to the ancestors as they light candles and put some snuff and tobacco on the ground; sometimes even some food; whatever they have and feel that it will appease the ancestors, they just put it down on the special spot and ask to be welcomed at this sacred place. Anyone they choose to represent them as their ritual leader; a priest if it is a congregation or a senior traditional for a group of traditional healers/trainees. This kind of ritual can be displayed through different performances or sub-categories such as the following:

4.2.3.1 A ritual to ask the ancestors to Acknowledge a person as one of their own children/clan – Mokete wa ho ipeha

Performance of this ritual is another form of calling upon or invoking ancestors by local user communities at Badimong and Motouleng sacred sites. According to one of the informants,

people perform this ritual after they have had a vision in which their ancestors have shown dissatisfaction in the manner in which that particular person is behaving or disregarding their existence. They would ask or sometimes just tell him/her, saying “*You are doing everything as you please; without ever informing or involving us in your life; whose child are you?*” They would then instruct an individual to prepare them a meal at a certain place, usually a sacred place during which one has to publicly acknowledge his/her ancestors and to invite into his life and to promise them never to neglect them again.

There is no particular time for this kind of ritual to be performed; the main factor is for the ancestral instruction to be taken seriously and followed properly. The slaughtering of a goat is also important because of its association with the ancestors through its cry as it creates a link between the ancestors and the person who makes an offering to the ancestors. It is important for the blood to spill to the ground as it sends a message to those “*buried into the ground*” as the Sesotho phrase refers: “*ke ba fatshe.*” Before the slaughtering can take place one must crawl into their cottage; one very small and dark hole like sacred spot within the sacred cave at Motouleng to consult with the ancestors, lights a candle as he/she introduces oneself and let them know of the ritual being performed. The goat is also dragged along to the entrance of this special spot to be shown to them and to ask them to accept it as a symbol of one’s apology for ignoring them. The animal is thereafter slaughtered at a special spot preserved only for slaughtering to the ancestors known as ‘the court’ or (*kgotla*.) Some of its blood is collected before it reaches the ground and is mixed with the goat’s bile or gallbladder and contents removed from the green tripe of a slaughtered animal – mostly the last meal of that animal (*moswang*). The mixture is poured all over the person’s body and smeared from head to toe. Meanwhile all the other participants are singing and chanting to the ancestors and beating the drums. Thereafter one is accompanied to the river, gets into the water and takes a bath.

4.2.3.2 Ritual for Permission to dig up healing clay - Tumello ya ho tjheka sewasho

Sewasho is a healing soil collected from the sacred sites. In order for this soil to be effective in healing different ailments it is important that local user communities should perform an invoking

ritual to ask the ancestors for permission to collect the soil and to summon their powers to enable the soil to function as a medicine to those who use it. In Motouleng, for instance, this ritual takes place on a special ancestral place within this sacred site called ‘a place of sacred soil/clay’ (*Diwashong*) where the candle light is essential as sign of respect and recognition that their approval is important for the soil to be of use in chasing away evil factors of darkness or sickness and bring upon (*kganya*) light and well being in people’s life.

4.2.3.3 A ritual for permission to dig up fire clay/soil - Tumello ya ho tjheka sewasho sa mollo

The similar kind of ritual is performed at Badimong, where it is said, there used to be hot or fire soil/clay collected from one special and sacred spot known up to this day as ‘Nkokomohi,’ translated as (a place of swelling/raising clay and soil). The red hot burning soil was used to start ceremonial fire by local user communities and inhabitants at this sacred site, even dwellers at nearby villages. It was vital for them to always ask for permission before they could collect the soil; failure to do so resulted in destroying the power of the soil to produce fire. “(*Ha o sa kopa o tla fihla moo o yang mobu oo o se o hloka mollo/mashala/motjheso wa letho... ka nako e nngwe ha badimo ba halefile hantle o fihla le wona ka bowana mobu/sewasho seo se le siyo lesenkeng leo la hao, o sa tsebe hore na jwale ho etsahetse eng.*” They could not just collect the soil with bare hands or dared to go to the place barefooted as they would definitely not be able to endure the heat as they tried to first perform the ritual, then collect or carry the fire soil. The fire made by means of using this soil was believed to be sacred and medicinal so much so that people believed they could get healed just by sitting next to it or eat food that has been prepared on it. According to the informants who grew up there; the heat or smoke produced by this kind of fire was indeed medicinal and failure to ask for permission before digging up the soil would cause the soil to be dysfunctional or the fire to just die out.

4.2.3.4 A ritual for a safe journey home - from the sacred sites - Tumello ya ho tsamaya/ho tswa mahaheng a badimo

It is important to report to the ancestors when visitors or local user communities are leaving the sacred sites; the same way they reported when they entered the sacred sites. To thank them for

accepting, guiding, and helping them during their stay or journey at the sacred sites. Another candle light is needed and it is left burning at the entrance of the sacred site, together with some other gifts such as money, sweets and anything that signifies respect, humility and gratitude.

4.2.4 Protection/cleansing/purification ritual - Ho leleka meleko/Ho tlosa senyama

Local user communities of the ancestral or sacred sites under study perform purification ritual in order to cleanse a person of negative forces or powers surrounding them. They come to perform this ceremony at the sites following the instruction from their ancestors. During this kind of performance different ritual elements can be used; different practices can be followed depending on the instruction. Hence, the ritual activities of this nature are named according to elements used. The individuals performing this ceremony at the sacred site do not necessarily need to slaughter an animal due to the fact that there are so many sacred elements that they can use other than the 'blood of a slaughtered animal' to cleanse or wash away the evil energies or factors in their life. These elements include sacred soil (*sewasho*), the sacred herbs and the sacred water from anointed springs within the sacred sites.

4.2.4.1 Cleansing through healing clay/soil - Ho tlosa senyama ka sewasho

It has been mentioned earlier that '*sewasho*' is a healing, sacred soil and is collected only from a special spot within both the sacred sites at Motouleng and Badimong. This soil is used for healing purposes of different ailments including cleansing one from evil contacts, chasing away and protection one from evil forces believed to be perpetuating and hindering ones' progress in life, progress in healing, progress in maintaining good relationships in life, at workplace or wherever. The ceremonies can be of two different purposes depending on the colour of the healing soil. These are 'a black healing sacred soil' and 'a white healing sacred soil.'

4.2.4.1.1 Black healing sacred soil or clay - Sewasho se setsho

It is the kind of soil which functions only for chasing away evil factors that prevent a person from achieving in life or evil forces that cause one to become constantly ill. These evil forces

are believed to be so strong that they can sometimes lead to a person's death. The soil is used as soap and is smeared on the person's body either by him/herself or the traditional healer who in this instance is the ritual leader; depending on ancestral instruction (*taelo*). Alternatively, a mixture of this soil and water is poured on the person who is sick or who has problems of different nature. During this process, certain words are being uttered to chase away the evil spirits or forces such as: *"With these sacred healing soil/clay it is my plea to you my ancestors; to chase away all the bad omens in my life, cleanse and heal me of all my sicknesses."*

4.2.4.1.2 White sacred clay or soil used for healing up - Sewasho se sesweu

This is the kind of soil used by local user communities who ask for blessings from their ancestors by performing ritual activities meant especially for this purpose. The soil is smeared all over the body while certain words are repeatedly being said to acknowledge ancestral powers to provide fortune and good luck to the individual who is performing the ritual. After smearing the white sacred soil/clay, water from the sacred spring inside Motouleng is poured all over the person's body or one can get into the river and bath, washing away all the soil. The belief is that all the bad luck flows along as the water runs down the river leaving the person all white and clean, hence ready to welcome all the good fortune and wealth his/her life. This is therefore the start of a successful life.

It is also important to mention that a considerable number of local user communities who believe that performance of this kind of cleansing ritual could be helpful are not only traditional Basotho; but also members of different church denominations such as the 'Shembe's and Apostolic Church' congregations. Their priests are always at the forefront, leading the ritual activities. Candles are lit and prayers said, asking God through ancestors to bring light into the lives of those members for whom the ritual is being performed. For them, visions to come to the sacred sites to perform such ritual can be experienced in two different ways as they can be instructed to use the sacred white soil or that their priest must put them in the sacred river by way of baptism. Church uniform or attire is also important for unlike other local user communities who are not members of the church they cannot be put into the sacred river by their priest

without their church attire on. The attire is the key to identifying that particular individual before the ancestors and God.

4.2.5 Ancestral summon ritual - Ho phahla

When traditional healer trainees complete a series of courses at Motouleng or Badimong, they graduate and return back home to start healing people of different ailments. After a period of time it becomes necessary for a traditional healer to go back to the sacred sites where the training took place to summon the ancestors and to take them home with him/her. A ritual is performed at the sacred spot ‘the grave yard’ (*mabitleng*) where it is believed that their spirit is mostly prevailing, then at another special spot ‘the ancestors’ cottage’ (*ka ho bo nkgono*) to ask them to come home where a mud hut is built within the family yard especially for them to dwell in there as protectors of the family and mentors to the particular traditional healer. “*Dihwana tseo ngaka e ileng le tsona moo ke tsona tse tla nka medumo ya mantswe le tsohle tsa badimo ba hae, e be ha ngaka e fihla hae e di beha ka ntlong e ikgethang e ahetsweng badimo ka taelo ya bona. Badimo ba bolella motho hore le ntlo ba batla a ba ahele e jwang, ha o ahe feela ka moo o ratang*”.... “Ancestors even instruct the traditional healer as to what kind of hut/house they want him/her to build for them...one does not just build...after all it is their house; not the traditional healer’s. ”



A roundable mud hut built especially for ancestors to dwell in – Only this traditional healer and her consultants must enter - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

Two chickens has to be slaughtered, four candles of different colours lit, each representing a different idea: a green candle is for welcoming them home, a yellow candle represents the stars as ancestors are like shining stars looking down upon the living-mostly to brighten the traditional healers' path in healing people and following ancestors' instruction, red candle to protect and chase away evil forces and spirits and a blue candle signalling the presence and supernatural powers of the ancestors. Snuff and tobacco are also important for enabling the connection or dialogue between ancestors and the traditional healer. Everything that is used during consulting and healing sessions are kept in the mud hut built for ancestors, consultations also take place in there. In most cases a traditional healer even sleeps in this hut so as to allow ancestors to guide and to help him/her at all time, day and night.

4.2.6 Prayer ritual - Mokete wa ho rapela

People of different cultures have religious gatherings characterized by prayers and songs of praise to One and the same God, the Creator, who is addressed and referred to differently through different cultures. Local user communities at Motouleng and Badimong come to these sacred sites for prayer ritual activities during which they ask ancestors to help them in praying to God.



MOTOULENG: The Altar where local user communities light the candles and pray -
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

Basotho people form a large group because for them God is so Great and Mighty that, traditionally, it would be disrespectful of them to speak directly to God. Instead, they must speak to the ancestors and ask them to take their messages to God or even pray for them to God as they are believed to be in a position where they are now closer to Him. They are regarded as mediators and as messengers between God and human beings.



BADIMONG: A prayer ritual at Monica's -
(Picture by Mensele, M S)

Therefore, local user communities pray to God through ancestors at a sacred spot known as 'the altar' in Motouleng as well as other numerous sacred spots at Badimong, for instance at 'the temple'. Also at Monica's place (the most senior traditional healer at Badimong who was a nun at one Roman Catholic Church – before she was called to serve the ancestors), where prayer ritual performances and activities are a combination of both Roman Catholic Mass characterized by the reading of a bible; together with ritual activities denoting African traditional healing processes, such as the candle praying God through ancestors. It is important to note that candle light is also a very important prayer ritual material at the Roman Catholic Church.



BADIMONG: A church congregation has come for prayer ritual from Klerksdorp in Gauteng - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

The Apostolic Faith Church members have come to Maseeng to perform a prayer ritual for their church. According to their priest and leader, their church has got nothing against ancestors, infact they strongly believe in ancestors. *“We pray God through the ancestors.”* (Says the priest)

A goat was slaughtered for this ritual for members of the church and everybody else present (ritual audience) to share their meal with the ancestors as the priest further explains: “Re rapela Modimo ka badimo ba rona.”



BADIMONG: Church members and other people from nearby special spots in Badimong at the prayer ritual are eating - (Picture by Mensele, M S)

“Dijo tsena ke tsa badimo ka hoo ha ho dijo tse yang hae kapa tseo re di nkang ho ya malapeng... di sala mona sebakeng sa badimo leha di ka tsa ba ngata jwang kapa jwang....Ketso eo e ka halefisa badimo hampe; ba ka re re ba fa dijo ha re qeta re boela re ba amoha tsona...”
“We don’t take any food back home; it must be eaten up at this special sacred spot and get finished. Anything that is left will remain with the dwellers of this sacred spot...” (Explains the priest)

4.3 Conclusion

This Chapter has outlined major as well as sub-categories of ritual activities that are taking place at both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites. Interpretation of these categories is dealt with in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four of this study, the researcher provided a typology of ritual with regard to different names (English and Sesotho) given to major as well as sub - categories of rituals performed at both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites. In the light of all these it has been revealed that ritual actions are different from habitual ones as ritual actions have the effect of connecting a person with something or someone (gods, ancestors, society or God) beyond the physical and concrete world of the individual” (Rapport, 1999: 24).

Rituals performed at these two sacred sites are to a certain degree linked to the purpose of the journey or pilgrimage to the sites. Of utmost importance, is the ancestors’ instruction or commissioning for the journey which impels on the kinds of ritual activities to be performed at the sacred site. Some ritual activities have preferences, specifically because the sites are associated with certain powers; for example, fertility spot at Motouleng/Maseeng spot at Badimong, the Court (Kgotla) at Motouleng or the sacred lake at the Temple in Badimong sacred site. That is, specific ancestors’ association with a specific spot in the sacred sites prescribes the kind of ritual performances at that specific spot.

In this chapter, data collected in a survey research that has been conducted is analysed and interpreted in terms of the specific reppetoires connected with rituals performed at both Motouleng and Badimong. Similarities and differences between rituals performed at both sacred sites will also be discussed even though the idea is not central to this study. Language use will be interpreted as well as its function and significance in different ritual performances.

5.2 Analysis and Interpretation of ritual activities performed at Motouleng and Badimong Sacred Sites

It is a significant observation that all the kinds of ritual performances and activities at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites are all of them in one way or the other recognize and respect the ancestors, if not directly instructed by the ancestors. The sites themselves are symbolic and to a degree an embodiment of the presence of the ancestors. Even those groups with Christian held beliefs are also honouring the ancestors, for instance the Apostolic Church, The Shembes and others who come to the sacred sites to appease the ancestors. It has also become clear that although the performances of these rituals testify to the sacredness of the site, or make it sacred, the belief amongst the people is that the sites themselves are residing places of the ancestors. For that reason people would make great sacrifices to come to the caves for ritual performances.

The following types of rituals activities taking place at the sacred sites under study reflect general acceptance or degrees of beliefs in the powers of and the role played by the ancestors among the local user communities within and around the two sacred sites. It is important to mention also that in analysing and interpreting different categories of ritual performance; the researcher speaks from both personal and scholarly perspective. Again, the classification of rituals maintains English together with Sesotho names ‘as they are referred to by local user communities’ of the sacred sites. Retaining Sesotho names is an act of cultural and personal affirmation as well as political affirmation to the local user communities in the sense that Sesotho names given to these rituals are still very important to them as their meaning is rich and varied hence the different names given to different ritual ceremonies connect them to the spirit world of the ancestors. In most African cultures, names are earned; thus in celebrating and recognizing the strengths, values or significance of various rituals activities that forms part of the naming process. According to majority of local user communities of the sacred sites, ‘ritual is their life.’ The local user communities of both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites agree that “*(Mekete ya badimo ke tumelo ya rona...ke seo re leng sona, re ke ke ra e balehela...re ikutlwa re thabibile, re bolokehile ha re e na le dikamano tse ntle ba badimo ba rona).*” Meaning “*we cannot run away from who we are as local user communities of these sacred sites... We always feel safe and joyous knowing that our relationship with our ancestors is secured.*” In addition, Katz *et al* (1997: 166) emphasizes that: “*Throughout most of African communities, ritual is the fundamental vision of who we really are as a community. Therefore, ritual ceremonies and*

activities; be them healing, thanksgiving, invocation, cleansing or protection, ancestral summon or prayer ritual, they make our hearts happy.”

The above statement strengthens numerous revelations made in this research of the significance and value of ritual activities performed by local user communities at the two sacred sites under study. Ritual activities are therefore analysed and interpreted in order of their presentation in Chapter Four. Most importantly, it must be indicated that this is the order in accordance with the most common ritual activities performed at these sacred sites given the significant role they play in enhancing the lives of individuals and groups of local user communities of these sacred sites.

5.2.1 Healing ritual- Mokete wa ho fola

The researcher discovered that healing ritual comprises a set of actions that are mainly performed for their valuable and powerful healing aspect; hence a source of physical, psychological, physical and emotional cure for majority of the local user communities of the two sacred sites under study. *“Healing ritual and activities are a major source of strength to individuals and groups of people who come to the sacred sites as it is through the performance of this ritual that many become cured of their different ailments.”* (A senior traditional healer and ritual leader at Maseeng special spot in Badimong sacred site explained as she was stressing the point about how important healing ritual activities are to the people)

Local user communities perform healing ritual activities mainly at the instruction of their ancestors to perform such ritual activities in order for them to get cured of the ailments. For instance, individuals (regardless of age, gender or race) come to Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites to be trained to become fully-fledged traditional healers by performing (*mokete wa lefehlo*) after discovering that they have fallen ill because of their negligence or disobedience to the ancestral call to become their agent. After speaking to quite a number of such individuals, both at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites, most of them testified that ancestors play a crucial and ongoing role in their lives irrespective of whether they are in rural or urban areas, educated or not educated... a true reflection of the one Sesotho proverb that (*ngwana ya tjheleng o tshaba mollo*) meaning ‘a burnt child tresses the fire.’ They admit that they have truly been burnt by not

listening to the instruction from their ancestors and for that reason some of them have almost paid with their own lives. In a sense, their illness was a sign of possession by ancestors' spirit. Thus, according to Buxton, a true reflection of the power of ancestors' calling and spirit as it is maintained that: *"Possession (the calling) is important because the spirit (ancestors) that controls the chosen individual communicates messages to the community through that individual. This calling to the healing profession can also be a critical moment as it creates self-understanding and personhood. It offers opportunities to resolve contradictions within the self and may be an incentive for people to pay attention to public morality."* Buxton (1973: 297)

The above words were proven to be true by this study through the words of the informants *"(Ke hlonepha badimo mme ke a tseba hore ba teng ba a phela. Ke bone ka mahlo)"* meaning *"I respect my ancestors and take them seriously now because I know now that they do exist...I have experienced and seen what they can do to a living person with my own eyes)"* (Reiterates a traditional healer trainee at Motouleng sacred site)

Healing ritual activities are not static as there is no fixed time, place or structure as to how a healing ritual must be performed. Therefore, the when, where and how healing ritual activities are performed will only vary for different individuals and groups of people according to their different ailments and different instructions from their ancestors. For instance, there are different special spots within both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites for local user communities with different kinds of ailments to perform the necessary form of healing ritual according to specific (*taelo*) instruction from ancestors.

Given the various forms or sub-categories of healing ritual performances (See Chapter Four); they serve to prove the significant role played by healing ritual activities among the local user communities of the two sacred sites under study. Boon (2007: 12) thus indicates a "more holistic" role played by healing ritual performances among communities who believe in existence of ancestors and their supernatural powers: *"Healing ritual activities in their forms can be used to cure numerous physical, mental, emotional and psychological ailments."* Most of the informants whom the researcher has interviewed at Motouleng and Badimong have become testimony to the above statement made by Boon (2007: 12). Local user communities of the two

sacred sites under study believe that good use of traditional herbs prescribed to the ritual leader or ‘sangoma’ together with following properly the instruction (*taelo*) from the ancestors, in most cases proves not only to be medicinally good but also economically good; given that traditional medicine does not cost even half as much as does the Western medicine. Testimony to this is when an individual (See Chapter Four) came to consultant from Quthing in Lesotho; he said so himself that the traditional medicines he is getting from the sacred sites come at a cheaper price whilst proving to be the most useful, given his kind of illness.

One most fulfilling moment with regard to the significance and the importance or usefulness of healing ritual activities performed at the sacred sites was when the researcher spoke to one of the local user communities and discovered that she was a nursing sister from Monontsha Village in QwaQwa. Their conversation revealed that healing ritual activities and performances are not just physically, medicinally and economically, emotionally and psychologically significant to the so called ‘uneducated or primitive people;’ as they have also proven to be useful even to those individuals who are perceived as very well known and respected members of the community in terms of their education, money and their social status. The lady who solely refused to be photographed (See 4.2.2.4) told the researcher that she was a nursing sister at one of the local hospital in QwaQwa. Apparently, this lady, even though she is happy and very grateful to the ancestors; the fear is still there that she will be mocked or verbally abused at work by her colleagues or seniors who have always had a problem with her resorting to traditional healing and medicine to help cure her infertility. *“I truly believe that ancestors have listened and blessed me psychologically and emotionally with this baby without even enduring any financial hustle.”* Healing rituals activities and performances have not only proved economically viable but also emotionally and psychologically therapeutic as this woman’s marriage was also saved in the process because she even told the researcher that before she had her daughter, her marriage was at the edge of falling apart as her husband was beginning to talk to her about marrying a second wife because she could not bear him even a single child.

Language use is also very important in performing healing ritual activities as it is through language that various messages are conveyed to the ancestors. For instance, during the performance of a healing ritual the words (*ho kgantshetsa badimo*) meaning to give to ancestors

anything as a token/gift before one can start asking for something from them. This (*ho kgantsha*) is to bring light, hence, with the words individuals indicate that they humble themselves as they present their requests before ancestors. At the same time they are requesting them to bring light unto them which is 'life, health and cure' because healing ritual activities are performed for people who are sick in order to ask for their life to return back to normal or their healthy life to be restored. Language carries messages of humility by those who are sick or asking on behalf of the sick for ancestors to cast a healing spell upon them. In another example, during the performance of a healing ritual known as (*Mokete wa ho tshwarwa ka matsoho, e leng moo ho kopelwang motho ya kulang ho badimo hore a fole*); the sick person him/herself is quoted as saying (*Ke ikopela ho fola*), he/she is pleading with the ancestors "I am asking for this sickness to be taken away from me."

The traditional healer or ritual leader and the rest of the participants are also quoted as saying the words (*Re o kopela ho fola*) as they are asking on his/her behalf meaning "we wish you good health." In this way, the participants and the sick person are admitting to the ancestors that they are their last hope because usually rituals are performed for sick people when everything else (Western and traditional medicine) has failed. The language or the words used during healing ritual activities are very carefully chosen with regard to their meaning or message which they are intended to communicate between local user communities of the sacred sites and their ancestors who are believed to dwell in these very sacred sites where healing ritual activities are performed in order to appease them. It for this reason that even when the local user communities of Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites are filled with joy because of the blessings from the ancestors, they will come to these sacred sites to perform another ritual activity in order to express their gratitude over what the ancestors have given them. Hence, Mbiti (1991: 139) maintains that according to the interpretation and experience of most local user communities of the sacred sites and Basotho people at large, disease is not just a physical condition; it is also a religious matter and to deal with it, people always revert to religious practices which is often the performance of certain rituals that the ancestors may specify.

5.2.2 Thanksgiving ritual- Mokete wa teboho

The thanksgiving ritual activities that performed at the sacred sites comprise a set of actions by local user communities through which they symbolize and declare their gratitude towards ancestors for their blessings. Most importantly to convey words of gratitude towards ancestors who are believed to be always close by watching and listening to every whisper at every single corner/spot within the sacred sites as one old informant was joyously telling the researcher how significant and important are these thanksgiving ritual activities at the sacred sites; “(*Ha re leboha, badimo ba tla re ekeletsa*).” Meaning...“*it is important to always show appreciation and gratitude towards ancestors for they will bless us even more....*”

There are different forms of thanksgiving ritual activities signaling that blessings from ancestors are experienced differently by different people. Regardless of their different forms, all of these performances contain expressions of joy as the participants make sacrifices and offerings of various kinds to their ancestors, including the slaughtering of animals prescribed by the ancestors. It is important that the animal offered to the ancestors bears the potential to serve the specific purpose of a particular thanksgiving ritual activity. Like most ritual activities mentioned in this study, the instruction comes from the ancestors to perform this kind of ritual as they are believed to be the reason why God provides to local user communities. It is the religious belief of local user communities of the sacred sites that even in the bible (Numbers 28, verse: 1), the Lord instructed Moses to present to Him at the appointed time, the food offerings that are pleasing to him.

The belief is also that these thanksgiving rituals play a role in signifying the appreciation towards the ancestors for the role they have played in approaching God on behalf of individuals and groups who have been blessed either with good harvest or any particular kind of blessing, hence, the harvest thanksgiving ritual performances, a thanksgiving bead ritual for the departed, a thanksgiving ritual for a baby, a thanksgiving bread ritual. The latter also displays similarities with the offering in the bible of the ‘festival of the unleavened bread’ (Numbers, 28: verse 16-19) as it maintains that “*it is during this festival that only bread without yeast was offered as food offering to the Lord*” (See 4.2.2.2). There is also the burnt offering ritual performance for which the religious belief of local user communities is that the smoke (produced from the burnt offering) is a messenger to the ancestors passing on their messages of gratitude and thankfulness.

When and how the ancestors want these rituals determine a set of different meaningful thanksgiving ritual activities performed at the sacred sites.

Most Basotho religious and ancestral beliefs are based on respect for the ancestors who are their only link to God. The thanksgiving ritual performances therefore are a means of utterance of the three most important words for displaying or showing appreciation and gratitude ‘*Ke/Re leboha badimo*’ meaning ‘I/We thank our ancestors.’ It is not surprising therefore, that the one most outstanding generic aspect in thanksgiving ritual performances is the festivity mood of traditional dancing and singing among the participants in all the categories of thanksgiving activities that include Basotho religious thanksgiving songs which are commonly sung with words that convey the participants’ feeling of gratitude such as ‘*Badimo re a leboha... Amen!... Re a leboha... Amen... Alleluja ... Amen!*’ ... Meaning: ‘*Ancestors we thank you ... we thank you!*’ In this religious thanksgiving song, the two words ‘Alleluja’ and ‘Amen’ are indication that local user communities are not only thankful to ancestors but also to God who changed their lives for the better. For in Sesotho as Mbiti (1991:68) maintains “*people feel themselves to be very small in the sight of God. In approaching Him they need the help of someone else just as in social customs it is often the custom to approach someone of a high status through someone else... hence the role of the ancestors.*”

Another important aspect or role played by ‘the burnt offering ritual’ in the lives of local user communities is noticed, based on their belief that its smell is pleasing to the ancestors and to God who is the sole provider of the blessings as Rusmussen (1996:90) puts it “*the role of burnt offerings in the lives of participatory members.*” The ritual leader makes known to the participants this person/s whom ancestors have called upon to perform this kind of ritual; or during harvest ritual fields (*Teboho ya lewa*) which is marked by lots of dance and eating as people enjoy abundant harvest and thank their God, through ancestors for blessing their hard labour in the fields as (Ray, 2000:47) maintains “*God, Creator, head of this place, who changes a bowl of leaves into food... who changes a bowl of millet into leaves... God, Creator, who changes everything.*” The same spirit or routine prevails even when the thanksgiving ritual activities are focusing on one or more individuals such as ‘a thanksgiving ritual for a baby’ the

ritual leader will bring the particular individuals to the front for them to be acknowledged as the focal point of such thanksgiving ritual activities or performances.

According to Moleleki (1993: 80) “*badimo ba ka o putsa ka tse ntle ha o tsamaya tseleng e nepahetseng, o ba thabisa, kapa ba ka o otlala ka tse bohloko tse kang komello le tlala ha o kgeloha tsela*” Thus, “the ancestors guide and bless those who respect them but they severely punish those who disrespect and dishonour them or their instruction.”

As much as the above words by (Moleleki, 1993: 80) are true, this study revealed that there is still room for improvisation even with matters of the ancestors, as leniency on the side of the ancestors can be seen during the performance of ‘a burnt offering ritual (*Teboho ya setjheso*)’ (See 4.2.2.1) when ancestors call upon a very poor person to perform a thanksgiving ritual activity for them and a simple burning of a bundle of wood at the sacred site instructed by the ancestors coupled with the use of relevant words is still considered meaningful and significant by the ancestors. That, to the ancestors is evident enough of ‘the will to appease them;’ that’s how significant is the language in this regard, not the material wealth of the particular individual. The fact that ancestors just accept the offerings unconditionally proves that they know the strengths and weaknesses of the people whom they have left behind. It strengthens the longstanding belief amongst the Basotho and other local user communities of the two sacred sites that ancestors are always watching over their relatives on earth as indicated by (Khathide, 2007: 333). It is indication that ancestors’ role is basically parental as in protecting, correcting and guarding over the welfare of their family or clan, Setiloane (1975: 65). Hence, thanksgiving ritual performances are a sign of appreciation for any achievement or a gift considered to be from the spiritual world, therefore one has to thank one's own ancestors.

As has been indicated, thanksgiving ritual activities can take different forms according to the reason why they are performed as instructed (*taelo*) by ancestors. Another important aspect in determining the form of thanksgiving ritual performance weighs upon the different specific spots within the sacred sites where the particular activity should be performed. This also strengthens a very well known fact that ritual activities performed at the sacred sites are not static or of the same pattern, as they can take any form based on why, when or where they are performed. For

instance, the researcher has discovered that in most of the thanksgiving ritual performances at both Motouleng and Badimong the animals slaughtered are sometimes cows, sheep or white chickens for life, peace and joy respectively and doves for harmony which are sometimes burnt as in ‘a burnt offering ritual.’

It is in this instance of animals slaughtered during thanksgiving ritual activities that the study revealed a very important aspect that needs to be clarified to the reader with regard to the use of a goat and; or a gallbladder during the thanksgiving ritual activities. It was mentioned earlier in the study that a goat or a gallbladder cannot be used during the performance of a thanksgiving ritual as these can only be used in matter in which the help of the ancestors is sought (See 4.2.2). However, the researcher discovered later on during an interview with another informant (a traditional healer at Badimong sacred site) that ‘provision’ can still be made in this regard especially at the ‘thanksgiving bead ritual for the departed’ (*Teboho ya lebitso la motho wa sefaha ya seng a hlokahetse on paragraph 4.2.2.3*) where mere mentioning of the name of this ritual explains the sensitivity of the situation surrounding its performance. At this form of thanksgiving ritual activity, a gallbladder is used together with other essential parts of the slaughtered goat and some traditional medicine; for bathing by this person who is named after the departed. Understandably so, this has to be done (goat/gallbladder); because this kind or form of thanksgiving ritual entails critical matters of life and death as the name context. The family thanks the ancestors for the rebirth of this name in the family; yet they request and plead with the ancestors to spare the life of this particular person who stands or replaces the departed one. Thus, Mbiti (1975: 25) contains that: “*In other African communities the name given to such a child (male or female) bears a true meaning or belief among such communities that death is not the end of life, and that the departed return to be ‘born’ in their family.*”

This research has by far revealed that thanksgiving ritual activities have long been celebrated not only by local user communities of Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites but also by the people of Africa by way of making offerings to the spirits of the earth, including sacrificial animals and the first vegetables and grains gathered at the end of the growing season; which is the same (*mokete wa lewa*) according to Basotho and other local user communities of these two sacred sites under study. These ceremonies are characterized in most African countries by feasting,

singing and dancing which is indication of appreciation and gratitude towards ancestors for providing for them. Nowadays there are even some new adaptations as the modern society prefer to say ‘they are giving tea to the ancestors’ at the sacred sites.

5.2.3 Invocation ritual

Performances of invocation ritual activities at the two sacred sites mostly entail announcing and requesting blessings from the ancestors. Thus, as much as there are no written laws, warnings or notice boards prohibiting local user communities to enter, dig up the healing and fire clay/soil or leave the sacred sites without announcing or requesting the ancestors for their permission and blessing; it is crucially important that different invocation ritual activities are performed pertaining to the kind of activity the pilgrims intend to embark on within the sacred sites. The Basotho people and other local user communities at the sacred sites under study; be those who come and go or those residing there, they perform invocation ritual activities in their everyday lives and experiences at the sacred sites as a sign of respect for ancestor who are believed to be dwelling at this sacred, hence close and ready to respond to their needs and requests.

For instance, one informant told the researcher at the Temple in Badimong: “(*Ha ho motho ya tlang mona mahaheng a badimo ho tla iketsetsa ka moo a ratang kateng... re a kopa, re a laelwa kapa re a dumellwa*)” meaning that: “*Nobody does as he pleases at the sacred sites...whatever we do, we ask for permission from ancestors.*” These words were said to the researcher as she was talking to one of the inhabitants about taking pictures of the sacred lake at the Temple in Badimong together with the inhabitants of this sacred spot. It was then that an invocation ritual (*wa ho kopa tumello*) was performance by the traditional healer in charge of this sacred spot together with other senior traditional healers and their trainees who were all residing there. They were asking for permission on behalf of the researcher from the ancestors to take some pictures of them and the sacred lake. I watched from a distance because I (together with my company) was not allowed to be part of this invocation ritual activity as vigorous praying, singing, clapping of hands and the beating of drums took place. Thereafter, there was a moment of utter silence after which I was told that permission has been granted by ancestors for me to take pictures of

the sacred spot itself and the inhabitants thereof; (See Chapter Four- the Temple at Badimong sacred site with its inhabitants).

The researcher realized then, that there are demarcations in some of the rituals as to who should or should not take part in certain ritual activities. However, note should be taken that it is not upon the wish of the traditional healer or ritual leader to involve or not to involve other people during performances of certain rituals, especially outsiders. This is where the researcher learnt of the utmost importance of always asking for permission before starting to take some pictures of any sacred spot within the sacred sites, of my informants or before interviewing and recording their voices as we spoke. Another valuable lesson drawn was that it is very important to always abide by the instruction of the ancestors. For instance, had they (ancestors) denied us permission to take pictures of the sacred spot (the Temple) and its inhabitants we would have had no choice but to accept; just as they (inhabitants) would not deviate from the ancestors' wish. The language says it all "Invocation or permission ritual" meaning (*Ho kopa tumello*) in the local or Sesotho language. The reality of this is experienced in all walks of life where once permission is asked for something, two answers must be expected and they are 'a denial or acceptance.'

Invocation ritual activities for local user communities to announce their presence to the ancestors are performed differently by assuming different positions as others only light the candles whilst standing, others kneel down as they announce their presence (either at the river before entering Motouleng sacred site or at the entrance just before going inside the sacred cave in Motouleng or before entering a vast sacred valley in Badimong). As it has been indicated earlier these activities are very important as a sign of humility and respect towards the ancestors who dwell in there. This is the "ritual for permission to enter the sacred sites...(Mokete wa ho kopa tumello ya ho kena mahaheng a badimo). To the local user communities this name is by far a resemblance to the very humility and respect people display before entering other people's homestead or property by ringing the bell at the door or knocking (*Ho kokota*) before they could enter. This action is a norm and culture to almost every society in the whole wide world. It therefore comes not as a surprise that local user communities of the sacred sites have to perform invocation rituals

to announce their presence to the ancestors at the entrance; to ask for their permission or guidance and hospitality throughout their stay or journey at the sacred sites.

Ancestral instruction and calling to perform certain specific invocation ritual activities at Motouleng or Badimong sacred site is central with regard to understanding the reason local user communities to choose the sacred sites as their ideal place to perform such ritual. Included among the various forms of invocation ritual activities such as ‘asking for permission to dig up healing clay (*Ho tjheka sewasho*) or fire clay/soil (*Ho tjheka sewasho sa mollo*), asking to be recognized and acknowledged as a member of the family by ancestors are two most important if not binding performances of invocation ritual activities at the two sacred sites under study and those are performances in which local user communities are asking for permission to enter the sacred sites by way of announcing themselves before entering both Motouleng and Badimong (*Ho kopa tumello ya ho kena/ ho kokota*) as well as just before they leave the sacred sites (*Ho kopa tumello ya ho tswa/ tsamaya*). Entering either of the two sacred sites without announcing oneself at a specific spot meant for such a ritual is a sign of disrespect towards ancestors while on the other hand leaving without reporting at the same spot for announcing one’s presence is regarded not only as a sign of disrespect but also as jeopardizing one’s safety on the journey or that of the family back home as misfortunes might befall that particular person/group or their families. Failure to report one’s departure means to the ancestors that one has not left the sacred sites as was said by an old traditional healer in Motouleng: “*you are still at the sacred sites according to their knowledge... understandably one cannot be in two places at the same time...how do you expect them to watch and safeguard you on your way home?*” In this regard, another invocation ritual is performed.

The same respect is shown by way of performing another invocation ritual when leaving the sacred sites just as a visitor is expected to bid good bye to the owners of a family after a visit. This ritual activity is in particular to communicate to the ancestors that you are leaving their place and to thank them for whatever you have achieved during your stay or visit, not forgetting to ask for guidance and to bless your journey home. Failure to perform these rituals has brought nothing but doom to many local user communities of the sacred sites. For instance, whatever it was that one had gone to ask for, will not be fruitful because the ancestors may not be satisfied

with the behaviour displayed by an individual or a group, they may be offended that they had not been fully respected.

One most important discovery made by the study regarding invocation ritual ceremonies at the sacred sites is that whether they are societal, private or clan based as in the ritual for ‘recognition as one of the family’ (4.2.3.2); they (rituals) must be entered into and performed with a truly good spirit, clear mind and humility.

5.2.4 Cleansing/protection/purification ritual

It is a general belief in most of the user communities of these two sacred sites that an individual needs to undergo a cleansing or purification ritual after a series of misfortunes in his/her life; regardless of one’s monetary or social status. The perception is that if a cleansing ritual is not performed the person involved will forever be surrounded by unpleasant events in life to such an extent that he/she could get killed. It is the responsibility of a traditional healer to provide necessary advice and assistance in terms of communicating with the ancestors as to what could be the cause of the misfortunes and how the situation can be normalized through performance of one of the cleansing or protection rituals.

Another belief among the majority of the user communities at these sacred sites is that misfortunes occur as a result of broken relationships between ancestors and the individual concerned. They would often tell him/her that “*badimo ba o furalletse*” meaning that “*the ancestors have abandoned you or they have turned their backs on you.*” Upon this particular case, many of the informants have agreed that they themselves are testimony to the significant role played by kind of ritual performance. Most of the traditional healers and the healer trainees at Motouleng and Badimong have stories to tell about how their lives returned to normal after a cleansing ritual was performed for them. They truly believe that cleansing rituals have proven helpful on more than one occasion in their everyday lives.

When one of the informants (traditional healer) at Monotsha village in Qwaqwa was involved in a car accident for a couple of times and went to hospital with broken ribs and other serious

injuries he started thinking that: “(*badimo ba mo furalletse.*” He consulted with one of the sangomas in the nearby village who in turn was instructed by ancestors to accompany or to assign him to one of the traditional healers at the Badimong sacred site to perform a certain cleansing ritual “*ho tlosa senyama/ho leleka meya e mebe*” which has been explained in details as one of the sub-categories of a cleansing ritual in Chapter Four. The young man was assigned to one of the well known traditional healers at Badimong, Monica, who assisted him in performing the said cleansing ritual. It has been six years since the cleansing ritual was performed and he has never been in a car accident again. The belief is that the cleansing ritual has not only protected the informant from evil and misfortunes, it has also strengthened his roots in terms of self image and self identity, in knowing that he can turn to ancestors for protection. The researcher learned that the significant role played by cleansing or protection rituals to the informant and other user communities of the sacred sites involves various dimensions in their lives and experiences such as re-establishing their positive thinking, therefore, enhancing their positive expectations and commitment, as Post (SANPAD workshop, 12 February 2008) outlined the communicative and working functions of rituals.

5.2.5 Ancestral summon ritual

After their final graduation ceremony the healer trainees ‘*mathwasane*’ have completed their training as fully recognized traditional healers. It means that the time has now come for them to start consulting and healing people. In order to carry out these responsibilities, traditional healers need to have a close relationship with their ancestors. One of the most important things that require their utmost attention when they get home after graduation is to build a special hut (*ntlo ya badimo*) or reserve a special room in the house where they consult with the ancestors in order to heal people. The hut or this specially reserved room is believed to be a dwelling place for the ancestors and other members of the family are not allowed to use it because ancestors need peace and quiet. It is for this reason that when a traditional healer gets instruction through dreams and visions that their ancestors need to come home, it is this very hut or room that becomes their home as they are welcomed into. Traditional herbs and other traditional medicinal accessories, together with everything else that a traditional healer has acquired during this profession are kept

in this special hut or room for ancestors to bless and strengthen their ability to heal or to protect people.

Most of the traditional healers have to sleep in this hut or room so that ancestors can find them in there even at night when they visit this place. The researcher has learned that this responsibility stands even for those traditional healers who are married, their partners are not allowed to sleep in the ancestral place because they themselves are not the chosen ones. It remains for ancestors to determine and to give permission as to when intimacy has to happen. Others eat and cook their own meal in this hut or room because there are certain foods which they either should or should not eat (*ba a di ila*) ‘they fast,’ and for that to happen accordingly, their food need to be cooked separately from that of the rest of the household. This is mostly food that is regarded suitable for a traditional healer to share with the ancestors who have now been summoned from the sacred site at Motouleng or Badimong to come and stay or reside in this room or hut in the homestead of the traditional healer. The room or the hut has now become a main sacred spot in the centre of the whole family yard. However, this does not mean that it takes over or replaces other important sacred spots in the family yard.

5.2.6 Prayer ritual

Prayer ritual activities performed at the two sacred sites consist mostly of singing of traditional ‘sangoma/mathuela’ songs and church hymns which according to informants does not only help communicate them with their ancestors but also with God as the ancestors have to convey their prayers to Him. It is through these songs that individuals and groups pass their religious knowledge to one another and strengthen the feeling of solidarity as they worship and pray. Hence, ‘*Re rapela Modimo ka badimo*’ meaning that ‘*we pray God through the ancestors*’ are very important words that form a major core of the language used during prayer ritual at the sacred sites. The researcher listened to a group of church members as they were praying at the site spot in Maseeng “*Modimo o re utlwe re a o rapela...Re kopa ho Wena ka badimo.*” Meaning “*God hear us, we pray....we ask You through our ancestors.*”

In deeper meaning and religious beliefs of the local user communities of these sacred sites, the prayer ritual activities serves as a communication tool between God (*Modimo*), the ancestors and man (themselves). The understanding is that the ancestors are middlemen or intermediaries between God and human beings (See 4.2.6); the priest at Maseeng special spot in Badimong confirmed the practise in this regard. This is normally after a member of the congregation or a priest has been approached by ancestors to perform a prayer ritual and ask the ancestors for certain things. The things prayed for are determined by various demands or situations prevailing within the church; it can therefore, be a request for good health for certain individuals in the church, protection from possible danger or to express gratitude for help given to them.

In performing prayer ritual activities at the sacred sites, the singing, dancing and clapping of hands as well as giving material and physical objects are the common features employed by local user communities. *“God is often worshipped through singing and African people are very fond of singing as many of their gatherings and ceremonies are accompanied by songs”* Mbiti (1991: 60)

The ritual leader, the prophet or the priest is not the only one who is entitled to pray or consult with the ancestors in praying to God, everyone that is present is free to ask God or to praise Him through the ancestors, as long as they feel they are being propelled by the presence of the spirit of God and that of their ancestors to pray. *“Individuals experience the presence of the holy spirit and it depends on whether they ignore the feeling or they listen the faith and stand up and do as they are sent; as in passing the message.”* (Kaschula, 2002: 184). After all, an African traditional prayer rituals (*Mokete wa ho rapela*) as the Sesotho language refers; for local user communities entails nothing else but praise, thanksgiving and requests.

It is the responsibility of the ritual leader who in this instance may be a traditional healer, a rainmaker or a priest to declare the state of affairs in which the prayers are offered. *“Such prayers always have concrete intentions and people do not ‘beat about the bush’ when saying their prayers. They request such things as: good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in travelling or some other undertaking, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals. For the community at large, prayer may ask for rain, peace, the cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success in war or raids, the acceptance of sacrifices and offerings, and fertility for people, animals and crops.”*Mbiti (1975: 55-56)

It is therefore, not surprising that the prayer ritual activities performed at these two sacred sites entails elements of the Basotho traditional beliefs as well as some Christian religious beliefs and their symbolism. In performing the prayer rituals, local user communities often involve offering to the Lord through ancestors which is to the researcher an indication there is a thin line dividing Christianity and African traditional or religious belief. An example of this can be clearly noted by performance of rituals such as (*sehlabelo sa setjheso*) as it is termed in Christianity while the traditional Basotho call this ritual ‘mokete wa setjheso’ which is still the same ‘burnt offering ritual’ appearing in the old testament of our Bibles(Numbers 28: verse 26). The African or Basotho religious means of praying God through ancestors is in many ways almost similar to that of certain church denominations such as the ‘Roman Catholic Church’ whom in their prayers, they ask the saints to pray to God for them. The researcher in this sense is a Roman Catholic and knows exactly the prayers that ask for the Saints to pray for the church/group. The leader or the priest often leads the prayer, calling upon different saints such as ‘*Saint Thomas, Saint Charles, Saint Joseph...*’ and the congregation responds after every saint’s name has been called upon by saying ‘*Pray for us.*’ This is a true sense of Christianity reflected in the Basotho prayer rituals at the sacred sites where they are asking the ancestors to pray for them as they ‘pray to God through the ancestors. Upon this relation, Mbiti (1991: 190) indicates that “*African Christians find many aspects of ancient Christian life which are similar to their traditional life as the church/ Christianity includes those who have died (as saints) and those who are still alive ... just as African religion through rituals view local user communities as the family of both the living and the departed (ancestors)*”

The above words strengthen the researcher’s view of the nature of prayer rituals performed by local user communities of the sacred sites which indicates that they feel that they are part of the Bible, hence, the children of God. That feeling can also be seen by what most of them wear; the long robes in different colours which are also very well known to be the Jewish attire. In performing a prayer ritual, a senior traditional healer and ritual leader at Badimong, Monica (who was a nun before the calling) reads the Bible of God; she calls upon God through ancestors who are seen as parallel to the saints in Christianity. Cawood (2010: 159) highlights another important aspect regarding these parallels of Christianity with African traditional beliefs and religion and that involves the numbers of local user communities visiting the sacred sites in

comparison with the Christian church calendar. *“The two sacred sites enjoy their highest visitors around times of important Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas...church groups and individual local user communities visit the sacred sites to perform rituals to their ancestors.”*

This is all because Basotho and local user communities of these two sacred sites of the study praise the same God praised by the Christians ... *“The same God, Whose concern is for the sick, the poor, the hungry and the oppressed which touches at the heart of African religion”* Mbiti (1991: 190).

5.3 Conclusion

Analysis and interpretation of major categories of ritual activities and performances at Motouleng and Badimong have been dealt with and discussed in this Chapter. The significance and value of ritual activities among Basotho people have been elaborated upon based on true experiences of the informants as well as the researcher’s experiences. Chapter Six will deal with the recommendations and conclusions regarding major and sub-categories of ritual performances at both sacred sites under study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research was conducted at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites in the Eastern Free State.

The main objectives of the research were to:

- To categorize and classify types of rituals performed at the two sacred sites specified.
- To determine the structure and significance of rituals at the sacred sites/caves in Badimong and Motouleng sacred sites.
- To examine language use in terms of Sesotho names given to different rituals and their significant role or relevance towards the structure of each ritual activity.
- To strengthen the fact that rituals have been, they are and hopefully will remain important if not integral part in the cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs of Basotho people and mostly of local user communities of these sacred sites at large.

The achievement of these objectives were sought through a literature study and interviews conducted at both sacred sites. This survey study included elements of exploration and description which highlighted the importance of rituals performed at Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites as a means of communication with the ancestors, a source of healing and an arena for thanksgiving festivals and ceremonies to ancestors. The findings of these processes are summarized as follows:

In Chapter One the background of the study and the problem statement concerning the rituals performed at Motouleng and Badimong sared sites. The objectives and method of research including the qualitative-explorative research approach employed in this study were discussed. In Chapter Two the description and definition of key terms in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework concerning ritual performance were provided. This chapter provided the reader with information regarding the importance of rituals to Basotho people. The chapter also

mentioned some of the sacred sites located at different places in the Free State where a variety of Sesotho speaking people live. This, however, does not change the fact that the study is solely concerned with ritual activities performed only at the two caves as mentioned. Chapter Three dealt with data gathering procedures together with analysis and interpretation of data. Procedures adopted in conducting this survey and instrument used in gathering the data were dealt with. Chapter Four presented information with regard to types or genres of ritual activities taking place at the sacred sites under study, their function and structure as well as their qualities. Further, this chapter clarified to the reader whether there are specific times when certain rituals should be performed or specific places and most certainly if there were any specific instruments or special attire for the participants. Major categories of rituals were mentioned and discussed along with their different sub-categories. In Chapter Five, data collected in a survey research that has been conducted was analysed and interpreted in terms of the specific repertoires connected with rituals performed at both Motouleng and Badimong. Similarities and differences between rituals performed at both sacred sites were also discussed even though the idea was not central to this study. Language use was interpreted as well as its function and significance in different ritual performances. Chapter Six is dealing specifically with the conclusion and the recommendations.

6.2 Conclusions

This study has to a large extent revealed that ritual activities and performances at the two sacred sites mentioned are mostly the results of ancestors' calling as in their instruction and commissioning. The kinds of rituals activities and performances prevailing in this regard are divided into different categories and sub-categories. It has however been revealed also that rituals performances at the sacred sites do not include all the domestic or home based kind of rituals, as they (rituals) at the sacred sites are linked to the purpose of the journey or pilgrimage to the sacred sites. These rituals are performed to a certain extent as mention was made earlier according to ancestors' instruction and the commissioning for the journey which determines and impels on the kind of rituals performed. Some rituals have preference of the sacred sites specifically because these sites are associated with certain powers such as fertility or diviner-healer training at Motouleng or Badimong sacred site and the clan identification at Badimong. In

other words, to a degree the specific association with the sites 'prescribe' the kind of ritual performances taking place at these two sacred sites. For instance the clay sites at '*diwashong*' in Motouleng and '*Nkokomohi*' at Badimong is where 'invocation rituals are performed to ask for permission from the ancestors to collect the healing clay or soil. The study also revealed that there are kinds of rituals performed by spiritual leaders accompanying their church members such as the Apostolic Faith groups and the Shembes. It is normal that the church groups may have come for spiritual some spiritual renewal, therefore their rituals are aligned with that aim, the prayer rituals. In relation to the latter, it is important to note also that even some rituals of African Indegenous religion have also abosorbed Christian symbolisms, as in Monica's (traditional healer), whose rituals of prayer includes Catholic symbolisms and her meal and libation offerings include Old testament assosiations such a burnt offering ritual '*sehlabelo sa setjheso/mokete wa setjheso.*' At times, it is the traditional healers who come to these sacred sites with their trainees for certain ancestral instruction in the form a ritual and they return home the day after or once they have performed the necessary ritual. Secrecy was also noted with the performance of other rituals at the sacred sites whereby it is the ancstors who decide on who should participate or observe. It is not for the ritual leader to decide as ancestors themselves make their decisions known to the ritual leaders by means of visions or instructions.

The use language and how Basotho people have more explanatory names for all the ritual performances taking place is clear indication of the importance of local language in performing rituals by local user communities of the sacred sites. The Sesotho names given are not only for classification purpose of the rituals but they most importantly bear or have a symbolic meaning regarding the ancestors' instruction necessitating the performance of rituals. The performances and activities prescribed are therefore entailed in the meaning of the names given to different rituals such as '*mokete wa ho kopa thari*' meaning the fertility ritual, '*mokete wa ho tlosa senyama*' meaning the purification or cleansing ritual. Hence, they are explanatory regardless of the fact that they sometimes overlap due to the fact that they (names) do not completely encapsulate the essence of their ritual diversity.

It is also important to mention that although there is a remarkable degree of conservatism as to the content and structure of the rituals, these rituals are not dogmatic in the sense that the

performances do not follow a strict form as deviations sometimes occur. That is, the ritual leader as well as the participating members may introduce differences during performances as there is no one checking correctness. It is the ritual occasion that may impact on the form. Given also that the two sacred sites are complex with different stations or special spots, these stations have a significant associations as well as a vast implications on the performance of rituals at both Motouleng and Badimong sacred sites. Thus, user communities of the sacred sites perform rituals differently at these speical spots or stations based on the nature of their ancestral instruction. All in all, this study has demonstrated that ritual performances and activities at the sacred sites or caves in the Eastern Free State will survive because of the increasing numbers of people who visit these sacred sites on a regular basis to appease their ancestors at different forms and levels of necessity and devotion from all over South Africa and outside. The following recommendations are made based on the given conclusion of this study.

6.3 Recommendations

Although this study has to a certain degree succeeded to expose to its reader the meaningful, positive attributes and qualities of African ritual practices and activities performed at the two sacred sites, the findings and conclusions of this study have also necessitated mentioning of the forthcoming recommendations:

- There is need to conduct an in depth research of individual rituals and their accompanying aspects such as the ritual attire, ritual objects, the psychology of ritual, ritual dimensions and their basic and technical effects, the emotions and physiological implications of rituals.
- The is legitimate concern in terms of the complexity of these two sacred sites and of the rituals performed there, and how these may be endangered by the sensitivity of the sites as well as the internal dynamics there such unavailability of proper structures for shelter and for sanitation. There is therefore need for the Free State provincial government to maintain and to preserve these sacred sites in this regard together with other sacred sites

which could not be included in the processes of this research due to the limitations of the study.

- There is need to preserve and protect the sacred sites as the heritage sites for future use by local users communities to continue with rituals that are customarily performed at this sacred sites. Although the study has to a certain degree succeeded to expose to its reader the meaningful, positive attributes and qualities of African ritual practices performed at the sacred sites.
- There is existing negligence which unfortunately leads to these sacred sites being most definitely undermined and underutilized by most South Africans in the Free State Province and within South Africa as a country. The need stands, therefore, that these sacred sites and others in the Free State and countrywide are spared the honour they deserve and declared as places of hidden Indigenous Knowledge Systems.
- The need for all the stakeholders involved to take responsibility to nurture and to protect not only these two sacred sites in the Eastern Free State but a whole lot of other sacred sites in South Africa and in the neighbouring countries such as Lesotho as most of the local user communities who come from outside South Africa are the Basotho from Lesotho.
- There is a need for in depth research of the participants of ritual and the ritual leaders.
- All in all, the researchers' point is that, it is at these sacred sites that researchers and local user communities are offered a broad spectrum of the Basotho ritual performances that are seldom observed in context. Hence, intervention is needed to prevent possible destruction of the sites and to preserve them for future generations of as reference of the rich and vast African cultures, customs and religious beliefs of their forefathers.
- Another in depth need is for research to establish the relationship between traditional Basotho religious activities or rituals and the modern Christian rituals. "While culture and environment have had important influence on world religions, a common faith can unite

people from radically different backgrounds, crossing vast barriers of culture, environment, geography, politics, and economics” Rausch and Voss (1989: xii)

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