

Stories of Origin of the Sotho people of QwaQwa: The construction and maintenance of society through narratives



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Thesis Submitted for the Degree:

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Faculty of Social Science, University of Tromsø

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the role of narratives, particularly stories that describe the origins of people, in the construction, maintenance and restructuring of society. The focus of this thesis is on the 'stories of origin' of the Basotho of QwaQwa, a small town in the Free State province of South Africa.

The narratives told are diverse in their content and context however they play a similar role in their effect on the structure of society. The part of society that is most impacted by each story is determined by the content of predominance and emphasis of each story. Each story is categorized according to its content into one of the following categories: 'religion', 'myth' and 'history'. 'Stories of origin' that are religious are used to cement relations between members of society that share the same beliefs for example Christians, while 'mythical' stories are used to create bonds between all Sotho people, however 'historical' stories draw clear lines between members of the society and outsiders thereby creating solidarity within society.

These findings are specific to the society of the Sotho people in QwaQwa and cannot be generalized to other Sotho societies, however, the study of narratives and social structure can be applied to other societies including those of Indigenous peoples.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historical Background and Present Situation in QwaQwa

Research was conducted in QwaQwa among the South Sotho people of Southern Africa. Citing Sharp and Murray, anthropologist Rachel Slater (2002) estimates the population of QwaQwa at about four hundred and fifty thousand by the late twentieth century. The exact size of the population today has not been shown in the recent government census; emphasis has been on cities and large towns. QwaQwa is situated between the borders to the Natal province and Lesotho in the Eastern Free State province of South Africa.

The population is largely of Sotho origin, but other groups are found in this region. People of different origins arrived in this town under different circumstances. According to Anthropologist, Tim Quinlan (1988: 81), the Sotho people arrived in QwaQwa under the leadership of Mopeli Mokhachane who had moved to this region to avoid conflict with the sons of king Moshoeshoe. Quinlan (1988: 80) states that the half brother of king Moshoeshoe, Mopeli Mokhachane, signed a treaty in 1867 that allowed him and his people, who were seven hundred in number, to settle in the area of QwaQwa which was then known as Wietsieshoek. This treaty was signed with the government of the Orange Free State which was made up of mostly Dutch and German settlers who had occupied the area and held legal control of the region of the Orange Free State. See appendix for map of the location of QwaQwa in the Free State Province of South Africa (figure 1) (courtesy of Slater 2002: 118). Signing the treaty served as a step forward for him and his followers in their establishment as a recognized group, both legally in terms of the government of the Orange Free State and traditionally in terms of the leadership of the Sotho people.

They became known as the Bakoena 'tribe', which Quinlan (1988: 82) refers to as the precursive Sotho society as oral tradition claims. He maintains that they were allocated the label of 'tribe' by the government in an effort to distinguish between the various groups of Bantu peoples and to distinguish between those who were compliant to governmental laws and rule and the non-compliant (Quinlan 1988). The Bantu people are the 'black' people of Southern Africa that include the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana groups. These two categories were

formed on the basis of linguistic variation, but various groups that speak a variety of languages exist within each of the two groups (Quinlan 1988). The South Sotho or Basotho, as they are commonly called, people belong to the Sotho-Tswana group. 'Black' people are the dark-skinned people that belong to various groups all over the world. These people experienced years of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination at the hands of others. The more specific experiences of the South Sotho people will be discussed later in this section. Two more 'tribes' settled in this region; the Batlokoa and Makhlokoe 'tribes'. However, Quinlan (1988: 83) puts emphasis of the idea that "... their identities were ideological constructions rather than apt conceptualizations of African society on the Highveld". It is therefore important to note that the concept of 'tribe' was not a construction of the Bantu people, but rather a concept that was applied to them which eventually took a life of its own. This concept stands, today, at the root of some friction between groups of people.

Subscribing to the authority of the Orange Free State government, Mopeli Mokhachane gained the status of superior chief in QwaQwa, thereby making the chiefs of the other two 'tribes' his subordinates. The government communicated its authority in the selection of a leader but did not involve itself in the running of the area of QwaQwa (Quinlan 1988: 86). Placing one leader in a position of authority over others would later cause friction between the three 'tribes' in the region, as well as friction between the Sotho people of QwaQwa and the government of the Orange Free State. Quinlan (1988: 91) assigns responsibility for the decline in relationships between the people to the shortage of resources, in particular space and employment. He argues that fertile land was already in shortage when the government decided to develop what they called "agricultural betterment schemes" (Quinlan 1988: 91). The aim of these schemes was to improve the agricultural land for the settlers which, in its process, limited access to fertile land for the Bantu people in order to distribute the best land amongst the settlers in the Orange Free State. Frustration caused by these circumstances, together with high unemployment levels in QwaQwa, forced people to work in either neighbouring towns as migrant worker or to work far away from home. Discontent with the circumstances caused rebellion in 1950 by the Sotho people of QwaQwa, during which 'militants' had a violent confrontation with the police (Quinlan 1988: 92). This rebellion did not change their circumstances; it simply caused the government to keep an even closer eye on the running of the region. Quinlan (1988) adds the uprising of 1950 in QwaQwa was also in response to the introduction of a new government and political system; apartheid. This

further exacerbated the situation of the people because QwaQwa was selected as a homeland of the South Sotho people and Quinlan (1988) states that this added to the already high population of the area. Systematic discrimination and lack of access to reasonable resources and jobs caused the Sotho people to lose respect for their leaders. The leaders did not have the power to negotiate better terms for their people.

All South Sotho people living outside in other parts of the Free State or South Africa were encouraged to move to their homeland, whether voluntarily or not. Many people who moved here over the years were forcibly removed from farms and towns in the Orange Free State in the 1970's (Slater, 2001). This small town, due to an influx of people, became overpopulated and unemployment levels increased to new heights (de Wet, 1994). Grown children stayed in their parent's home in order to share living costs because of the high unemployment rate (Sharp, 1994). People were forced to work as wage laborers or migrant workers (Sharp, 1994). Very little migrant work was available in the factories and businesses in the nearby towns (Slater, working paper). Work was also scarce in QwaQwa even in the many firms in the area and people were forced to find jobs even further from home. These trends can still be observed in QwaQwa today. Unemployment rates are still high; some of the informants were unemployed. People had to find alternative sources of income while others decided to find work in other towns or cities. The most common alternative sources of income involved working in the informal sector, especially by women (Slater, 2001). Some informants, particularly women, were working in the informal sector. Others engaged in various activities in attempt to supplement their income such as joining social organizations that are formed to save money (Sharp, 1994). Those who were still employed supplemented their income by engaging in the informal sector, for example selling alcoholic beverages and other goods (Slater, working paper). Quinlan (1988) offers a similar account of how people survived; women would work as hawkers while men found another form of supplementing their income by transporting people all over town in the taxi and charging fare. These jobs would either supplement the already meager income on which families had to live or as the only source of income for the family.

In discussing the historical background and social context of QwaQwa, it is important to look at the religious beliefs of the individuals living in this area. In QwaQwa, as in many South African towns, there are a variety of religions to which individuals subscribe. Some of these

include the ‘Traditional’ beliefs, Islam, Christianity and Hare Krishna religion amongst others. What is termed ‘Traditional’ beliefs will be described later in the section of the chapter in which key concepts and terms are discussed. It should be noted that other religions such as Islam and Hare Krishna will not be included as none of my informants represent such religions. This, of course, means a limited representativity in the area of religion; however the data gathered from informants will be useful in determining the relationship between religion, myth and history despite the differences in stories told by informants.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze stories of origin as told and interpreted by Basotho of QwaQwa in an attempt to shed light on the way that people describe, understand, and interpret ‘stories of origin’ of the Basotho.

The significance of this research is in its focus is on informants, their viewpoints and interpretations. Value is attached to stories told by each informant and their understanding and description of their origins. The criteria used to categorize stories are formulated for analytical purposes in order to draw out the differences between stories told by informants within and outside of each category and the role of stories in each category.

Aims and Objectives of Research

Aims

The aim of this study is to understand how people tell and describe their stories of origin. This will be done while also observing the possible influences of their stories on the functioning and maintenance of society. The focus is on stories that are told by the Sotho people of QwaQwa. The findings resulting from the analysis of stories are limited to the place of study and cannot be generalized to all other Sotho communities and societies.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to observe how stories of origin are told by different informants and to analyze the differences between stories of origin told by different

informants on the basis of their content of predominance by classifying each story into a category on this basis. The following categories are created for analytical purposes: Stories that are 'religious', 'mythical', and 'historical'.

Definitions and Descriptions of Key Concepts and Terms

Indigenous

The concept 'indigenous' has two definitions: an etymological definition and a legal or political definition. According to Merriam Webster online dictionary, being indigenous is "having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment [...]" (<http://mw1.m-w.com/dictionary/indigenous>). This is the general use of the concept 'indigenous' even for groups of people. Therefore, Basotho qualify as indigenous to South Africa in this sense because they are accepted as having lived in South Africa for a long time and thereby belonging to that region. However, they are not accepted as such in the legal or political sense. Kendrick & Lewis provide following the legal or political definition of indigenous as defined by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) using four "principles":

(1) priority in time, with respect to the occupation and use of a specific territory; (2) the voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness; (3) self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups and by state authorities, as a distinct collectivity; and (4) an experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination, whether or not these conditions persist (2004: 5).

In the political and legal sense, the Basotho are not considered indigenous in South Africa. Although they belong to Southern Africa and have lived there for a long time and meet all the criteria with the exception of the second, they are not legally recognized as Indigenous peoples. The reason for this is that other people arrived first and had lived in the region for thousands of years before the arrival of the Sotho and other people. The Sotho people, in a sense, colonized the area and were responsible for taking land that was used by the Khoe-San people. For this reason, they cannot be attributed the same status as the very people they marginalized even though both groups were later colonized by European people and had similar experience from hence. Therefore the Khoe-San people, who are recognized as the first to arrive in Southern Africa, are recognized as indigenous in the legal sense.

The Basotho are treated as indigenous, in the general and not legal sense, for the purpose of this study. Although they are not legally recognized as Indigenous peoples, the Basotho consider themselves to be indigenous in the sense that they belong to and have lived in Southern Africa for a long time. Their identity and culture as a people is attached to the land that they occupy. There is a relationship between identity, culture and 'stories of origin', therefore their self-identification as a group that belongs to this region qualifies them the title 'indigenous' at the general, but not legal level. This is, therefore, not an attempt to classify the Sotho of Southern Africa as Indigenous peoples according to the WGIP's definition as I fully recognize the strife and difficulties that the San people, which have had a devastating effect on their culture and way of life.

'Story of Origin'

According to author and folklorist Virginia Hamilton and author and artist Barry Moser (1991), a 'story of origin' can be defined as a story about where people come from and/or how they came into existence and need not be evidenced. The focus of this research is on the 'stories of origin' of Basotho. These stories could be interpreted as factual (history) or 'symbolic' and/or 'allegoric' (myth) or both. Each informant's story will be told and analyzed according to the criteria that were created for this purpose.

'Religion'

The beliefs of my informants are shown below starting with their initial or 'Traditional' beliefs, which are still held by some today, leading to the conversion to Christianity.

Sotho people believe in a God who created the Sotho people who does not involve himself in their lives. Theologian Klaus Nürnberger (1975) contends the God of the Sotho people did not communicate with them in any way or require of them any action or acknowledgement of his existence. He is believed to be both above and below the earth. Their God is not acknowledged in their religious activities through either prayer or sacrifice, something which also means that there are no religious practitioners who serve as instruments of contact between God and the Sotho people (Nürnberger 1975). However, Sotho people have beliefs and practices that acknowledge other deities known as ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits are

spirits of Sotho men who have died. Each spirit is remembered and acknowledged by the family members as senior in rank, to be recognized as an ancestor, through ritual and practice (Nürnberg 1975).

The ancestral spirit has the power to affect the lives of his family in either a negative or positive way depending on their acknowledgement of him through ritual and practice. It is, as Nürnberg (1975: 177) puts it, the responsibility of the family to perform sacrifices and the pouring of traditional beer as a means of acknowledging and recognizing the ancestor and their superior. These acts serve to appease the ancestor so that he will not act against them by causing problems for them such as drought amongst others, the ancestor will instead bless the family and keep them from harm (Nürnberg 1975). He points out, and I agree, that ancestral spirits rely on their descendants for survival because they are only remembered if there are people alive to acknowledge their presence through ritual (Nürnberg 1975: 177). In cases where ill fate has befallen the family, diviners or traditional doctors serve as a link between them and their ancestors to discover the cause of such problems. The diviner will then offer instructions, from the ancestral spirits, on how to proceed to restore that which was lost. People contact their ancestor through diviners for various reasons; it can be to acknowledge, seek blessings, and give thanks and so on. According to Bishop of the Catholic Church of Johannesburg, Buti Thlagale (2006: 2) ancestral spirits were praised and celebrated communally and played the role of regulating morality and protecting their descendants.

The very nature of Sotho beliefs and religion is what made it easy for the transition to Christianity by many at its introduction in the nineteenth century, at the arrival of the French missionaries in Lesotho (de Clark 2000). King Moshoeshoe welcomed the missionaries, he and his people learnt about Christianity from them and many were converted and became church members. "... Casalis, Gosselin and Arbousset founded the mission which was to become the pride of their society, ..." (de Clark 2000: 5). The introduction of Christianity brought immense change to the Sotho society. The role of the diviner was taken over by the priest or pastor with the recognition of God as more than a distant deity, but a God who involves himself in their lives and they interact daily with him. They also began to interact with God and to acknowledge him through church attendance and prayer amongst other actions. The introduction of Jesus Christ as both man and God was not difficult for the Sotho

to comprehend as the ancestral spirits have a similar role; therefore the transition was not overly challenging (Quinlan 1988).

Nürnberger (1975) contends the conflict between ‘Traditional’ beliefs and Christianity was easily resolved by the rejection of all ‘Traditional’ religious beliefs and activities. These individuals began to live Christian lives and passed on their beliefs to the following generations, however problems began to emerge as society changed through “... resettlement, industrialization, urbanization, secularization of education and the revitalization of traditional social authorities by the state, ...” (Nürnberger 1975: 194). These changes in society brought about four possibilities with regard to religion as Nürnberger (1975) claims; firstly, a rejection of Christianity in favour of ‘Traditional’ beliefs, secondly continuing to attend Christian church while engaging in some ‘Traditional’ practices in secret, thirdly the emergence of Independent or Zionist churches that allow a combination of Christian and ‘Traditional’ belief and practices thereby fulfilling the needs of people in both situations, and finally remaining a Christian and pursuing a life in accordance to ones beliefs, that is the life introduced to them by the missionaries. The result of such possibilities is a diversity of Christianity as a religion within the Sotho societies. Today, a representation of each category is found in Sotho society. Although most Sotho people were converted to Christianity, they maintained parts of their cultural traditions. Though many have been converted to Christianity, some still practice some traditional aspects of their culture such as healing and protection against evil that are offered by ancestral spirits through the power of traditional healers (Thlagale 2006). Rituals that signify “[...] birth, puberty, marriage and death” are still practiced (Thlagale 2006: 3). These rituals usually involve the slaughter of animals as a sacrifice to the ancestors. Here, the concept of ritual is used to refer to the practices that form part of one’s religious beliefs.

These possibilities that Nürnberger (1975) presents are realities of the Christian religion in QwaQwa, therefore when an individual says he or she is a Christian; it could mean a variety of things. Many people say they are Christians, but it is important to determine their understanding and definition of Christianity. The choice in religion has an influence on stories of origin, this is why it is important to define and understand religion in the context of the society under observation.

Myth

According to Classical Greek and comparative literature scholar, Gregory Nagy (2002), the academia has not offered a standard definition of the concept 'myth'. Different people in the academia have offered different definitions when writing on this topic. Nagy suggests three reasons for this:

Firstly, anthropologists and folklorists found that different societies have different understanding of the truthfulness of myth. Secondly, the everyday use of the concept 'myth' describes it as a story that is not true or real. Finally, the concept 'myth' comes from the Greek word "muthos" which meant a truthful story, but this myth came to mean the opposite in the "fifth and fourth centuries B.C." (Nagy 2002: 241).

In addition to this archaeologist, Jaquetta Hawkes (cited in Ions, 2005: 6) finds the concept 'myth' to have a rare characteristic: It has "... two precisely opposite meanings, each being selected according to the beliefs and prejudices of the user". Some understand myth as a truthful representation of past events while others believe it to be fictional.

Scholar of Religion, Gavin Flood (1999: 115) refers to Cassiers statements that "[...] myth is a cultural form alongside and equal to, others such as science, [...]". Scholar of Religions, Bruce Lincoln (1989: 24) defines myths as stories that have "[...] both credibility and authority". To explain authority, Lincoln (1989: 24) refers to Geertz's description of meaning that is true and serves as "[...] a model of and a model for reality". In the study of myths, one is likely to come across references to religion, it therefore important to keep this relationship in mind.

The authority of myth has long been disputed by members of the academia. Hawkes (2005: 6) suggests that "[T]he use of the term myth as synonymous with fiction comes to us from nineteenth-century positivism and rationalism". During this period, scholars required all things to be explained in scientific terms. Whatever could not be scientifically explained was considered fictional. Myth was one such subject because there was no way of verifying its truthfulness. Myths were associated with 'primitive' people whose beliefs shed light on the beliefs of "early man" as Hawks (2005: 6) describes it. The study of myth requires one to understand this concept if you are to analyze it or use it as an analytic category. It is therefore

important to understand the society, religion and worldview of those who tell the myth. In other words, the researcher needs to understand the context of the myth before they can understand peoples' interpretations of their myths.

History

History can be understood as the story of the past as recorded by various individuals in the course of time; events are usually recorded as they take place however this is not always the case. History may be written or recorded in other ways.

Social anthropologist, Paul Connerton (1989: 13) states that historians may change historical statements made to others in such a way that they fit into their own interpretations of events. He adds that they hardly rely "... on authorities other than themselves, to whose statements their thought must conform, historians are their own authority; ...". History has described parts of the oral history of people belonging to oral cultures as fiction even if the people interpret these stories as fact. French Missionary, Dr D. Fred Ellenberger (1988: 9) gives an example of this stating that Sotho people did not record their history in written form so they had to rely on accounts told by elderly people who were told stories by their grandparents. However, these stories are sometimes very different which means that the one who records the story should choose or select what appears to be the truth [translated from South Sotho].

Ntsoana-Tsatsi

This is believed to be the place of origin of the Sotho people. It is both a mythical and physical place. The mythical aspect of it, as described by Ellenberger (1988) is a place from where the first Sotho people emerged. They are believed to have come from the ground at Ntsoana-Tsatsi, where there is a lot of water and reeds. The geographical location of this place is believed to be Vrede in the Free State Province of South Africa, according to accounts by informants. It still carries this name and some Sotho people are still found in the area.

Difaqane

According to historian Kevin Shillington, difaqane was a period of war, that was not exclusively African, but led to the creation of formidable kingdoms including "... the Basotho

under Moshoeshoe; the Zulu under Shaka and his successors; Mzilikazi's Ndebele; the Swazi under Mswati and Sobhuza; and the Pedi under Sekwati. The emergence of these kingdoms permanently altered the face of Southern Africa" (Shillington 2005: 356). These kingdoms included numbers of displaced people who were scattered during wars; they joined successful military leaders leading to the formation of the above-mentioned kingdoms (Shillington 2005).

These wars were instrumental in the formation of the Sotho 'tribe' that still exists today. It is so because these wars displaced a lot of people, many of whom were incorporated into the Sotho 'tribe'. The very nature of Sotho group changed after the difaqane, through which it became one of the largest surviving Bantu kingdoms in Southern Africa.

Previous Research

Different scholars present different perspectives on the origin of the Sotho people. According to Professor of history Leonard Diniso Ngcongco (1979: 24) there are theories that the Sotho-Tswana people "... arrived in South Africa in a succession of migration waves...". They are said to have come from the Great Lakes region of Africa by migrating southwards until they reached southern Africa (Ngcongco, 1979). The idea of migration suggests that the people were already culturally differentiated, which Ngcongco (1979) disagrees with. He suggests, rather, that people were in smaller groups that later drew in other groups to form the 'tribes' that exist today (Ngcongco, 1979). This statement is based on the archeological evidence that shows that Bafokeng lived at Ntsoana-Tsatsi under the leadership of chief Napo in the 1600's (Ngcongco, 1979). Several informants' stories attest to Ngcongco's assertion that Basotho lived at Ntsoana-Tsatsi before difaqane wars. Like Ngcongco, Quinlan (1988: 84) suggests that there was "... political confusion..." at that time that prevented the stability of any 'tribe'. The use of archaeological evidence put this research into a more 'historical' category because these migrations are verifiable and can therefore be accepted as truth in terms of historical validity.

Ellenberger (1988) refers to Arbousset's statements that Basotho believe to have emerged from a cave that is hidden by reeds. According to Nürnberger (1975: 184), Basotho are believed to have emerged from the ground and return to it when they die, this according to the

myth told by Basotho. This represents the more mythical story of origin that is, therefore, difficult to verify. Ellenberger (1988) adds that Bafokeng came from Egypt and travelled through Africa and eventually through the Sahara to reach southern Africa. Due to disputes with Bahurutse (Tswana) that they had been travelling with, Bafokeng moved to Bochabela or where the sun rises. Ellenberger (1988) refers to Smith's statement that the first Sotho people were of the Kwena clan who lived at Ntsoana-Tsatsi, but were forced to leave because of famine and clashes between them and Bafokeng.

Previous research by Nürnberger (1975) discusses the Sotho people's belief in ancestral spirits to whom they pay special attention through various rites such as sacrifice to acknowledge and remember them. Ancestral spirits have the power to affect or influence the lives of the Basotho in either a negative or positive way depending on their diligence in their recognition of the ancestors through such rites Nürnberger (1975). However, it should be noted that Basotho believe in a God who created them but does not interact with them and they do not necessarily acknowledge him in their religious practices as Nürnberger (1975) states.

Research Methodology

Entering the Community

As part of my preliminary research, I contacted Basotho Cultural Village (BCV) to get permission to interview the staff. I had already identified the traditional healer working there as a possible informant who would represent the upper social strata by virtue of his position of authority in society because of his knowledge of the traditions and practices of Basotho. I spoke to the director of the BCV, Mr Makashane Ntlhabo, who requested a letter of recommendation from my supervisor. Once he received the letter, he contacted their governing body (Department of Arts and Culture) and requested permission for me to conduct research there. I was granted permission the following week and I began my interviews. The individuals at BCV proved instrumental in finding potential informants.

Data Collection

Interviews were used as a primary source of data collection and books, articles and internet sources were used as secondary sources. According to sociologists James, A. Holstein and

Jaber, F. Gubrium (2004: 140), "... interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversations". Interviews were conducted under the umbrella of qualitative research and therefore more open-ended questions were asked to allow informants to give as much detail regarding the subject.

Both informal and formal interviews were conducted. I used informal interviews to get a general idea of what people know and to find other potential informants. The aim of this interview is to keep conversations casual so that people speak freely (Greef 2002). This is also a useful way of finding additional informants that I could interview at a later stage, where necessary. Formal interviews were used to gather the stories of origin and the interpretation of these stories by the people who tell them. Greef (2002) favours this type of interview because it allows participants to give detailed answers. I also used probing as a way of getting more information about what the informants had already stated if more detail was needed. According to Greef (2002: 299), "[w]hen responses lack sufficient detail, depth or clarity, the interviewer asks a probing question to complete or clarify the answer, or to request further examples and evidence". The snowballing effect was used to find more informants in the case where the data collected seemed insufficient. Snowballing involves the referral by informants to potential informants (Greef 2002). This was a very useful method of finding informants, through which I made contact with many of the informants. I had some expectations about the content of stories of origin. I believed stories would be of the distant past, providing detailed descriptions of how the Sotho came into being or existence. This certainly influenced the set of questions I chose to ask and the order in which they were asked. Formal interviews were conducted with various informants starting with Dr Malete, Jakobo Mokoena and Mochini Nzimande. I also decided to conduct formal interviews with the informants at the Basotho Cultural Village as I did not have enough informants at this point. The following questions were asked during formal interviews:

- Where do the Sotho people come from?
- Please tell me the story of creation
- Who are the characters in the story of creation of Basotho?
- Who created the Sotho?
- What role does each character play?

- What is the meaning of their actions?
- What is your interpretation of this story? (Is it mythical or historical or both?)
- What is the relevance of this story today?
- What is the creator's role in Basotho's daily lives?

If the informant responded to the first question with a historical story of where the Basotho came from, I asked the following set of questions that allowed informants to speak about their history. These questions focused on the recent history of Basotho, whereas the questions above deal with the distant past. Once these historical questions had been answered, I asked the first set of questions. The first set of questions was always asked, while the second set was asked only sometimes because some informants had already answered these questions when asked the above set of questions.

- How did Basotho get here?
- Why did Basotho come here?
- Who was responsible for this move?
- When did Basotho come here?
- Which Sotho clans moved here?
- What is the relevance of this story today?

Some adjustments had to be made to these questions, especially in the case where individuals said they did not know stories of origin of Basotho. In this case, I asked the informants to tell me what they know. Some responded while others would say they do not know anything. In some cases, informants answered these questions when responding to the first three questions.

The interviews were conducted in the South Sotho language, which required transcription and translation. Transcription did not present much of a challenge unlike translation which was quite time consuming. The recorded interviews and field notes were all transcribed in their original form to the English language, which created a very large body of text. This text was translated in such a way that the message that informants wished to convey would not be lost. Translation was never a simple task and it often leads to loss of information or meaning. Therefore, the greatest challenge was to preserve what informants shared when translating their statements to the English language. This was necessary because the views and stories of

the informants are at the very centre of this thesis and should, therefore, be included. The translated stories are written in plain text, with the exception of direct quotes that are written in italic font.

Research schedule

Fieldwork was to take place over a period of four months from May to August, 2008. Due to personal reasons that interrupted my research schedule, I had to continue research for an additional month before returning to Norway.

I spent the first week with family and friends, while preparing to begin fieldwork. I spent the next three weeks planning interviews and visiting QwaQwa to meet people and find informants. It was during this time that I conducted most of my informal interviews, with the exception of the interviews at Basotho Cultural Village because I needed permission from the Department of Art and Culture (the governing body) for this. I had informal conversations with David Seekane (a cultural researcher who had previously conducted research in QwaQwa), Tumelo Kgomo (a driving school instructor), Tumelo Mbele (an actor and writer), Mrs Khoanyane and Ms Elsie (who are both domestic workers). David Seekane told me about Ntsoana-tsatsi, the place from where the sun rises, which he believed to be the place of origin of Basotho. He also gave me names of people I could interview, but did not provide their contact details. This made it difficult to get hold of these individuals and so I did not interview many of them. Tumelo Kgomo directed me to a friend of his, Tumelo Mbele, as a possible informant. I scheduled formal interviews with both Tumelo Mbele and Tumelo Kgomo for a later time. It took three weeks for me to get hold of Tumelo Mbele with the help of Tumelo Kgomo. He informed me that his phone had been broken and he did not have my contact details. I had informal conversations with Mrs Khoanyane and Elsie who were employees of my parents when my mother was ill. I wanted to find out what they knew about the history of Basotho. They both informed me that they did not know of any particular story or myth that describes the origin Basotho.

The next months were spent conducting in-depth interviews with various informants. Some weeks were busy while others were not because interviews were scheduled according to the availability of informants. I was able to interview Dr Maletle (Rector at the University of the Free State, QwaQwa campus and a linguist), Jakob Mokoena (a retired farm worker) and

Mochini Nzimande (retired farm worker) over the first three weeks of the second month. I made an appointment with Dr Maletle's secretary, who contacted me the next week to provide the time and date of the interview. During the second week, I visited Mr Mokoena and Mr. Nzimande at their homes and requested permission to conduct interviews with their families. We made appointments for the following week.

I planned to find five families who would represent different social strata, using my contacts that include friends and family. Parents, their children, and grandchildren would represent each generation. Interviews were to be conducted on a one-on-one basis to avoid informants influencing each others' responses. Identifying families in which all the possible participants were either available or willing to participate as informants proved challenging and I had to find another way to class informants into generations. I grouped informants according to age so that each group represents a generation: 0-19, 20-39, 40-59, 60-79, 80 and above.

Once I identified informants, I requested their personal information so that I could place them in various categories to observe their possible influences on the way that stories are told and interpreted.

Research Process

I was not able to find accommodation in QwaQwa because the only bed and breakfast was fully booked. I was forced to stay in the nearby town of Harrismith and travel to QwaQwa almost on a daily basis. I felt detached from the community at times, but my connection to some of the people was of great help in these instances.

The fieldwork process was an interesting and emotional period. QwaQwa is a place with which I quite familiar as I was brought up there. Familiarity with the place made travelling and meeting people easier which gave me a great sense of comfort because I knew the language, culture, and rules of behaviour. I have many friends and acquaintances that live or lived in QwaQwa. I used the opportunity, while visiting family and friends, to find informants by asking them to introduce me to individuals who could participate as informants. Some of my friends introduced me to people while others did not. Few of the people I met through friends agreed to participate, but they often pointed me to other individuals who may be interested in participating. Convincing people to become informants was quite a challenge, which frustrated me. In addition to this, my research was interrupted as mentioned above. I

had to stop conducting fieldwork several times throughout the process for personal reasons which had an effect on my focus on work. This made it difficult to flow through the process, which affected my confidence especially when approaching potential informants. This most certainly affected the flow of the process and made me very nervous about the time limitation and the amount of data I had collected at that point.

In spite of the challenges experienced during the fieldwork process, it was certainly one of the most exciting and emotional periods of my academic career. An experience I will treasure and one from which I have learned greatly. I learned a lot from my informants about the origin of Basotho. I have also learned more about myself and the history of my people.

It is very important for a researcher to remain reflexive throughout the research process in order to ensure that ethics are maintained and cautiousness when relating with the members of the community in which one conducts research. However, reflexivity can sometimes be challenging during the fieldwork period. It was, at times, challenging for me because of my close links with the community in which I conducted fieldwork. The possible reason for this being my familiarity with the culture, people and place gave me a sense of comfort or belonging such that it became possible to get lost as a member of the community rather than a researcher. Thinking of my role as both researcher and member of the community allowed me to consider and interpret some of what informants told me from more of an outsider's perspective, thereby allowing me to distance myself as member of the community when necessary. Reflexivity was, therefore, a means of keeping in mind the role I had to play at different stages of fieldwork and thereafter.

Findings

Upon reviewing of the collected data, I found the following:

1. Different informants told the stories of origin differently, although their stories showed some similarities. Most informants referred to the recent history of Basotho, while others described the distant past. I had expected people to tell different stories because of their different experiences.
2. Many informants referred to the recent history of Basotho, especially the period of Difaqane or Mfeqane wars. The influence of various factors such as age, gender, social status, and education level can be observed, at least at the surface level. These factors will be used to

determine the possible reasons why some informants said they did not know stories of origin.

The results show that younger informants know less about the origin of Basotho than older informants. I had anticipated this possibility in my project proposal. I thought it could be due to the little time spent with parents and grandparents. The informants between the ages of zero and nineteen years (who represent the youngest generation) did not know anything about the origin of Basotho.

Even in the similarities between the stories, the predominant content of each story is easily observed when hearing or reading the story that each informant tells. This made the categorization of the stories simple.

Reflection on my Role

While preparing for fieldwork, I anticipated certain advantages and difficulties that I could experience during fieldwork. I have a dual role as an insider and outsider; an insider because I grew up in QwaQwa and am familiar with the culture, people and place and outsider because I am approaching the fieldwork from the role of a researcher coming from an anthropological background. Familiarity with the Sotho culture afforded me certain advantages such as knowledge and understanding of the language, norm and values of the society. However, I also anticipated some problems like the expectation that I should already know the history of the Basotho because I am a Mosotho. I also had expectations of my own. I expected informants to tell me stories of origin that I knew. I expected them to immediately refer to the very distant past of Basotho, especially the story of creation that I knew. This bias influenced the way that I structured my questions and my emphasis on certain things, like the story of creation.

I was surprised to find that being a member of the culture did not necessarily make it easier to establish a relationship of trust between me and my informants. Meeting potential informants was simple, but convincing them to participate in the research was more difficult. Ten informants (three males and seven females, see appendix for table) refused to participate, stating that they do not know anything. I tried to convince people to participate by explaining what the research is about and the importance of recording our own history. Many agreed with this but said they could not help. The pauses in during the fieldwork process proved to be

a challenge; however, I was able to make contact with potential informants during this period. I spent a lot of time with her, while also contacting people who could participate as informants. These interruptions affected the flow of the fieldwork process, I felt as if I was starting over each time. I was concerned about the number of informants interviewed up to this point so I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with some of the informants I had previously interviewed in a more informal manner.

It is important for a researcher to be aware of the possible impact that interviews have on the informants in keeping with the ethics of research. The questions asked about the origin of the Sotho people may have had an impact on the informants because it required that they not only think about past experiences, which in some cases were painful experiences, but to also recount such experiences. For some informants, it presented an opportunity to talk about past injustices and to express their emotions regarding these experiences. In these instances the interview provided a platform to voice their opinions especially because they were aware that their responses would be used to write down the origin of the Sotho in a master's thesis. For some informants, recounting experiences was painful for some and angering for others. This experience affected each individual differently, whether or not they showed their psychological response to the questions. It required them to think about their past and how it affected the Sotho people as a whole, this was not simply a task for informants.

Limitations of Research

The greatest difficulty was finding people who were willing to participate in this research. I turned to individuals with whom I had informal conversations. I conducted formal in-depth interviews with them. The high unemployment levels have forced some of the family members to work in other towns or cities, which made them difficult to find. I decided to group informants into categories according to their age, each category would represent each generation. This meant that I no longer had to use families as my informants.

Bias regarding the story of origin may have affected the data that was gathered. My focus was on the distant past of Basotho, especially the story of Ntsoana-tsatsi. I did, however, accept informants' stories of origin as told and described by them.

Ethics of Research

I always had informed consent from my informants. I would tell them what the research is

about and ask their permission to conduct the interview. I also asked permission to record the interviews. I did not interview one informant because he required payment for the data that he provides. Although his contribution would have been of great use to this study, payment may have tainted his data in some way. How would I know that what he told me is what he believes rather than random information that he provides because he received payment? This was my great concern, so I decided to exclude him from the research.

Religion, identity and origin are sensitive subjects; it is inevitable that it should have an effect of them as mentioned in the previous section. Here, my role as researcher was very important because I had to be careful on how I approached questions, particularly when questions provoke strong emotion like anger and sadness. My familiarity with the community and the customs was useful because I was able to approach informants in such a way that the norms and values were adhered to. I was therefore able to ask the elderly questions from the perspective and approach of a youth and children questions from the approach of an adult. In keeping with the norms and values, even when feeling or emotion was provoked, I was able to get a response from informants.

Chapter Overview

The subsequent chapters detail the origin of Basotho as told and interpreted by the informants in this study. Chapter two begins with a discussion of the differences between ‘stories of origin’ followed by a description of the biographical information of informants and a discussion of the categorization of stories. Finally, the chapter offers a description of ‘stories of origin’ and the contexts in which they are told. Chapter three focuses on the criteria for categorization of stories of origin: ‘religion’, ‘myth’, and ‘history’. Reasons for these categories are given first, followed by a discussion of ‘religion’ as a category, with reference to Christianity and ‘myth’ as a part of religion. Finally, a description of ‘history’ as a category showing the transition from ‘myth’ to ‘history’ and the use of ‘history’ in the construction of society. Chapter four describes the findings of this study, followed by conclusion and recommendations, success of research and possible research in the future.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BASIS FOR ANALYSIS

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the stories of origin as told by each informant. For analytical purposes, each story of origin is categorized according to its subject of predominance. Stories have been grouped into the following categories: Stories of origin that have a 'religious' basis, stories that are 'mythical', and stories that are 'historical'.

Each of these stories may refer to the subjects of other categories, but the emphasis is one of the categories. Each informant tells his or her story of origin in a unique manner, even though there are references to similar places and activities in some stories. Both individual and group interviews were conducted. Some interviews were conducted at Basotho Cultural Village (BCV) after getting formal permission from the Department of Arts and Culture.

The interviews were conducted in the open museum where the different houses of the Sotho are exhibited. Interviews took place in an empty storeroom. There was a large table in the middle of the room and many broken chairs around the room. The supervisor brought in two chairs and I was invited to take a seat. I sat furthest from the door on the shortest corner of the table. I placed the other chair adjacent to mine to be close to the informants. I interviewed one informant, by him or herself, at a time.

Differences between 'Stories of Origin'

When studying stories of origin told by Basotho, two major differences are apparent: first, each informant has a different story and tells it differently; and secondly, each story has an overriding theme as its focus.

In the first case, each informant tells their version of the story of origin of Basotho in their unique way. No two stories are alike in the way that they are told or in the content of the story. The environment, personality, creativity and beliefs of each informant work together to produce a story that is unique to that individual. Anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (2007: 72) describes how education, upbringing, and interests influence the stories people tell: "Oral narratives ... treat of the great as well as the small human issues of life, of change, continuity,

assertion of self-interest, dilemmas, agency, drawing them within the frame of the narrative”. Each story reflects the personal experience, worldview, character of the person who tells the story and the context in which it is told. All of these factors work together to produce the final story that is told. Personal experience refers to environmental and situational experiences impacting on the individual. The concept of worldview, here, refers to the way that a person perceives the world and things around them. This concept, in relation to stories of origin, will be discussed later in this paper. Each individual has a different character or personality that is reflected in the way that stories are told. The very personality of each individual leads them to tell their story in a unique manner in such a way that they emphasize different things; this will be discussed in the following section. Due to difference in personalities between individuals, differences exist within the family where each individual adds something of their own to the story of origin.

Each story that was told had a particular theme or focus. These themes were not exclusive, but there was often (not always) one overriding theme. The main themes in each story were 'religious', 'mythical' and 'historical'.

Biographical Information of Informants

In order to understand the context from which stories are told, it is necessary to have information regarding the background of the people who tell the stories. This information shows the differences between informants and their possible influences as a result of experience as mentioned in the previous section. The biographical description of informants is provided in tables 1, 2 and 3 (See appendix) according to the categories into which each of their stories is grouped.

Three stories are grouped into the category of religion largely due to their theme of emphasis which in this case is Christianity. I recognize that this may be less representative of the larger Sotho society of which most members consider themselves Christian. However, it should be kept in mind that what is Christianity to one may not be to others as different forms of Christianity exist within the Sotho society as described in chapter one. The complexity of this categorization lies in the content of each story, the issue being that most stories told by informants carry some aspects of religion even though it is not the topic of predominance.

Comments made by other informants in their stories regarding religion or religious beliefs and practices will be considered during the analysis.

Representativity in terms of age, gender and education of informants in relation to the rest of the population of QwaQwa may be difficult to determine. QwaQwa, although has a large population, is not one of the larger parts of the country to which attention is paid in the statistical reports that the South African government compiles after census. Priority is, therefore, given to provincial statistics and those of large towns and cities. The result is that little information is provided regarding the population density and distribution in QwaQwa. An approximation founded upon my knowledge and experience of QwaQwa is that the population distribution is as follows: there are more women than men and more young people between the ages of five and thirty five than elderly people. The informants that were chosen are, therefore, not well representative in terms of gender and age since I interviewed more men than women as well as more elderly people than youths. The main reason for this is the challenge met in finding willing informants who would participate. Therefore, the willingness of informants became more of a priority than their representativity of various groups and sub-groups in society so that data could be available for study.

The following section addresses the different stories told by informants by categorizing them into groups. A detailed description of the combined stories of informants is provided under each category.

Categories of ‘Stories of Origin’

Stories of Origin with a Predominantly ‘Religious’ Basis

Stories that are categorized under this heading make use of religion, Christianity in particular, to describe the creation or origin of the Basotho. Religion is also used to explain the differences between nations as well as the movement of peoples to their current positions. These stories also describe the movements of Basotho from their place of creation and/or origin to their present position.

Jakobo Mokoena tells his story of origin from a ‘religious’ point of view, with specific reference to the bible of the Christian faith. He credits the creation of the Basotho to God. He

referred to the story of creation in the Bible to answer to the origin of Basotho stating that God created Adam and Eve, the first people on earth, in his image. He breathed his breath into them and gave them life. All people descend from them, including Basotho. Norma Mokoena agrees with her grandfather that the Sotho people were created by God; she also made reference to the story of creation in the Bible.

To explain the differences between the people in the world, Mr. Mokoena refers to the story of an old man who was walking around naked. The people of Jaftha covered him, but a curse was put on all who would descend from the old man. It was prophesied that his people will be dark, have hard lives and will work for the other man's children forever, something that Jakobo Mokoena says is happening to black people today.

He explains the movements of the Sotho people after arriving in Southern Africa in the following manner: the Sotho came from Natal as the Ngwenya clan, which still exists in Natal as part of the Zulu nation. The Ngwenya people fled to Ntsoana-Tsatsi from Natal as a result of the difaqane wars and took became the Kwena people. They settled on top of the mountain at Ntsoana-Tsatsi in such a way that they could be able to see enemies approaching in order to protect themselves from further attack. Even so, they were later attacked and scattered to various places when fleeing. Some went to *Bopedi* or Limpopo Province, others to Lesotho. Norma did not provide any background information regarding the movement of the Sotho people after their arrival in Southern Africa. She simply states that they came from Lesotho and her cousin Seipati Mokoena agrees.

Stories within the category of 'religion' relate more to the Christian religion, using the Bible as a reference and evidence of the creation of the Sotho people by God. The relevance of God for Mr. Mokoena is observed in his reference to the direction of the Sotho people by him. The following section describes 'mythical' stories of origin from the point of view of the informants who tell them.

'Stories of Origin' that are predominantly 'Mythical'

These stories describe and discuss Ntsoana-Tsatsi, the place from where Basotho are said to have originated. Each informant describes the place differently, but they agree that the place is real. This place carries great significance in Sotho tradition, which can be observed in the rituals and practices of the people.

Marabudi Thloho spoke of Ntsoana-Tsatsi as the place where the Basotho come from stating that the Basotho are the children of Bochabela (where the sun rises). This is observed when a Sotho man prays: He takes off his hat and faces the direction of the sun rise, which is his home so that God can see that he is a man. In addition, when people die their bodies face Bophirima, the direction of the sun set, so that he/she will face their home; Ntsoana-Tsatsi.

With respect to the recent history of the Sotho people, Marabudi says the Sotho come from Lesotho. People of different cultures, many of whom were Basotho, came together after they had been displaced by war. Their name comes from their experiences during this period of war. Ba-sutu, which means ‘those who suffer’ became their name which later changed to “Basotho” [Translated from South Sotho]. They reached a part of Lesotho and settled there under the leadership of Moshoeshoe, however he is not credited by Marabudi as the founder this nation. According to Marabudi Thloho the ‘tribe’ already existed but was to be under the rule of Moshoeshoe’s brother. However, Moshoeshoe was believed to be pure of heart and was therefore chosen to lead. He emphasized that a leader should be kindhearted, brave and patient.

Anna Nyaredi speaks of Ntsoana-Tsatsi as a place where the Sotho people lived during a period of famine when they lived on grasshoppers, bees and ground mealies. Maseabata Moloji does not mention a period of famine when the Sotho people were living at Ntsoana-Tsatsi, however she states that they planted wheat and maize after colonization. She does not know how they arrived in Ntsoana-Tsatsi, but states they left this place traveling through Africa until they arrived in Southern Africa.

Emily Tlhapi, Tshepiso Motloun, Mahali Boshadiba, Jacob Dibe and Mavuso Tshabalala agree that the Basotho came from Ntsoana-Tsatsi; however they did not provide information regarding its location or the way of life there.

These stories indicate that ‘mythical’ stories told by informants do not carry much detail regarding the experiences and happening of those days. They simply offer a broad description of where people come from, this appears to be enough detail for those who tell the stories. The following section describes the ‘historical’ stories of origin as told by various informants.

Stories of Origin that are predominantly 'Historical'

These stories recount the recent history of Basotho by describing their movements from their place of origin or places they lived to the places they occupy in the present day. Some of these stories may describe the birth of the Sotho nation, while the creation of the Sotho people may or may not be discussed. The focus is, therefore, on the movement of Basotho over time and the circumstances that led to these movements.

Dr E.N Maletle offers the following story of origin: The Sotho "tribe" that exists today was founded by King Moshoeshoe by bringing together people who were dispersed by wars that were instigated by Shaka, king of the Zulu. This new Sotho "tribe" consisted of people of various cultural backgrounds, including Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho with the exception of the Tlokoa clan. Chief of the Tlokoa, chief Sekonyela, refused to be under Moshoeshoe's rule so he and his subjects separated from the larger Sotho "tribe". This move ensured the survival of the Tlokoa language to date. The Sotho people who remained under the rule of Moshoeshoe later spoke and wrote the Kgatla language after the arrival of the missionaries who introduced literacy.

Mochini Nzimande offers a slightly different account; All Bantu people come from somewhere near Egypt. They were instructed by God through Moses to move to where the sun rises; the Basotho are often referred to as "Basotho ba bochabela" which translates: 'Basotho who come from where the sun rises'. Mochini Nzimande says that *Bochabela* is in fact where Basotho ended up living. The Bantu people kept moving south until they reached the end of the continent, the area that is known as Natal in the present day. This area was unoccupied with the exception of the San peoples; it soon became populated by people of different origins and cultures. Shaka, king of the Zulu started wars that forced people out of this region to other parts of Southern Africa including Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and other parts of the present South Africa.

It was during this period that the different languages and cultures were born. Due to conflicts with European settlers, the Sotho people who were under the rule of Moshoeshoe were forced from Ntsoana-Tsatsi, where they had settled. They later settled at Butha-Buthe after crossing the Caledon river *Mohokare* which is the border between Lesotho and the then Republic of South Africa with their cattle.

Mankele Mofokeng agrees that Sotho people came from Egypt, Israel and the surrounding areas, however he offers a different reason for their southward move; they were in search for a better life. They searched for land that has good soil, water and grass for agriculture and cattle rearing. They kept themselves separate from other groups during this southward move to avoid theft, war and culture loss. They chose to settle in large open spaces where they could live in peace, however they were not successful and conflicts arose between them and others. They settled at Ntsaona-Tsatsi, where they began to have an ordered society with the selection of first chief and advisors who would counsel the chief regarding political and social affairs. Mankele Mofokeng is in agreement with Mochini Nzimande regarding the circumstances that led to the arrival of the Basotho in Lesotho. There were several wars between the Sotho and Zulu people over time, but the most well-known was the war between Moshoeshoe and Shaka. These wars were fought to acquire good pastoral lands and to retaliate after theft by the other. These wars forced Basotho to move to the present day Free State and later Lesotho where they settled. They lived on top of the mountain named Thaba-Bosiu to protect themselves from enemies who could attack at any time. They would roll rocks down the mountain when they were attacked by the Zulu, so they never really had to go into battle. Tumelo Mbele describes Thaba-Bosiu as a place of safety that allowed the Sotho people to protect themselves without the use of weapons; they rolled rocks down the mountain to stop enemies from coming up.

Andries Mofokeng's story is similar to Mankele's, however he credits Moshoeshoe as the founder of the Sotho 'tribe'; Mamothepane Mofokeng, Thabo Mothobisa, Tumelo Mbele and Tumelo Kgomo agree and Tumelo Mbele calls Moshoeshoe a king of great intelligence. Puso Belang describes the role that Moshoeshoe played in the establishment of the Sotho 'tribe' that was, according to him, birthed out of war. People of different cultures were scattered in groups as a result of the wars that had taken place and found themselves in one place and kept increasing in numbers. They joined the already existing Sotho 'tribe' and needed a leader. Moshoeshoe was chosen as the first king of the Sotho nation. The people who came together completely embraced their new culture and no longer referred to where they came from. Makhothi Tsotetsi offers a different account of the origins of the Basotho. He states came from other parts of Africa like Senegal, although he is not sure of the exact place. Tsheeliso agrees that the Sotho people came from other parts of Africa; any part like Ethiopia. They

later settled at a place called *Ha-Sekhukhune* ('*Sekhukhune's*, a Sotho chief, place' after moving northwards to Lesotho. Those who arrived at Tafelkop or Ntsoana-Tsatsi were the Pedi of Rapulana who changed their clanship to Tlokoa. The fighting continued and some Basotho were forced to move to Nquthu. This war eventually came to an end. Some of the people stayed behind when others left Ntsoana-Tsatsi, their descendants are still found there.

To explain how Basotho arrived in QwaQwa, Dr Maletle referred to the story of Paulus Mopeli, son of Moshoeshoe by his last or youngest wife. Moshoeshoe's other children felt threatened by Paulus because their father favoured him, fearing he could inherit the throne. To heal this division, Moshoeshoe sent his son to the area between the towns of Ladybrand and Ficksburg (as they are called today) to settle there. This place received his name and still carries it today. Mopeli was looking for another place to settle in the Orange Free State (OFS). He asked president Brand, who was leader of the OFS at that time, for a place in his area. He was given QwaQwa where he and his clan, Bakwena, would settle. This decision was taken to control or at least have some point of negotiation with chief Wetsi, chief of Bakgolokoe, who lived in QwaQwa at that time. He was notorious for his conflicts with the government so Mopeli was to be intermediary there. However, by the time Mopeli arrived in QwaQwa chief Wetsi had already been pushed out of the region back into Lesotho. This history of QwaQwa resulted with it having a population of different clans including the Kwena, Kgolokoe and Tlokoa.

Phakiso, Tankiso and Ramakau emphasized the loss of traditional knowledge and practices rather than the origin of the Sotho people. They attributed the extent of culture loss among the Sotho to the introduction of Christianity, loss of language and loss of oral traditions.

'Historical' stories of origin are more detailed than mythical one. They are told in a progression from the beginning to the recent situation, in cases where it is discussed. They therefore follow the line of traditional historical stories that are detailed and show progression.

Summary

The origin of the Basotho is different for each informant. There are, however, some similarities between the stories told even if the details of each story are different. These

stories and their ability to provoke memory and kindle a sense of community will be discussed in the following chapter. In the analysis of stories emphasis will be on the role that they play in the society in which they are told.

CHAPTER 3: 'RELIGION', 'MYTH' and 'HISTORY'

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to observe the differences between 'stories of origin' by grouping them into analytical categories according to their content of predominance. The purpose of this categorization is to unearth the role and function of 'stories of origin' for the people who tell them as well the community as a whole. Three categories have been formed: 'religion', 'history', and 'myth'. The first part of this chapter describes the categorization of stories; following this each category is defined and described with the use of examples from the informants.

Reasons for Categorization of Stories

According to historian of Religions, Thomas A. Tweed (2006. 18) "... theories of religion are sightings for particular geographical and social sites whereby scholars construct meaning using categories and criteria they inherit, revise, and create". These categories are constructed by theorist on the basis of their point of observation, that is to say based on what they see, the position from where they make the observation, who they are and how they describe the topic under study. My background, both academic and personal as Tweed (2006) puts it, influences categories that are formed and the meaning drawn from these categories. My academic background influenced my understanding of the concepts religion, myth, and history influenced the way that I categorized them because I formed the criteria of each category on the basis of my understanding of each concept. My personal background as a member of this culture exposed me to stories of origin, especially mythical ones. I had certain expectation of what constitutes myth and therefore was biased in this manner in the way that I categorized mythical stories in particular.

The categories according to which stories of origin are grouped are created for analytical purposes in order to draw meaning from stories of origin that are told by different informants. Three categories have been created for analytical purposes; stories that are predominantly 'religious', 'mythical', and 'historical'. Each category consists of stories that are classed according to their content of predominance, therefore each category is not exclusive as the

stories within in may have one or more aspects from other categories. Flood (1999: 48) states that the boundaries of each category are not rigid so there are "... degrees of category membership ...". No story fits in its entirety to the category in which it is placed.

The 'stories of origin' told by different informants each had an overriding or emphasized theme. The major theme, therefore, served as the deciding factor with regards to how each story is categorized. Those stories that had as their major theme aspects of Christian or 'Traditional' beliefs were categorized as 'religious', those stories that were not easily verifiable through recorded events but were regarded as true by the narrators and had certain symbolic dimensions were classified as 'mythical', and finally those stories that showed a progression of events that could, mostly, be verified through recorded sources were categorized as 'historical'. Within the 'historical' category, those stories that had strong mythical aspects were addressed within this context are referred to as the 'myth-like' stories.

There is no one definition of each concept that is accepted by all scholars, therefore the definitions and descriptions of the concepts 'religion', 'myth' and 'history' are created for the purpose of this study. These concepts are, therefore, not assumed to be the only and correct definitions but they are used and understood in the described manner in this study.

'Religion' as a category

Flood (1999: 47) defines religions as "value-laden narratives and behaviours that bind people to their objectives, to each other, and to non-empirical claims and beings' ". These value-filled narratives, together with behaviours that may accompany them, serve to structure society by drawing boundaries that are recognized by those who believe the story to be true and act in accordance to it. The boundaries of society do not extend to those who do not believe the content of the narrative to be true because the narrative is of non-effect them. It is a means for bringing people with similar beliefs together and keeping them together. Historian of religions, Ursula King defines religion as "...a core concern, as expressing and addressing the sacred, or as disclosing a transcendent focus linked to ultimate value. Religion has not only been the matrix of cultures and civilization, but it structures reality ... and encompasses the deepest level of what it means to be human" (King 1995: 4).

Flood (1999: 47) states that these narratives are not limited to religion; they can also apply to society and culture. It is in the application of this definition of religion that both history and myth form part of religion. In the context of this study, society refers to the 'historical' stories of origin while culture refers to the 'mythical' stories of origin. These relationships between society and 'history' and culture and 'myth' will be discussed in the following section. Religion has some narratives that carry a lot of value and the actions performed that are different from other aspects of culture, but can only be recognized or are effective within a specific or given culture (Flood 1999: 2). Although religion is distinguishable, it is not necessarily active outside the context of the culture within which it is practiced. The narratives and actions that relate to religion are, therefore, also active when religion is active. This means that there is a relationship between the religion's activity and the effectiveness of the narratives told, particularly with regards to the actions performed in relation or response to the narrative with the context of the religion.

Religion always has social aspects but social or cultural phenomena may or may not have religious aspects (Flood 1999: 2). Religion cannot be separated from social phenomena such as narratives and history, while such phenomena may or may not carry religious aspects. In the context of this study, religion is seen as the umbrella that encompasses social aspects, in this case 'myth' (narratives) and 'history', which cannot be separated from it. However, within each aspect, religion may play a role or be part of the social or cultural phenomena at play. 'Mythical' and 'historical' narratives told may have religious aspects, especially in making reference to certain religious beliefs or practices. An example of this relationship between 'religion', 'myth' and 'history' can be seen in 'stories of origin' of Basotho. All stories, being either 'religious', 'mythical' or 'historical' cannot be separated from the larger category of religion. However, although stories form part of religion, the content of each story is not necessarily religious; for example in making references to a supernatural being or practices related to religious belief. Of all the stories told by informants within the category of 'myth' and 'history', only four informants made explicit reference to aspects of religion.

Christianity and 'Stories of origin'

In the following excerpts from stories told by informants make reference(s) to a supernatural entity (God) without any information about this entity. The section that follows will first look at some general aspects of these stories in relation to religion.

Basotho came from somewhere near Egypt. They were instructed by God, through Moses, to move to Bochabela... [Mochini Nzimande]

Basotho are part of a nation that was created by God [Mankele Mofokeng]

Christianity was introduced and the Bible was read to Basotho. They were eventually forced to convert (at the arrival of the European settlers) [Tumelo Kgomo]

The first excerpt makes reference to God as the one who directs the Sotho people, instructing them on where to live. The second excerpt also makes reference to God, but does this in a different way because God is seen as creator of Basotho and others. Here reference is made to a supernatural being or entity that has power to create and direct the lives of the people unlike the third example which simply refers to the introduction of Christianity and the conversion of Basotho (by force) to this new religion. However, Tumelo Kgomo makes a strong statement that Basotho were forced to convert, giving a totally different view of Christianity as a religion from the first two informants. In the first informant make a Biblical reference to God thereby clarifying the God to whom he refers, thereby personalizing God and his Christian walk. The second informant simply refers to God, without specifying religion. The third informant, however, views Christianity as a foreign religion that was imposed on the Sotho people.

The following statement is an excerpt from a story in the category of ‘myth’:

... when a Sotho man prays: He takes off his hat and faced where the sun rises (his home) so that God can see that he is a man [Marabudi Thloho]

Here, reference is made to a supernatural entity in the acknowledgement of God through the activities performed. However, no other information regarding the involvement of God in the lives of the Sotho people is mentioned. This works together with the Sotho idea of God as described in Chapter 1; a distant god who does not involve himself in the lives of the people even though he has created them.

The Basotho had Traditional beliefs, as discussed in chapter one, as their religion before the introduction of Christianity in the sixteen century by missionaries (Quinlan 1988). The introduction of Christianity brought a change to stories that describe the origins of the Basotho because of the influences of Christian beliefs. This relationship between stories of

origin and religion will be discussed in this chapter as well the role of religion in forging and maintaining relationships.

The informants' understanding of 'religion' is taken from the stories that they tell. Some informants make direct reference to Christianity while others only refer to God, making it difficult to determine whether they are approaching religion from a Christian or Traditional perspective. In both cases, reference is made to a supernatural entity that may or may not be described in detail. The extent of detail provided acts as a clue to the beliefs of the informants who tell the story. When informants make reference to a god or any other supernatural entity and do not provide much information about the people's relationship with the entity or practices or actions that serve to acknowledge the entity, it can be considered to be a more Traditional belief system because other religions such as Christianity tend to provide more information about the relationship between people and their God. Christianity has established norms, symbols, theme and form of expression that differs from the 'Traditional' beliefs and practices that are lax and therefore interpreted differently by different individuals.

The following is a common understanding of the concept of 'religion' as subtracted from interviews with informants. Informants describe 'religion' as belief in supernatural beings that may or may not involve themselves in the daily lives of the people. Such beings may also be the creator(s) of the particular nation. Certain rituals and practices may be performed in relation to or reverence of the supernatural beings. The religion of the Basotho of QwaQwa is often either traditional or Christian. Traditional religion is belief in a God who created man, but distances himself from them. Reverence is given to ancestral spirits, in the form of rituals and practices, who have the ability to affect and influence the lives of people in a positive or negative way. Sacrifices are often made to ancestral spirits to acknowledge and appease them. Other religions like Islam and Hare Krishna are also found, but they are not represented among the informants and will, therefore, not be included in the analysis.

In the context of this study, religion refers only to beliefs, practices or stories that are related or linked to supreme beings or entities that may or may not play a role in the daily lives of the people. Anything that exists outside of the boundary of this definition is not considered religion for the purposes of this study.

The following stories are excerpts of stories that give a Christian explanation as to the origins of Basotho and other Bantu people.

Everything was created by Ramacholo (God). God created the first people of earth, Adam and Eve, in this image. He breathed his breath into them and gave them life. All people descend from them, including Basotho.

To explain why people are different today, he adds: *An old man was walking around unclothed and the people of Jaftha covered him, but a curse was put on all who descend from this old man and it was prophesied that they would be dark and would suffer greatly, working for the other man's (the one who clothed him) children forever.* [Jakobo Mokoena]

The following story is told by an informant who uses history throughout his story, but he makes mention of God and the Bible.

Basotho were instructed, by God through Moses, to move from the vicinity of Egypt to the south. They were to settle at Bochabela or "the place at which the sun rises" [Mochini Nzimande]

These two stories make clear reference to the Christian concept of God and the people's acknowledgement of him in their interaction with him in each case. The following section will make references to the excerpts of 'stories of origin' given above to explain the relationship between religion, in this case Christianity, and 'stories of origin' told by informants. Although these stories differ, they both make reference to God as the one who directed the lives and movements of Basotho and they both use the Bible as their source of information. Perhaps, in these cases, the Bible is used to validate the stories told.

According to historian of religions, Robert A. Segal, both myth and history, as science, explain the world in which people live or lived (Segal 1999: 7). As the world changes, the myth and history begin to change, and so do the rituals that are performed according to the myths or histories. The world of Basotho changed when many were converted to Christianity by missionaries. Stories of origin that were used to explain the world changed to reflect their changing worldview. According to theologian Gary Lease (1998: 442), worldviews have to do with the relationship between individuals and the world in which they live with emphasis on the meanings attached to this relationship. Lease (1998) contends these worldviews are

strongly influenced by myth in the way that they are and the way that they are used. This indicates that 'stories of origin' should change as the worldview of those who tell it changes.

Effect of conversion on the Sotho society

Many of the Basotho in QwaQwa converted to Christianity; Ntate Mokoena is one of the informants who are Christians. The change of religion presented a challenge for Bantu people because it required they abandon most of their cultural practices as they were not in line with Biblical law. The idea of God is an example of this. According to Mutwa (1998: 563), the Bantu people believed God to be "[...] neither evil nor good, neither life nor death, neither merciful nor cruel; God exists but as far as we know for no reason whatever. God is neither beneficial to us nor interested in us in any way". To reconcile this, stories of origin were 'reinvented' to reflect their new religion; in this case, Christianity. Previously, Basotho made little reference to God and if they did it was to refer to him as creator and nothing further. The excerpts of 'stories of origin' from Jakobo Mokoena and Mochini Nzimande that are provided in the preceding section offer an explanation of the creation of the Sotho people from a Christian perspective. Jakobo Mokoena and Mochini Nzimande speak of God in a way that shows an interaction with him either by instruction from God as in Mr. Nzimande's story or by referring to creation of man by God as in Mr. Mokoena's story.

Individuals began to explain their world from a Christian point of view which could be seen in their 'stories of origin' that fit into the mould of Christian narratives. Informants made references to the Biblical story of creation to explain how all people, including the Basotho, came into existence. For instance, Mr. Mokoena uses the Sotho name for God, Ramacholo, to endorse and personalize his 'story of origin' among the Sotho people. He makes further Biblical references to explain how African people became dark, as well as how they ended up in Africa, Southern Africa in the case of Basotho. Stories of origin with a religious theme described the origin of Basotho from a Christian perspective, sometimes using the Bible as a reference and evidence of the progression of Basotho from one place to another. In Mr. Mokoena's story, all black people are depicted as a cursed people in the sight of God. They are doomed to suffer in this life because of the weaknesses of their ancestors. His story explains why many black people including Basotho had suffered greatly at the hands of others throughout history. It is a way of making sense of his strife and that of his people, thereby

allowing him to come to terms with his and others' circumstances and find peace despite the injustice of the times. It is his own way of describing and explaining the past and the current social situation in which he finds himself.

Mr. Mokoena's understanding of the origin of the Sotho people is useful in explaining the role of stories in society; however it should be kept in mind that he is not representative of the views of other Sotho people. This is due to the shortage of informants who told stories from a largely 'religious' perspective. Therefore, the findings made here cannot be generalized to other Sotho societies or people.

As Basotho converted to Christianity, they became members of a distinct group within Sotho society. This was done by making some changes to existing 'stories of origin' in order to accommodate their new Christian beliefs. Lincoln (1989: 27) states that changes can be made to the "accepted myth's standard narration or advance new lines of interpretation for it". The original 'story of origin' can be changed or adjusted to accommodate changes in religious beliefs. In this way, the new 'story of origin' is used to confirm the new religious beliefs or practices. However, the older 'stories of origin' still exist and carry the same weight of validity as the newer version for the people who tell them. In a manner of speaking, the new version counters the older versions because it draws from new beliefs that are not shared with those who accept older Traditional beliefs.

Telling Christian narratives strengthens the connection between individuals belonging to this religion, thereby giving strength to the beliefs, rituals and practices of the religion concerned. This means that the borders that separate Christians from non-Christians in the Sotho community are identified and maintained through emphasis of differences in "habituated behaviours (customs), normative preferences (values in the moral sphere, aesthetics or taste in others), and so forth" (Lincoln 1989: 9). The 'stories of origin' in this category, therefore, aim to reflect these differences that mark the boundaries between sub-groups in society. According to Lincoln (1989:22), "[T]hese stories recount formative moments from the past" in such a way that they evoke emotion in the people who tell stories today. Mr. Mokoena, who told his story from a 'religious' perspective did it in such a way that it explains the past and present suffering of black people as the result of a curse. He focused on the moments that were significant, that is the creation of man by God (in the Garden of Eden) and also on the

curse on the man who was naked (from whom Basotho descend). He uses these two events to explain the later experiences of black people. The changed myth becomes an instrument that legitimizes “actions and mobilize social groupings” (Lincoln 1989: 28). It serves to legitimize the religious practices and beliefs of Sotho Christians, while also explaining historical event.

Myth as Part of Religion

The discussion above shows the relationship between ‘religion’ and ‘stories of origin’, but it is also important to keep in mind that myth can be part of religion and is treated as such in the following section.

According to Lincoln (1989: 24), myth refers to “... a small class of stories that possess both credibility and *authority*”. The myth has to be generally accepted by all members of that society for it to have credibility and it should have the power to “construct society” if it is to have authority (Lincoln 1989: 25). Myth can be used to change, structure or restructure society by adjusting its credibility and authority in one or more of the following ways:

1. They can contest the authority or credibility of a given myth, reducing it to the status of history or legend and thereby deprive it of the capacity to continually reconstruct accustomed social forms.
2. They can attempt to invest a history, legend or even a fable with authority and credibility, thus elevating it to the status of myth and thereby make of it an instrument with which to construct novel social forms.
3. They can advance novel lines of interpretation for an established myth or modify details of its narration and thereby change the nature of the sentiments (and the society) it evokes.” (Lincoln 1989: 25).

Myth is not always recorded in written or other forms. For this reason, myth is difficult to validate (or invalidate) because it can be accepted as historical and valid by the people who tell it, and ‘fictional’ by outsiders. For Lincoln (1989) myth is valid when it is believed to be true by those who tell it and accepted as such by the audience that hears it. Therefore, the validity of stories of origin of Basotho lies not in the story itself, rather in the belief that stories are true by both the teller and the one who listens. Insiders may use myth as a historical source that legitimizes the actions that are based on it, including religious practices and customs. This is what makes the concept of myth unique in its use because, according to Strenski (1987: 1-2, cited in McCutcheon 1998: 193), “myth is everything and nothing at the same time”. It is *the* true story or false one, revelation or deception, sacred or vulgar, real or

fictional, symbol or tool, archetype or stereotype...”. In this understanding of myth, what may be accepted as truth by the members of the society or those who tell the myth is not necessarily accepted by others (outsiders).

As stated on religion and social aspects, myth has social aspects but social phenomena may have mythical aspects. Each ‘story of origin’ that is ‘mythical’ has social aspects such as norms, values and behaviour attached to gender roles and other ascriptions. The following statements by informants show the relationship between myth and social aspects of Sotho society, showing the presence of social aspects in each of the ‘myths’.

Moshoeshoe was believed to be pure of heart and was therefore chosen to lead. A leader should be kindhearted, brave, and patient. ...he became the first king of the Sotho people.
[Marabudi Thloho]

People should know their traditions even if they do not practice them. They should still be available for future generations... [Marabudi Thloho]

Ntsoana-Tsatsi is where Basotho lived during a periods of famine. They ate grasshoppers, bees and grilled mealies that have been ground that were often used for long distant travels.
[Anna Nyaredi]

The first statement shows that even within myth, social aspects come through. In this case, the required characteristics of a leader were shown in the myth because Basotho appointed Moshoeshoe because he had those required characteristics. These characteristics are, therefore, important to the social functioning of Sotho society. This statement shows the change in detail of the story to change the sentiments associated with it; this is one of the ways that Lincoln (1989) points to as a means for reconstructing society. In other stories, Moshoeshoe became king because he brought the Sotho people together, yet here the informant changes the details slightly to create in Moshoeshoe a figure of bravery and purity, worthy to lead the Sotho people. This kind of narrative evokes more strongly sentiments of pride and unity, making the Sotho people different from others.

The second statement emphasizes the importance of knowing one’s traditions so that this knowledge could be passed on to the next generation, whether or not it is used. Therefore, social significance is given to knowing the tradition of your people and the myth is used as a platform to bring forth. It is a means for keeping information that may be useful in the construction or maintenance of society in the future. It therefore meets Lincoln’s (1989) idea

that a story can be given authority and credibility so that it becomes myth and a useful tool of social construction.

The third statement gives an idea of the survival strategies that Basotho used during periods of famine; this ties in well with the second statement because this kind of knowledge can be useful to future generations. All of these statements give social guidelines that help in maintaining social structure and the Sotho culture. They are a means of carrying valuable information regarding authority and social roles as well as useful knowledge to the following generations thereby ensuring the survival of the norms, values and institutions of authority that are conveyed in these stories.

Although these excerpts of 'stories of origin' show that myth has social aspects, they also show that social phenomena, such as those shown in the above excerpts, need not have 'mythical' aspects. None of the stories show mythical aspects in their social phenomena; this gives a good example of the sometime absence of mythical aspects in the social phenomena.

'Stories of origin' that make reference to known myths

'Stories of origin' that are predominantly 'mythical' are used to make sense of the world in which people live. These stories are often considered difficult to verify and subsequently believed to be fictional rather than factual. The use of 'myth' as an instrument, particularly in the maintenance of social boundaries is discussed in this section.

'Myth' is understood by informants, as drawn out from interviews for analytical purposes, as a description of a historical story that is difficult to verify through recorded events, but is believed to have occurred. The exact details of the event as well as the time may or may not be known. However, the story is believed to be true even if individuals are not certain of the exact facts of the story or the circumstances in which it occurred. Reference may or may not be made to the existence of supernatural beings or entities.

The validity of stories of origin has been questioned by outsiders. For Lincoln (1989: 24), myth is valid when it is believed to be true by those who tell it and accepted as such by the audience that hears it. Therefore, the validity of stories of origin of Basotho lies not in the story itself, rather in the belief that stories are true by both the teller and the one who listens. 'Myth' does not refer to any story of the past that is told by people that evokes some

sentiment. ‘Myth’ carries validity and is believed to be true by all who tell it, it is not questionable even if the story itself is not detailed.

The following are excerpts from stories that are ‘mythical’ in their content of predominance. The following stories told by informants provide little detail about the way of life at Ntsoana-Tsatsi, but informants believe the place to be real and an important part of the history of

Basotho lived at Ntsoana-Tsatsi during a period of famine and had to live on grasshoppers, bees and grilled, ground corn. [Anna Nyaredi]

Basotho left this place to move to southern Africa and that they were agriculturalists planting mostly wheat and later maize [Maseabata Moloji]

The following statements show the performance of rituals in reference to the ‘mythical’ origins of Basotho. Although Dr Malete and Tumelo Mbele tell their stories from a predominantly ‘historical’ perspective, they discuss the ‘mythical’ stories as part of the distant history of Basotho. Dr Malete, however, does not believe that Ntsoana-Tsatsi is the true place of origin of Basotho. Dr Malete’s story recounts the following story:

The Basotho are believed to have emerged from the ground in a place where there is a large body of water that is surrounded by reeds. Some rituals are performed in accordance to this belief for example; a reed is placed at the entrance of a hut in which a woman has given birth to signify that a Sotho life was born. The reed is a symbol of the emergence of the first Sotho people from this place known as Ntsoana-Tsatsi.

Tumelo Mbele’s story is as follows:

The Basotho came from Ntsoana-Tsatsi and they signify this in all their traditional practices by facing the direction of this place (facing the direction from which the sun rises). Basotho did this because they believed that all help came from that place.

Tumelo Mbele’s story indicates that they believed their ancestors to be at that place so they had to face them when seeking help or for any other ritual or practice. Another informant, Marabudi Tlhoho, who tells his story from a predominantly ‘mythical’ perspective, says:

The Basotho believe this place to be their home or place of origin. Any ritual or practice that is performed recognizes this place. He gave two examples of such rituals: The first is, when a

Sotho man prays, he takes off his hat and faces the direction of the sunrise so that God can see that he is a man. Secondly, when a Sotho person dies their body is buried facing the direction of the sunrise so that he faces home. Basotho refer to themselves the people of Bochabela.

The 'stories of origin' are used to make sense of the world in which informants live. Stories told from a predominantly 'mythical' perspective make reference to moments that are so much in the distant past that little detail can be provided, yet the significance of that event remains firmly in the minds of the Sotho people. What remains is the idea of the place; it is a means for explaining their relationship and reference to Bochabela in their ritual and practices.

This understanding of where they come from, which is what makes them different from other groups, allows them to maintain their way of life, beliefs, rituals and practices and thereby maintain the current social structure. The power to maintain or change the structure of society, therefore, lies in the ability of 'myth' to evoke emotion or sentiment. 'Stories of origin' told from a predominantly 'mythical perspective invoke sentiment by referring to the origin of Basotho from a mythical place called Ntsoana-Tsatsi. Although little detail is provided regarding the place, many rituals are performed in reference to and remembrance of the place at which the Sotho nation was birthed. This shows that people acknowledge and accept these stories to be true. Stories, therefore, creates a sense of unity by making emphasizing the distant origins of the Basotho which separates them from other groups or societies. For example, the stories that Anna Nyaredi and Maseabata Moloi recount what are important for them; their focus is on the things that concerned women at the time. The emphasis is on the food that was grown and eaten in those days, which was the role of women. Their familiarity with the gender roles of the time is reflected in the story and they are able to identify with the women of the time by referring to the things that would have been a big part of their lives had they lived in those days. This creates a sense of familiarity with the life lived by Basotho back then, thereby kindling sentiments of oneness with them.

Therefore, 'myth' can be used to construct, maintain, restructure or even change society by appealing to sentiments in society that influence the sense of unity, cohesion or solidarity. By this process, society is structured and restructured by those who tell and control the content of

the story (Lincoln 1989). This keeps the Basotho within a boundary that is not open to others who do not share similar origins, thereby drawing clear boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The ‘myths’, therefore, play a significant role in society which Lincoln (1989) likens to the effect that ancestral invocations has on social unity. Instead of reference being made to ancestry, through clanship, focus is on the emergence of the Sotho community. This period is represented as an important moment in the history of Basotho, thereby evoking sentiments of unity and cohesion at a societal level. The stories act as a means of reminding people of their distant past, their origins and how they arrived to their current state as society as a whole thereby strengthening their sense of oneness.

Lincoln (1989: 20) contends ancestral invocation is not limited to formal or informal speeches that kindle sentiments that encourage cohesion, but also to “... allusions, gestures, narratives, displays of emblematic object or designs, and so forth”. The use of narratives, rituals and practices that are associated with the origin of Basotho, therefore, has an ability to maintain or change society as determined by their content. In the case of Basotho, rituals and practices that are related to ‘mythical’ are explained and justified by these stories. Different informants offered different version of these stories, but they work much in the same way by evoking sentiments that create bonds within their society. ‘Myth’ is used as an instrument of construction in the Sotho and other societies by evoking sentiments through repetition of narratives. Such sentiment encourages solidarity and social unity and thereby support and maintain the existing social structure.

Both predominantly ‘historical’ and ‘mythical’ ‘stories of origin’ have a special characteristic, that is, the ability to act as a “coding device” that is used to carry important information (Lincoln 1989: 25). Even with the changing world and circumstances, this information needs to be passed on so the ‘myth’ will take on a new form in order to continue to carry the message to future generations. The ‘story of origin’ that is ‘mythical’ is still past on even if its content changes or is forgotten. The striking feature of stories of origin that are predominantly ‘mythical’ is that they are generally not detailed with regard to their reference to the place of origin and the way of life there, yet the stories persist. The ‘mythical’ story of origin conveys important information regarding the origins of the Basotho, without going into detail about life in those times. This can be observed in the excerpts of stories shown at the beginning of this section as told by Dr Maletle and Tumelo Mbele. None of the informants provided much

detail about Ntoana-Tsatsi, but they attest to the truth of these stories. Therefore, traditions and practices that acknowledge or are based on ‘stories of origin’ are validated and evidenced through these stories. The following excerpts show the performance of rituals in reference to the ‘mythical’ origins of Basotho. Although Dr Maletle and Tumelo Mbele tell their stories from a predominantly ‘historical’ perspective, they discuss the ‘mythical’ stories as part of the distant history of Basotho. Dr Maletle, however, does not believe that Ntsoana-Tsatsi is the true place of origin of Basotho. The significance of the place, Ntsoana-Tsatsi, can be seen in these stories (told in the beginning of this section). The fact that little is known about the place is of little significance, the very idea of it makes them conscious of their origin and heritage, thereby bringing up sentiment that builds a sense of unity and cohesion among Basotho. The difference in stories does not have much of an effect on the social structure because each story has a similar effect on each informant who tells it. Social cohesion, therefore, lies in the ability of the story to kindle sentiment rather than on the story itself. This means that the differences between stories do not have an effect on the sense of belonging to the Sotho society.

In summary, ‘stories of origin’ that are predominantly ‘mythical’ serve to create a bond between those belonging to Sotho society. It serves to unify the people and to emphasize the differences between them and others in order to maintain the current structure of society and keep people aligned to the Sotho way of life. Religious stories create and maintain a bond between the subgroup of Christianity that exists within the larger Sotho society while myth serves to strengthen ties between members of the larger Sotho society. Therefore, the two types of narratives play similar roles at different levels in society. The following section describes the role of ‘historical’ stories of origin in society.

‘History’ as a Category

‘Historical’ ‘stories of origin’ play a similar role as ‘mythical’ stories in the way that they are used to make sense of the world around in which the story teller lives. ‘Historical’ stories are, however, often considered factual and more verifiable stories told from a ‘mythical’ perspective. In this section, the transition from the ‘mythical’ to the ‘historical’ in stories of origin is addressed first, followed by the use of discourse to maintain social boundaries

between and within 'tribes', and finally history as an instrument that structures and restructures society.

As gleaned from interviews with informants, history is understood as the recorded description of events and experience(s) of a person, group or nation from the past. The events need not be described in a chronological way, although this is common. The recording of these events as they occur is taken to be 'evidence' of their validity, they are considered to be 'proven'. History does not include stories that cannot be verified through any recorded source, it should also show a progression of events over times even if the exact time is not specified.

Lincoln (1989: 24) identified three factors according to which narratives are accepted as historical and valid; "... (1) a numerically specified position in the sequence of elapsed time can be affixed to them; (2) written sources attest to them; and (3) their only significant actors are human." The informants' stories show a progression even though they do not give the exact time during which these events occurred. Their stories are recorded in written history, particularly books written by missionaries and early anthropologists and historians. In all the stories told, the participants are human, in particular are Basotho. These aspects can be seen in the following excerpts from 'stories of origin' told by informants:

Basotho were brought together by King Moshoeshoe who brought together the existing Sotho 'tribe', with the exception of the Tlokoa tribe that remained under the rule of Sekonyela, and small groups of people who had been displaced by wars that were instigated by King Shaka of the Zulu people of Natal. They settled in Lesotho. [Dr Maletse]

Basotho, together with other Bantu people, arrived in Southern Africa to find the areas at and close to the coast occupied by the San, indigenous, people. They, nevertheless, settled on the land but were forced northwards to Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique and Lesotho (in the case of Basotho) by wars that broke out at the prompting of King Shaka of the Zulu. Basotho settled in Lesotho where Moshoeshoe became their king. [Mochini Nzimande]

Basotho arrived at the southern part of Africa in search for good pastoral lands and water. They were, however, forced to move from the southernmost part to escape wars and moved northwards to what is the Free State Province and Lesotho of today. They settled on top of a mountain named Thaba-Bosiu for protection. They rolled large rocks down the mountain whenever they were being attacked by other 'tribes'. [Mankele Mofokeng]

Although these stories are different, it is clear that the Basotho came together as a group and settled in their current place in an attempt to escape the consequences of war.

These stories can be seen as a form of invented tradition as they are repeated over time and serve a purpose in society, in this case to carry the history and origin of Basotho to future generations. As an invented tradition, Hobsbawm makes the following observation: They seem to belong to three overlapping types: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (Hobsbawm 1983: 9). 'Stories of origin' of the Basotho that are predominantly 'historical' fulfill the first and second observations made by Hobsbawm in the sense that stories symbolize the existing cohesion in the society of the Basotho by invoking sentiments maintain or increase social unity. As observed in the statements made by informants, the Sotho kingdom was born out of the circumstances of the time and the actions of Moshoeshe. Retelling these stories serves, therefore, to legitimize the institution of authority that lies in a king, thereby meeting the second criterion. Although the informants here do not live in the Kingdom of Lesotho, where the king of the Sotho people lives, they fall under his social, but not political, authority. This is because Lesotho is a country independent from South Africa, where the informants live, but the political boundaries do not affect the social boundaries that mark the Sotho society whether people live in South Africa, Lesotho or anywhere else in the world. As mentioned, the first two criteria are clearly met in the society of the Sotho, this does not mean the third criterion is not met. The very existence and survival of society implies the values and beliefs, through socialization, are maintained in such a way that society is legitimized within.

The myth-like story

There is another type of story that falls within the category of 'history'; the 'myth-like' story that has aspects of the 'mythical' within the context of a 'historical' story. These stories are not less historical than others, they simply make reference to distant times or situations that are difficult to verify through recorded sources that are used to verify the 'historical'. These stories still meet the three requirements of history that Lincoln (1989) referred to while also adding a special characteristic that brings out the 'mythical'. From the three examples of 'historical' stories of origin, references to mythical aspects are made by each of the aforementioned informants.

Basotho as well as all other Bantu people originate in Egypt. They moved southwards until they reached southern Africa.

...the Basotho are believed to have come from a place called Ntsoana-Tsatsi which was surrounded by reeds that came out of the water. The significance of this place can still be seen in the traditional practices surround birth and death. When Sotho children are born, a reed is placed in front of the door to signify that a life has just entered this world and its connection to the place of origin, Ntsoana-Tsatsi. When a child dies, mothers sit on the ground to signify the return of their children to the ground from which they came. [Dr Malete]

They came from Egypt., Israel and the surrounding areas. They moved southwards in search for a better life. They were searching for resources such as good soil, water and grass for cattle. They kept animals and moved with them until they reached the sea in Natal in South Africa. [Mankele Mofokeng]

Although, these stories make reference to mythical aspects, they still carry the same historical validity as others because these mythical aspects add to the story and do not take away from the historical content of it. These mythical aspects are also used to explain, in the first excerpt from Dr Malete's story, the rituals performed at childbirth and at the death of a child. This meets the third criteria identified by Hobsbawm (1983) because it communicates practices that relate to the origin of the Sotho people to the following generations and explains the significance of such practices. The excerpt from Makele Mofokeng's story explains, in mythical and unverifiable terms, how Basotho arrived in Southern Africa. Both informants refer to the historical and verifiable origins of the Sotho people, rendering the stories valid in spite of its 'mythical' aspects.

In order to understand the difference in effect that 'history' has on society in contrast 'myth', it becomes necessary to observe the transition from 'myth' to 'history'. This transition is discussed in the following section to give

Transition from 'myth' to 'history'

The authority of the predominantly 'mythical' stories of origin to maintain, alter, structure and restructure society is parallel to that of the predominantly 'historical' stories of origin. Lincoln's suggestion on how society can be altered as discussed in the historical section (3.2.4) shows the transition between 'history' and 'myth'. The largely 'historical' story of origin reconstructed society by taking away the detail of 'myth' and adding historical detail to

validate it for all people. This changed the sentiments that were evoked by the original 'myth' and replaced them with sentiments that are evoked by events that took place at a particular time. Here, both the second (explained above) and the third means for using myth as described by Lincoln were used by investing in the written history as the new 'myth' of the Basotho giving it credibility and authority the recorded text thereby altering. The alteration of 'myths' to create 'history' does not necessarily mean that the original story is destroyed or no longer exists. Instead, the story survives because it is primarily for the purpose of explaining the world in which informants live. This is why many of the informants still made reference to the distant, though unrecorded, past in their telling of their 'stories of origin'. 'Mythical' 'stories of origin' still carry important information to the next generations, information that has not been sacrificed even after a change in the environment has influenced stories.

The transition from 'myth' to 'history' should therefore be considered because 'myth' represents an earlier story of origin, whereas 'historical' stories are more recent. Therefore, these stories exist side by side. The transition of 'stories of origin' from 'myth' to 'history' in the Sotho society is described below, also referring to outside factors and circumstances that had an influence on the change in stories. The change in the stories told had some effect on society.

The majority of informants told 'stories of origin' from a predominantly 'historical' perspective. The stories told by Basotho have previously been regarded untrue by outsiders while they were taken to be true by those who tell them. These stories were referred to as myth or legend by outsiders because they refer to events of the distant past that are difficult to verify. However, they have recently changed to be more 'historical' in the sense that they are more chronological in the description of events and can be confirmed through recorded sources. 'Historical' stories of origin describe to the formation of 'tribes' and nations amongst the Bantu peoples of Southern Africa. Much of the information is verifiable through recorded sources and is therefore accepted to be valid by outsiders.

The Basotho were brought together by King Moshoeshoe who brought together the existing Sotho 'tribe', with the exception of the Tlokoa tribe that remained under the rule of Sekonyela, and small groups of people who had been displaced by wars that were instigated by King Shaka of the Zulu people of Natal. They settled in Lesotho. [Dr Maletse]

Mochini Nzimande's story is similar to Dr Maletse's, but there are some differences.

The Basotho, together with other Bantu people, arrived in Southern Africa to find the areas at and close to the coast occupied by the San, indigenous people. They, nevertheless, settled on the land but were forced northwards to Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique and Lesotho (in the case of Basotho) by wars that broke out at the prompting of King Shaka of the Zulu. The Basotho settled in Lesotho where Moshoeshoe became their king. [Mochini Nzimande]

The Basotho arrived at the southern part of Africa in search for good pastoral lands and water. They were, however, forced to move from the southernmost part to escape wars and moved northwards to what is the Free State Province and Lesotho of today. They settled on top of a mountain named Thaba-Bosiu for protection. They rolled large rocks down the mountain whenever they were being attacked by other 'tribes'. [Mankele Mofokeng]

Although these stories are different, it is clear that the Basotho came together and settled in their current place of settlement as a result of war. The arrival of people into Southern Africa was the result of lack of resources, in their search for better resources wars broke out that forced people even further south. Based on the three factors that contribute to the validity of story as historical, the stories above meet the following two criteria: they are in line with written sources that are often used in history classes in primary and high school and it involves human beings as its main actors. The first criterion, which requires numerical position in time, is not met because informants did not mention exactly when events took place. In meeting the two criteria, 'historical' stories therefore has validity both within and outside of the Sotho Society. This means that the Sotho society is recognized, by insiders and outsiders, as a legitimate society with a historically valid past.

The change in stories serves a particular purpose in society, the role that these changes play can be observed in Hobsbawm's (1983: 4-5) statement: "a transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible ...". The immigration of Europeans to Southern Africa and subsequent colonization, and later apartheid, had a massive transformation on the society of the local people. The validity of their oral narratives was questioned and little of their history was accepted as 'true' or 'factual'. This, largely due to the fact that stories were remembered or memorized rather than

recorded in other forms (written and other forms). They were, therefore, rejected on the basis of the lack of evidence that these events had taken place. This kind of approach to the narratives of the 'indigenous' people of Southern Africa was based on the understanding of what is 'historical' from a western perspective.

The introduction of such ideas to the local society had an impact on their stories of origin. This is the kind of story carries the traditions of the society in question and in order to maintain the social structure and beliefs and to carry through traditional beliefs and practices. Stories had to change in such a way that they could be validated and accepted by all people as 'truthful'. The focus on the recent and recorded history of Basotho in these stories of origin legitimizes the stories within and outside of the Sotho society. The various social boundaries are now legitimized in a different way; while the major traditional beliefs, practices and clanship or ancestry are maintained. This matter will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Lincoln (1989: 29), in his study of Evans Prichard's study of the complex relationship between the Nuer and Dinka people, found that the myth had changed in H.C Jackson's account of the myth which was told at a later period. These changes are not meant to "...discredit the myth-to rob it of its authority or credibility-but to reshape it in subtle ways that might open up new possibilities for Nuer-Dinka relations". These changes in the story of origin of Basotho, to a more historical and verifiable story, therefore do not discredit the 'old' myths but rather open up new chances for validity and verification or evidence of truth. The informants who told stories from a largely 'historical' perspective did not, therefore, abandon their origin or older story of origin. In fact, most informants referred to the story of Ntsoana-Tsatsi as described in the 'mythical' section and offered up some practices related to this place. The story itself was not totally abandoned, it is not as detailed as the 'historical' version, in that way focus is more on the valid account without discrediting or rejecting the older story of origin. In this case, part of the old story of origin was borrowed (without detail) and built upon using historical accounts. Hobsbawm's (1983: 6) statement gives credence to borrowing from (in this case folklore) old 'tradition': "[S]ometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation...". Even with the changes of focus in stories, the aim is still to set apart the Sotho nation as a separate entity that

has its own history, cultural practices, religion among other characteristics. In other words, the stories have been reinvented and the result is ‘historical’ stories.

What is of significance is that these ‘historical’ stories have taken the role of the previously ‘mythical’ ones that they have grown out of as a result of exposure to other people and ways of remembering (recording stories). It, therefore, becomes the role of the ‘historical’ ‘story of origin’ to perform a similar function in society as the ‘myth’ had done before it was altered or replaced altogether by this new ‘historical’ ‘story of origin. Recounting these stories creates stronger bonds between members of the group; they function in much the way that stories that are largely ‘mythical’ do, that is, to bring social unity between Sotho people while clearly separating them from other groups or societies. Lincoln (1989) states that repetition of a story helps to keep society as it is, he also suggests other ways that stories can be used to change society which will be discussed in the following section.

History as an instrument for the structuring and restructuring of society

Lincoln (1989: 9) maintains that discourse (discourse here refers to the historical discourse that is used to describe the historical origins of people) is used to persuade people by making reference to morals and appealing to rationality and is used to bring up sentiments allows structuring and restructuring of society. Unlike ‘myth’, that appeals directly to sentiment, ‘history’ appeals to rationality and morality. This use of historical discourse to appeal to morality and rationality raises sentiment in people and tends to increase the bonds between members of the group. Having these things in common allows for people to experience a sense of unity which serves to construct, maintain or restructure society. Since Sotho society can be constructed by narratives, it can change as the discourse that is used to evoke sentiment, moral and rational ideas changes. This discourse is carried in the narratives that people tell.

It is through the recognition of this unity or cohesion in the Sotho group that institutions of descent including those of clanship and kinship are established. In the same manner, leadership (through descent) is legitimized so that kings and chiefs that descend from the primary kings and chiefs of the Sotho nation are accepted. Those chiefs and kings that descend from the first king, Moshoeshoe, and his relatives are accepted as legitimate rulers of

today. Retelling the stories kindles a sense of solidarity by referring to events that in history of great importance that led to the formation of the 'tribe', thereby creating a unity that is recognized inside and outside of the group. It is recognized outside the group as well because the type of story told ('historical') can be traced and validated through recorded history even by outsiders.

The use of discourse to maintain social boundaries between and within 'tribes'

In the study of the construction of society, Lincoln (1989) found three things:

Firstly, "... society is constructed from nothing as much as from sentiment, ... These sentiments -above all those of internal affinity (affection, loyalty, mutual attachments, and solidarity) and external estrangement (detachment, alienation, and hostility)-constitute the bonds and borders that we reify as society. Second, the shape of society changes as these sentiments change. ... Third, the mechanism that accomplishes such redefinitions is the recollection of specific moments from the past-those associated with different apical ancestors" (Lincoln 1989: 20).

Lincoln's statement shows how society is able to take shape and reshape on the basis of narratives told by those belonging to society. This use of narrative is not limited to the creation of boundaries between societies; it is also used to create internal boundaries as we will see below. The use of 'historical' narratives to create boundaries that mark the Sotho society in contrast to others is discussed first, followed by the use of narratives to create boundaries within Sotho society.

Lincoln's (1989: 22) study of the stories of the Siense, Nuer and Swedish found that "[t]hese stories recount formative moments from the past: moments in which the enduring tensions that divide rival groups were dramatically at issue". In the same way, stories of origin of the Basotho that are predominantly 'historical' focus of the time of dispersion, confusion and loss and then tell of a time of unity under Moshoeshoe who delivered their ancestors from the hands of Shaka Zulu and his militants (as in the examples provided by Dr Maletle, Mochini Nzimande and Mankele Mofokeng). This raises sentiments amongst Basotho and increases their sense of unity, collectivity, and closeness. Moshoeshoe is hailed as the deliverer of the Sotho people and is held in high regard by his people. The use of these emotions and people's affinity for him has been important in maintaining the borders of the Sotho society. Recounting the events of the past through narratives is a useful form of historical discourse that works well to create strong bonds between members of society in such a way that even

geographical separation cannot break the boundaries of society. One still identifies oneself as a Sotho person even when separated from his or her community.

Similar methods are used to create and maintain boundaries within the Sotho society. Clans mark the social borders within the Sotho society. These boundaries are maintained by making reference to ancestry by members of each clan. Sentiments of these times bring a sense of cohesion, belonging, and unity to maintain the borders between different clans of the Basotho. Most informants made reference to their clanship by referring to their clan name as well as a short description of the line of ancestors from whom they descend. This is done, according to one informant Andries Mofokeng,

... to identify oneself to other Sotho people as well as to members of your clan by making reference to one's clan name and clan animal. It is a means of identifying oneself to others, so that they know who you are and where you come from.

Clanship evokes sentiments of belonging, unity for each clan, while also asserting their belonging to the larger Sotho society. Through this, clanship has restructured the larger Sotho society to form smaller units within that are maintained by reference to clanship in their daily lives and, most importantly, in stories of origin. Such sentiment that is provoked through stories of origin that are predominantly 'historical' to maintain the social borders within and without the Sotho society.

Summary

In summary, 'religion', 'myth' and 'history' as conveyed in stories of origin can be seen as a means for creating, shaping and controlling society. The stories of informant work together, because they are accepted as truths by those who tell them, to strongly influence individuals. 'Religious' stories create a bond between those who share similar beliefs within the Sotho society, thereby creating a sub-group of society. 'Mythical' stories serve as a means of maintaining the social structure of Sotho society and drawing clear boundaries between the Basotho and other people. These stories clearly separate, through sentiment evocation, insiders from outsiders. 'Historical' stories play a similar role to 'mythical' stories; however the boundaries that they draw are recognized by both members of society and those outside of the society because of its use of historical and verifiable sources. These stories appeal to morality and rationality, unlike 'mythical' stories that appeal to emotion even though their

effect is similar in that they create bonds within society that conscientise the Sotho people of their origin.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Description of Findings

The general agreement between scholars is that there is no set definition of the concept of myth, however many have constructed their own definitions that grow out of their approaches to the subject within their field of study. The other two major concepts that were discussed in this paper are religion, of which myth is a part, and history. These two concepts have some criteria that are generally accepted by many, but not all, scholars. Religion is generally accepted as a set of beliefs that relate to an entity or entities according to which actions are performed in acknowledgement and/or service to such an entity. History can be generally accepted as the events involving human beings that are recorded in such a way that a progression of time can be seen. They are accepted as verifiable and valid by those who record them as well as those who use them in the future.

My familiarity with the place meant that informants did not necessarily feel the need to explain the history of my people because I belong to the same culture. There is a possibility that informants did not tell me all they knew because they knew that I belong to their culture, therefore some things had to be kept from me, particularly if they were controlled by specific individuals by virtue of their positions. An example of such information is the religious information handed down to traditional healers for centuries that is considered sacred and not be shared with the lay man, whom I represent in this regard. Thabo Mothobisa, the traditional healer I interviewed, gave very little information when asked about the history of Basotho and he avoided the subject of religion. There is a possibility that he kept some information to himself in order to comply with Traditional law.

Asking questions about the history of the Sotho people may have had its own implications for the informants. This is so because they needed to think about their past and what it means to them and therefore had to reflect on the past in order to answer questions. This could affect the social, psychological and mental position of the informants. Discussing their history required confronting memories of the past, be they pleasant or not, so that they could give a full picture of what they know. For some informants, the discussion of the past brought back painful memories of a hard life before and during apartheid, in particular Mr. Nzimande was

affected and spoke openly about his experiences in his childhood and adulthood. This was not an easy thing to do, but it was necessary if we are to discover his story of the origins of the Sotho people. Therefore, this serves as an example of the possible effects that interviews can have on people. I may not know how other informants were affected during and after interviews, but there is a possibility that each of them experienced some emotion in this respect.

One of the first things that became clear after interviews is that each informant tells a different story in their own way. Despite some similarities in the stories, each story is unique in its own respect as it is influenced by the background, experiences, worldview, knowledge, characteristics, and personality of the individual who tells it. However, the similarities found between stories created a point of categorization for each story. Three categories were created for analytical purposes: 'religion', 'myth', and 'history'. The first two categories were treated as one because myth is part of religion in chapter three.

The first part of chapter two provides biographical information of the informants that were interviewed during the fieldwork process. The following information is provided: name, age, gender, education and employment. This section is followed by the description of the major themes of stories of origin in each category as told by various informants. This is to answer the following question: what are the stories of origin as told by informants?

Chapter three provides an analytical view of the role of stories of origin in Sotho society. Stories were treated in categories in order to unearth their meanings and roles in society. In the discussion of religion/myth, the uses of 'religion' and its associated practices or actions as well as the uses of myth were discussed.

'Religion' is defined as narratives that bring people together in such a way that their objectives and interaction with supreme entities becomes similar. Therefore, religion serves to keep people of similar beliefs together by using narratives; however the 'religion' has to be active if the narrative is to be effective. The influence of these narratives is limited to the 'religion' in which they are activated.

In the 'religion' of the Sotho, both Traditional beliefs and Christianity are represented. Both religions acknowledge a supreme entity or entities and have accompanying beliefs and actions

that are performed in relation to this supernatural being or entity. 'Traditional' beliefs acknowledge ancestral spirits in their beliefs and perform actions in relation and reverence to the spirits. Christianity, on the other hand, acknowledges God the creator of the people while also leading and controlling aspects of their lives. It, therefore, requires that Sotho people perform actions that align with their belief in such a God.

It is not always clear which religion informants subscribe to when telling their 'stories of origin'. However, it should be noted that Christianity has had an influence on the stories of origin told by informants to reflect a change in their worldview. This worldview is strengthened by 'stories of origin' told from a largely religious perspective. This story, although emerging from the more 'mythical' stories of origin, counters the 'mythical' stories. Christians now represent a sub-group in society that it maintained through recounting narratives that serve to strengthen connections between members of the sub-group. Christian narratives, because of their basis on historical content, are often accepted as historically valid and are often accepted as truth by both insiders and outsiders.

As myth is a part of religion, stories of origin that are 'mythical' were treated as part of religion. Religion has social phenomena, while not all social phenomena have religious aspects. 'Mythical' stories are those that are not easily verifiable and are often considered untrue due to the lack of validity, particularly for outsiders. Stories are accepted as valid by those who tell them and the audience that hears them even if outsiders reject them as untruth. Stories, therefore, act as a means of uniting members of society in their common beliefs regarding their origins. This makes them different from other groups of people and emphasizes their way of life and way of doing things. These stories, therefore, carry the power to structure, restructure and change society. Informants direct or associate the origins of Basotho with a place called Ntsoana-Tsatsi, but most informants tell different stories about the exact origins of the Sotho people.

In the same way, 'history' as a verifiable form of story that shows events through a progression of time. It is often recorded in written or other sources that are used as a means for validity. The stories that were once 'mythical' have been changed by informants to more historical stories in such a way that they are verified and accepted within and outside of the Sotho society. 'History' uses morality and rationality to maintain the union within members

of society. It appeals to these peoples' rationality and their sense of morality to create a sense of unity and thereby keep the social structure intact. This is not limited to the larger society, but also to the sub-groups within society such as the kinship system that exists through clanship. Sentiment is kindled in a similar manner as in the larger Sotho society so that each clan member feels a strong sense of unity to other members. Within the historical stories of origin, there are stories that incorporate aspects of myth. These myth-like stories carry the same validity as any historical story of origin, but they are able to appeal to both sentiments the way that myth does and to rationality and morality as history does. They, therefore, play a dual role of binding society and maintaining the boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

Results of Research

The purpose of understanding and analyzing 'stories of origin' as they are told and interpreted by the informants was met in the sense that the informants' views and descriptions of the origins of the Sotho people were conveyed. Although each story is unique, strong similarities were found in some of the stories and this is seen in the description of stories in the second chapter of this thesis.

This research and thesis is, in my opinion, significant because it gave individuals the platform to describe and explain their origins in their own way. The emphasis was on the knowledge and views of the informants. Not all people have knowledge of their origin, many people refused to be interviewed for this reason. It is not possible to be certain whether they truly did not know the stories or they did not want to participate, however some individuals genuinely did not know and they pointed me to individuals they thought would know more than them. This is how most of the informants were found. The informants who were willing to be interviewed were able to express their views and speak openly about the origin, history and experiences of the Sotho. Some even spoke of their personal experiences that fell within the frame of the questions asked.

The aim was to observe the influences of stories on the functioning of society after gaining an understanding of the descriptions that informants give regarding the origin of the Basotho. The differences between stories had to be identified before their role in social functioning could be uncovered. These differences were used to categorize or group stories into one of the

aforementioned categories. Once this was done, the role that each category plays in the functioning of society became clearer. The chosen categories as well as the different effect of each category of story will be discussed in the next section.

However, there are some limitations faced during research. As mentioned, people were reluctant to be interviewed. Therefore, it was not possible to find informants that are well representative of the population of QwaQwa. Men, particularly the elderly, were more willing to be interviewed than women and children. This presented a challenge because the population is mostly comprised of women and youths. This, however, does not reduce the value of the results found; it simply means that these findings cannot be generalized beyond the sphere of these informants. They cannot be generalized to the larger Sotho society because of this lack of representativity. Aside from this limitation, the fieldwork process and the following analysis was a successful in discovering the significance of stories of origin for the people who tell and the community that hears the story.

Concluding Remarks

Although different, all these stories perform the important function of maintaining society. Even reinvented stories have functioned to maintain society under changing circumstances so that the religious, cultural and social practices can continue.

This has allowed for the survival of the Sotho society, even after contact with other people from all over the world. The beliefs and practices of outsiders tended to question the validity of stories of origin that were told by the Basotho. For them to keep functioning and existing as a separate group in a changing world, some changes had to be made. This began with the reinvention of the various stories of origin so that they could be validated in some way. Religious stories took the form of Christian narratives for those who converted to Christianity and were accepted both inside and outside of the society, thereby allowing society to continue to exist despite the changes around it and the interaction with other societies.

‘Mythical’ stories remained more or less the same in that they continue to refer to unverifiable places and events but they tend to include aspects that are more verifiable. In this way, the story continues to maintain the society by forging a deep sense of belonging within the Sotho

people through the kindling of sentiments. These bonds are a means for maintaining society and ensuring the survival of the society as long as the story is still accepted by the members as truth. Therefore, the continuity of the narrative does not rest on external validity as determined by outsider, but rather on internal validity by the insiders. As long as the Sotho people continue to believe the myth, it continues to exist and continues to play its role of keeping society intact.

'Historical' stories of origin have evolved out of the mythical stories to form a new kind of story that is verifiable in terms criteria of history. It is therefore also verifiable, like 'religious' stories, both inside and outside society and therefore generally accepted as truth by insiders and outsiders alike. This characteristic makes it very important in establishing clear boundaries between the Sotho society and other societies. The acceptance of the stories as valid justifies the maintenance of society because it is recognized by both insiders and outsiders. The story then becomes a tool for drawing strong boundaries that distinguish Sotho society from any other and cause all those who accept history as valid to recognize these boundaries. It is an effective tool of separating Sotho people from others and therefore allowing for the continuation of the culture in the next generation.

What arises out of these stories is that the actual content of the story is not as important as its use to maintain society. Therefore, the content of the stories can be changed several times if society is to remain intact and continue. It is what the story does, rather than what it is, that matters to the society at hand. For Basotho, survival of their society is more important than the exact belief systems and practices. Changes in religion and myth show this clearly because these stories become less about the original religion or myth of Basotho and more about maintaining society so that it exists for future generations. History represents a new phase in the Sotho stories of origin because it opens the door to Western concepts of truth or untruth, validity or invalidity while separating the Sotho society and emphasizing its uniqueness.

To show this point, most of the informants emphasized this point during the interview process, stating that it is important for one to know oneself because "*one cannot know where he is going if he does not know where he comes from*".

Another important matter is the indigeneity of the Basotho. The Basotho present a challenge in terms of indigeneity. They have been living in Southern Africa for a long time and have developed an identity that is strongly tied to the land that they occupy, however that land was taken by them from the first people of the region, the Khoe-San. They, therefore, cannot be recognized as Indigenous peoples on the basis of this although they have strong ties to the land on which they live.

The methodology used in this thesis may be successfully used on other indigenous people, whether generally or legally defined, to observe the relationship between stories that are told and the maintenance and structure of society. Although Sotho people are not indigenous in the legal sense, the study of their narrative and society can be a useful for future studies in the field of indigenous studies. In addition, the study of people in the marginal areas of indigeneity can be seen as important within indigenous studies in order to challenge the concept and the status quo of the field.

Possibility of Future Research

There is possibility of doing future research in a more precise manner, find informants that are representative of the larger community in QwaQwa. The use of quantitative methods for identifying informant might be a useful way of doing this. The result of this is that stories could be generalized. Beyond this, a possibility is to spend more time with informants and get more detailed background information as well as to look deeper into their descriptions. The aim would be to search for broader and more details descriptions of their stories as well as what they perceive the role of the stories to be. It is a continuation of this study on a broader and deeper level, which was not possible due to the time limitations.

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APPENDIX

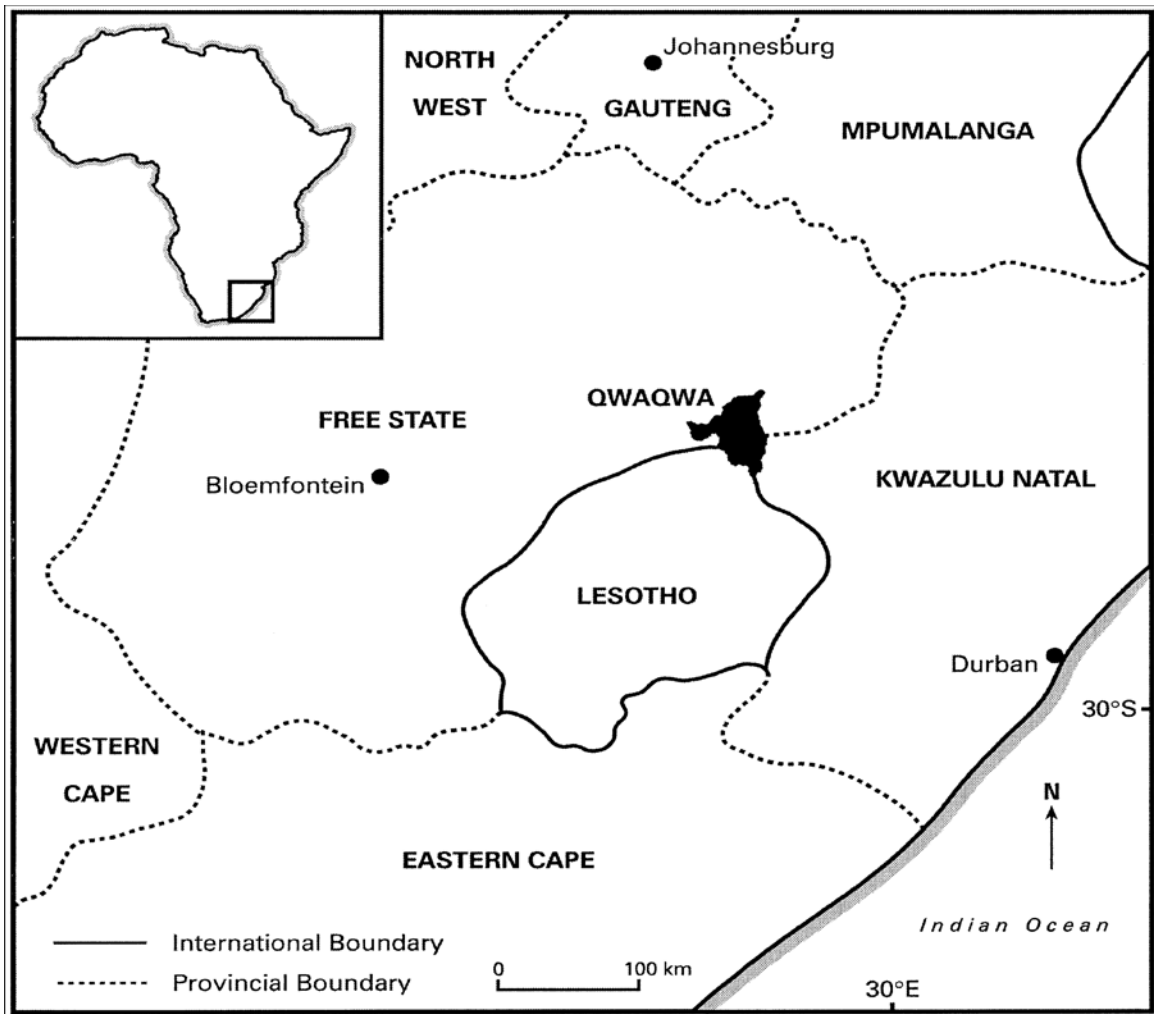


Figure 1 Map showing location of QwaQwa in the Free State Province

'RELIGION'				
Name	Age	Gender	Formal Education	Occupation
Seipati Mokoena	11	Female	Grade 6	Student
Norma Mokoena	12	Female	Grade 7	Student
Jakobo Mokoena	82	Male	Grade 2	Retired Farm Worker

Table 1 Biography of Informants in the category of 'Religion'

'MYTH'				
Name	Age	Gender	Formal Education	Occupation
Murabudi Thloho	29	Male	Grade 11	Actor (Chief's musician): BCV
Tshepiso Motlounq	35	Male	Grade 12	Taxi Driver
Mahali Boshadiba	43	Female	Grade 12	Owens food stand
Maseabata Moloji	46	Female	Grade 10	Actor (Chief's second wife): BCV
Mavuso Tshabalala	50	Male	Grade 10	Gardener
Emily Thlapi	51	Female	Grade 6	Actor (Chief's first wife): BCV
Jacob Dibe	55	Male	Grade 9	Security guard
Anna Nyaredi	56	Female	Grade 4	Actor: BCV

Table 2 Biography of Informants in the category of 'Myth'

'HISTORY'				
Name	Age	Gender	Formal Education	Occupation
Phakiso	23	Male	Grade 12	Unemployed
Tsheeliso	23	Male	Grade 12	Unemployed
Ramakau	27	Male	Grade 12	Unemployed
Andries Mofokeng	33	Male	Grade 10	Actor: BCV
Tankiso	34	Male	Grade 12	Unemployed
Thabo Mothobisa	34	Male	Grade 11	Actor (Traditional Healer): BCV
Tumelo Kgomo	Late 30's	Male	Grade 12	Driving School Instructor
Tumelo Mbele	Late 30's	Male	Diploma in Theater Arts	Worker at a Jersey manufacturing factory, Sotho poet and writer
E.N Maletse	Mid-40's	Male	Doctor of Linguistics	Head of the University of the Free State: QwaQwa campus
Mankele Mofokeng	50	Male		Actor (Chief): Basotho Cultural Village (BCV)
Puso Belang	51	Male	Grade 10	Actor (Chief's advisor): BCV
Mamothepane Mofokeng	56	Female	No formal education	Actor (First wife of chief): BCV
Makhothi Tsotetsi	56	Male	No formal education (worked as a shepard boy as a child)	Tour guide and repairman: BCV
Mochini Nzimande	90	Male	No formal education	Retired Farm Worker

Table 3 Biography of Informants in the category of 'History'