Interview Six - Female religious leader and community member of Ga-Masemola (Pseudo name: Mrs Church Elder)

Agreed to recording; documentation of interview and disclosure of her identity.

20 June 2022

Place: Her residence

Today, was a lady’s day as both scheduled interviews include two women from the community. Miss Student was a young lady in her twenties, now off to interview Mrs Church elder, an elder who has long passed the age of sixty years.

Mrs Church Elder is religious leader in the community raised by Lutheran church values. She identifies an a Christian because she was raised in a Christian church going family. She also identifies with her customs and traditions, even though she does not practice some of the institutions of traditional authority such as diKomma. She regards the Kgosikgadi as her Queen mother and acts as a senior agent between the church and the ‘Mošate’.

Our interview was scheduled for 18:00 today at her residence because this was the only time, she was free from any work needing to be done in the house or in her impressive garden. She lives alone because her husband is late and her children and grandchildren now reside in big cities for employment and educational purposes. They come to visit her very often, however, she spends a great deal of her time fulfilling church commitments and taking care of her house and garden.

The researcher arrived at her home; she welcomed her in and quickly went into the kitchen to dish up her supper. It’s her supper time and today she gets to share her meal with someone. Mrs Church Elder and the researcher enjoy their meal while watching Skeem Sam.

Once the eating was done, and the area was cleared, the researcher began the interview with Mrs Church Elder. The interview questions were conducted in both SePedi and English. Mrs Church Elder was free to respond in Sepedi. The researcher begun by explaining what the research study is about and the purpose of holding the interview and presenting the study information documents and interview consent forms. After all ethical matters were addressed, the researcher begun with the interview questions.

Government vs. governance – highlights that both systems are competing for power structures. Her emphasis was on how the idea of apartheid started and why before colonialization and white apartheid. There is white washing of history and how white rule succeeded in administration and infiltration of communities, hence their domination today. The difference between Black apartheid and White apartheid is the formalisation and legislation of their ideologies. The church and the institutions it brought (religion=education=healthcare) played a significant role in their rule. This is where indirect rule started and the dissemination of different ways of life.

She also highlighted that the failure of the institution of traditional leadership is mostly attributed to the Constitution and globalization. State system and international arena dictate national policy.

Colonialization of the mind as well as education and the spreading of misinformation or miseducation.

**‘Setjo e no ba setjo, se kas chanche’**

Q1: What is tradition?

Bokgoši is leadership where you are not appointed or elected like the position of being president, premier or municipal official. You’ll never hear of an appointed or elected Kgoši. He is born a leader through his birth right; he is a hereditary leader. It is for this reason that when he passes, his first-born son birthed with a candle wife, is the next Kgoši.

Q2: What does tradition mean?

Do you mean ‘Setjo fela sa ka Mošate?’ or ‘setjo sa kakaretjo ya Mošate’?

Remember we have tradition and we have culture, which one do you mean?

Q2.1: I mean ‘setjo fela’?

‘Setjo sa go wela ka go tradition’

It is the way we live, how we do things, our food, our weddings and how we hold the proceedings. It includes a lot of things for a lot of the things we do or do not do.

Q3: What is the value of tradition?

Our tradition and the accompanying customs serve to remind us of where we come from so, we do not get lost and to know where we are going.

If we lose where we come from and we don’t know who we are, we are going to follow other nations and how they do things instead of ourselves. We won’t be ourselves because we are following someone else’s way of living, how they dress, their types of weddings, their norms, living protocols, and how they do things. Tradition is how we live, how we dress, our food, the type of weddings, etc.

If we say we do not like these things, somewhere along the line we are going to follow someone else’s way of things and live under their tradition which they want and want to live under and will not let go of.

Look at the AmaZulu, the BaVenda and MaTsonga, they don’t want to follow other traditions. They can speak, or learn other languages and learn about others, however, they are not willing to lose their respective traditions. They do not want to live like others or follow their ways, they want to be themselves and speak their own language at all times.

Q4: What is traditional authority?

What can I say. When we talk about a ‘Kgoši’, we are talking about ‘Molaudi’, the leader. ‘Bokgoši’ is, we have governance and government, ‘Bokgoši’ is governance. It is leadership.

Q5: Where does traditional authority come from?

They say in the beginning in the bible that ‘Bokgoši ‘comes from God. Today they say that ‘Bokgoši buwa tswalelwa’. It is a birth right. It is hereditary leadership through a ‘Kgosi’ and his candle wife from a royal kraal. It is not something you can seek.

We cannot say that you can all now vote or choose me as ‘Kgoši’. There those who understand the lineage and how the Bokgoši is passed down.

The next in line to be a Kgoši must be a royal born first son from a previous Kgosi and his candle wife. As the first-born royal son, he can meet someone whom he loves and get married to that person. But, the love of his life, she who he married, cannot bear the next Kgoši after him.

As life journeys on and they build their home and she is provided for, and settled in her marriage. The Royal Council, will then approach him and say, the time has come for you to marry the ‘Stima mmolo’. The wife who will be married for the nation, whose bride wealth, ‘lobola’ will be contributed by the people.

Then they marry her and she will give bath to the next ‘Kgoši’. The Kgoši can marry as many wives as he wants, up to five if she chooses, but their sons cannot be ‘Kgoši’, only the candle wife, the one married by the people, can birth a ‘Kgoši’.

She is called the ‘Stima mmolo’ because on the day she leaves her own home and is brough to her in-laws, ‘Bokgadi’, ‘ mo motseng’, every household will switch off their lights. It will be dark because upon her arrive she will light up our ‘Moshate’. She is our light.

For example, if she is from ‘Ga- Mmpahlele’, or ‘Mohlalautwane’ or ‘Ga-Mamapana’, or ‘Ga-Marishana’, on their way here, the neighbouring villages do not have to switch off their lights. But when they enter the Ga-Masemola motse, community, from where they enter , they will announce to everyone to switch of their lights, ‘timang’ ‘timang mabone’.

Previously, our households were close to each other , our communities were close-knit, we could easily see them approaching and switch off the lights. But now because our households are spread out in the village and we are far from the ‘Moshate’ itself, we cannot see that the Kgoši is approaching. However, they announce before the time that on a specific day at a specific time, we will be arriving with the ‘Stima mmolo’. On this day at the specified time, we are going to have the people’s initiated loadshedding.

Q6: What is the basis of traditional authority?

It is a birth right, hereditary leadership. The ‘Bokgoši bo ba setjo sa se gabo rena’, the rules and laws that govern us which we call western, and white, originates from ‘Ditjong tsha batho’. It originates from different peoples, customs, cultures, ideas and traditions. Its just that now these have changed in the sense that have been westernised, or whitewashed. The prevailing values, norms, cultures, rules and laws are interpreted in a western way, but everything is a sample from different people who live in different places who lead their lives in particular ways. It’s a contribution from different nations, but, claimed by Europeans as theirs.

In any political community there is a leader, or system, in our case the government, that will lead people and consolidate competing claims and interests. Like when people want a place to stay in the urban areas, in townships, they approach the government for that because the government has the data and information on where these people can be placed or housed. The plans on where and how the houses are to be built, how and where the water and sewerage pipes will be built, etc.

Even with us in Ga-Masemola, when one gets married and you leave your home, you cannot just go settle where you want and start your homestead. Our traditional authority which is our type of ‘Bokgoši’ is approached if you need a place to stay or land to live on as newlyweds. You approach the ‘Moshate’ and state and ask that you saw a vacant land where you would like to build your home.

Previously before we had the prevailing laws of the country, when you approached the ‘Mošate’ and stated and asked that you saw a vacant land that you want to live on, they allowed you access to that vacant land. They did not measure for you the size or tell you where to go. What mattered was that you identified the land and according to your own research and information, you found it suitable for you to live and build on.

Today because of the Constitution and the idea of property rights, we have to apply to the government and wait for government to get back to you, which is not good. Where do you live while government have to approve your application and still chose where you live and the size of the land on which you will live. which according to me is not fair or just. This does not originate from how we live but from the Constitution and its drafters. Before, this system worked because the system made people have enough land to live, build and grow their own family, produce and livestock.

Before although we lived close to each other but, our homes were spread out enough for people to have land to do the above. People lived better because they had enough space for themselves and their neighbours.

Some people today prefer to live next to each other for various reasons, including crime which has gone on the rampage.

Today, they say that ‘no one is above the law, above the Constitution’, including Makgoši. The Constitution rules everyone including diKgoši. Meaning that their supreme powers have been limited by the Constitution of the state or country of South Africa.

So, our Kgoši’s are also bound to the Roman law like us, they cannot break this law.

They still have power, although not like before. As we are sitting here, we know that we have a ‘Kgoši’ who we approach when we need housing, when we as community members have disagreements, we approach the ‘Mošate’ to mediate between us.

The ‘Mošate’ have two groups of elder, advisors, adjudicator’s. We have ‘Bakgoma’ and ‘Bakgomane’. They listen to cases brought to ‘Moshate’ they advisor, they adjudicate. They ensure that the prevailing rules and laws of Ga-Masemola are followed and implemented. They also ensure that our values, norms, rules and laws are not discriminating or harming us the people who follow and abide by them. They convene and attend meetings.

Now we have our municipal councillors, who are part of local government who have now build court halls and court rooms. Before we didn’t have such. Before, at the ‘Kgoro’, the community meeting place, at a tree. Community meetings or community matters where wrongdoing was concerned or grievances we raised , the male elders would gather at this tree to hear the case, together with those involved in the matter and adjudicate in front of every member of the community. The punishment or fine would be given here, and matters and recourse to the matter were started and concluded here.

In these court halls or court rooms, only those involved are called to be judged in front of a magistrate who rules with foreign laws, or nowadays laws. These court proceedings ran differently from ours. The rules and laws and outcomes are different from how we live and understand grievance processes and procedures. And the types of lasting outcomes we would want.

But the ‘Bakgoma’ and ‘Bakgomana’ still hold meetings the way they use to before in the royal home. They consult each other, they consult the Kgoši and they consult the people.

We also have the Masemola Traditional Council, who work in our Court hall, who are specifically charged with dealing with any matter that rises in the community between community members. They also fulfil the same roles of listening, consulting, mediating with the aim of long-lasting peace between those in dispute with each other. The same rules and principles apply to them because the council includes the Kgošikgadi, some for the ‘Bogama’ and community members.

You can even take your matter straight to the ‘Kgošikgadi’, no one is going to stop you. However, when you approach her as community member regarding a grievance, you cannot say I am here to report so and so. If you go to her and report so and so, they are going to direct you to the Masemola Traditional Council which deals specifically with these types of matters. It is only when the council cannot find a resolution , will they then consult her regarding you reporting so and so. The Kgoši or Makgoši will only intervene in this matter if you approach her for advise or words of wisdom regarding your disagreement or grievances with so and so. But not when you are there to report that person because they are structures and protocols in place for such.

When you ask for her advice, she will call both you and the said person and you will have a face-to-face sit-down mediation session with her. She is our mother, she cannot choose between her children, but as a mother, she can listen and advise based on what she heard between you and the other party. Her role is to maintain respect and the bonds between siblings. And give advice that will ensure peace and harmony between the members.

If you do not find her advise fair or objective, she can refer you to the other elders who will listen to all sides and advise based on what was said and ensuring respect and peace between the members.

The Masemola Traditional Council can be approached again and they can listen again to the members grievances until a solution resolution is found. Interpreters, elders from different sects can be involved at the will of those involved. So, it’s continuous listening, sharing, advising and empathy.

Tuesday s and Thursday the Council meets to hear matters regarding land and stands, those bring grievances. If a problem cannot be solved on a Tuesday, the council members also use the Thursday. If it is still not solved, the following Tuesday again, you’ll be back at the court hall.

Q7: What is a traditional community?

Before we had elderly men who lived in the village who never went to seek employment in the cities , who will attend the Traditional Council meetings and grievances. They use to sometimes participate in the adjudication of grievances because they knew our prevailing rules and laws in the community and actively participated in community matters, in implementing and upholding the rules and laws as community members.

In our ‘setjo’, there is no appeal. Once a matter has been adjudicated, it is final. If there was a fine or punishment imposed, that was it, whether you like it or not. You have to follow the judgement given.

Today it is only because the Constitution is dominant that people can appeal in matters regarding our national issues and judgements. The Constitution gives people the right to appeal, so even in our Traditional Council judgements they can appeal as well. However, you are appealing to the same people who made the previous judgement which also rises other matters.

Appeal in the western sense means that you have received judgement from one court which you did not find satisfactory or fair, when you appeal, you will appeal at another court. Those who were involved in your initial judgement will not be involved or be present at your appeal case. They will look at your case with new eyes and maybe a different perspective.

But here, because you are appealing to the same people, you may not be successful again in your appeal case. But you may choose to bring your matters when there is different members convening the Traditional Council. The council meetings are open to everyone and different people from ‘Mošate’,’Ga-Mmpahlele’ ‘Ga-Marishane’, ‘maspala’, or a regular who happened to come with a friend who attend. So, you may go when the court has different members in attendance that day because they may offer a different view from those who first adjudicated on your matter. The different view might be what’s needed from a stranger or passer-by.

They say ‘molato o ahlula ke mo sipidi’ ‘mo fiti wa stila o gona go ahlula molato’.

This is how ‘setjo’ used to work before, versus, now.

The western rules and laws continue to oppress our leaders because of some of the changes the Constitution has imposed on Bokgoši and Makgoši.

Now we all have to report matters at the police station, you cannot punish people or your children by hitting them because it can qualify as abuse.

Q8: What characterises traditional authority and traditional leaders in Ga-Masemola?

The above which have explained to you. It’s the system of Bokgoši and how it operates, with the people.

Q10:Why do you obey tradition?

I currently live on the soil and land of a Kgoši therefore, I must abide by the prevailing rules and laws that govern where I am. I cannot just do as I please.

We have a system of doing things here. If you do not like the rules and laws you can move, however, what you must know is that each and every place has its own leader(s), rules and laws that you have to follow.

Q11: How do you practice tradition?

How I speak, how I dress, how I have chosen to live my life, where I have chosen to live, how I was married, the way I brought up my children, honouring my late husband. Respecting my neighbours, serving at church in the way I serve. Leaving the kind of life I am living now.

Q12: How would you describe a day in your life?

I spend my days in my garden, at church and upkeeping my home.

Q13: How would you describe Ga-Masemola?

Before we didn’t have schools and churches, people just lived according to life. These institutions brought with them indoctrination and reading of the bible. Christian songs and education.

The church brought most of the schools and clinics we have in rural areas. It brough about different ways of being and behaving, changing or altering how we use to do things.

The Anglican church built a school in Jane Furse, Roman Catholic brough St Peters church, the NG Kerk built Matlala Sending Hospital. These institutions have their own intellectual and ideological teachings. These changed the face of blackness in rural areas, they changed how people see themselves, as church goers and non-church goers. For example, we dressed different, we have our own conception of dressing and why we dress and how we dress. We didn’t wear clothes, but ‘ditito’, ‘dintipa’, ‘dipita’ etc. but after their arrival, we were taught that what we wore was not adequate or proper. They said we are naked, whilst we didn’t see our attires as revealing or not proper. They institutions and ideologies about things, changed our ideologies and conception about things because we started seeing them through their eyes. Through the church or through health care that they brought.

When you part of the church you are not allowed to practice certain things like ‘dikomma’, they would emphasize that there are church goers and those who don’t go are heathens.

School is for those who love church and those who don’t go to church must not do get an education. The church put people of the same community against each other.

But as time went people started seeing the value of education and started sending their children even if they didn’t go to church. Things do not stay the same and different things influence each other for change to happen or for it to have happened.

‘Setjo’ changed because before girls and boys would attend dikomma for six to nine months. Teachers at schools noticed that during certain periods have of the class was missing because they were at dikomma. They approached the Kgoši and voice the concern that children are missing out of the majority of the school year because of dikomma. And this was detrimental to their schooling and education. This initiated a change in dikomma and how long they go.

The state, ‘Mošate’ ,diKgoši and people decided that dikomma must only take place during school holidays. They can miss one week but not months.

Boys and girls now go at the same time, to their respective kommas. When school closes, they go to dikomma, when school opens, they come back from dikomma. If they come out late, its no more than by a week since schools opened.

The state rules now, because you will hear on radio that you have to apply for Komma. If you do not and you initiate it without applying, the state has the power to shut down and close that Komma. The power of the Kgoši is being constricted because how of our current reality. You cannot take dikomma and put them before getting an education.

Heath workers now go to school campaigns for male circumcision. At this schools they take the boys who intend on going to dikomma and go circumcise them at the clinic. You will see them with their mothers in large groups. Although, I cannot say anything about dikomma because I do not know. I have not gone there.

The state claims that circumcision is not komma so people must go to the clinic first. Some people take their children to the clinic for circumcision and then to dikomma. It is actually now becoming common practice for people to do this. While some who used to only practise dikomma, no longer do so because they take their children to the clinic. Those who practise them continue to do so, with some seeing the state taking their role as facilitators of a sacred rite.

Because of the advice from doctors and health workers more and more people take their children to the clinic and then to dikomma.

If you find a Christian family which does not practice dikomma in their family, but their boy child runs to dikomma. They say that if you enter dikomma, you cannot leave until it has been concluded or closed. Those in charge of dikomma will not chase away this boy because of the family Christian values, but that have to accept them. The law that one who enters cannot leave before the komma closes also prevents them from turning anyone away.

It is one thing to give a value judgement on dikomma, but without understating via passing through the rite, you are better not to say anything about dikomma because you do not know what goes on there.

This practised intertwines, merges education, health, spirituality, religion, psychology, sociology and many other sectors, spheres and planes of reality.

Unless you have been there, you cannot say anything about it because you do not know. and if you have been there, you cannot say to others who have not been there, what it is like there. It is a sacred rite only known by those who have been there. By those who are chosen to lead and guide those who are there.

You see this also limits and diminishes the power and authority of diKgoši and ‘Setjo’ because of the era of the Constitution, the accompanying rules and laws pertaining to dikomma and ‘Bokgoši’.

‘Setjo e no ba setjo, se kas chanche’

Q14: What are some of the challenges in the community?

Like many nations, we are experiencing high and frequent acts of crime. Even this problem of the state that we have rights, but these rights are conceived in a misdirected way. For me, the rights are interpreted not in the right way. Rights go with responsibilities.

Because they conceived and interpreted in the wrong ways, that why we have high crime rates these days. Before we can ways of punishing people which had the effect of correcting their behaviour. Before the community could discipline and punish a wrongdoer based on the crime and the lesson the person needs to learn from the punishment. Today people decide to easily enter someone’s yard to steal their belongings knowing what will happen to them afterwards. Because they know the type of punishment they will be given, they willy nilly commit crime because the punishment does not speak to crime, behaviour. Prison sentence with more benefits than the average person who is not in person does not seem to be changing the criminality in people. Or give them reasons not to commit the crime again. They know they won’t be beaten; they won’t feel pain. They won’t learn that it is wrong to do something.

Today when someone has committed a crime, they say you must apprehend that person and call the police. When the police arrive, they ask what has this person done. Because they have not witnessed the crime themselves and they do not have evidence of the crime. More often than not, the next day you see the person come of the cell because the police cannot confirm the crime. They did not witness the crime and do not understand the effect of that culprits wrongdoings. They cannot confirm if yes, he stole this or yes, he did that because they were not there. This also contributes to high crime because criminals, wrongdoers, are let out based on the fact that the police cannot confirm or deny a crime happened because they do not have evidence that it happened.

The other challenge is that we have not achieved or actualised the types of freedoms we thought we would actualise in 1994. You are not free, we are still dominated by the world and whites in particular.

Where we live, we have not even received basic serves such as basic running water like in urban, previously only white areas. You will not hear of anyone in Pretoria saying that I am going to fetch water at the river or dam. They have tapes in their homes. We still walk long distances with wheelbarrows. You see an elderly woman walking from one corner to the next corner searching for water, pushing a wheelbarrow.

Thinking about this must make you realise that we are not free in any sense. How can someone that is free struggle to get basic water to drink, to wash, to cook, to clean, to water their produce. Our roads are still sand, mud roads.

Yes, we now majority have access to electricity and just switching on the lights, but we in such areas lug behind in a number of basic needs.

We don’t have water, we don’t roads, but when you go into such places like Polokwane there are tar roads, there is water and tapes in people’s yard, infrastructure development etc. Everything is provided for, but us that live in rural areas do not have this.

Q15: How would you go about fixing these problems?

We don’t know when we will be helped or if we will be helped with this. But we pay tax to the government for everything. Food, clothes, electricity, petrol, everything. But it is not re-invested back to us.

Q16: When do you approach a traditional leader? Why?

At any point where I may need intervention in a matter with family, my neighbours, our church agendas, matters that need mediation, or when I need advice.

Q17: Do you want to be governed by traditional authority? why?

Yes, because a Kgoši is a hereditary leader, he is born for the specific position of Kgoši and nothing else.

Before, diKgoši were not exposed to education and when he did not understand something he could just disagree or not approve the matter. But, after they required Magoshi to go to school, they even opened a school in Arabie called ‘Bo aparangkwe’. Where children from Makgoši and ‘Bakgomana’ use to go to school. You know they say a Kgoši cannot go by himself, he always has to be in the company of others. He always has to have those who protect and guide them.

However, they closed this school with the thinking that these children can access education via the private or public schooling system.

You see that’s how we live.

So, through education some Kgoši’s were exposed and taught different things. And they themselves from this school understand the importance of education.

Before people use to walk very long distances to go to school, but today you will see that Makgosi have built schools and schools in their communities. The first schools in our communities were built by Magoshi and not the government. Today our Makgoši are exposed and educated, so they understand everything that is happening today. Even if you will find that a Kgoši himself has not gone to school, his community will have primary and secondary schools for his nation.

Let me tell you about Ga-Masemola, before, people use to walk from Apelle cross and come to school in our village because we had our school built in our area very early on. People would walk from the original settlement of Ga-Mampane, after those mountains before they settled in Kantane where they are now.

There is a village called ‘Ga-Nqumaneng’,the people from here also walked here to access education.

You can image these are very long distances for one to walk to school to access education. There was just one school where everyone could attend. You can imagine a child that is five or six cannot walk such a distance. So, parents would wait till their children were ten years before they sent them to school because at least at that age, they can manage the distance. Children started their schooling late and this had other adverse effects. After passing standard six, they would say the child is a man and he must go into the city and offer themselves up for labour. There is no continuing with school.

There are some Kgoši’s who are unable to continue leading today. They are overwhelmed. Today there are some laws that cannot be governed by Makgoši, it cannot work because we leave in a different time.

They fulfil more cultural, customary and mediation roles today because of the rules and laws we live under today.

Even at our police stations there are some matters where they will direct you to the ‘Mošate’ and say this fall under the ‘Moshate’s’ jurisdiction. So is so because they want to show that the Kgoši still has some authority, he is still leading the community.

There are some authority and power that ‘Moshate’ has lost, and unfortunately, will not regain now.

The municipality has taken over a majority of the previous duties and roles of Magoshi. Government has superseded Makgoši with their administration and structures. The reality is that the government might have taken over the duties and roles of Makgoši, but they are not doing their job. The municipal system and structures do not fulfil their current roles.

The roads start here and end there. They do not connect. You can see the materials of the roads are of inferior quality. It is not satisfactory.

Q18: How does traditional authority govern the community?

EXPLAINED ABOVE

Q20: Is it effective in governing the community?

EXPLAINE ABOVE

Q21: What does it mean to be traditional community member?

EXPLAINED ABOVE

Q22: What is the value, if there is any. Of being a traditional community member?

EXPLAINED ABOVE

Q23: Should you be governed by traditional authority?

Q24: Do you have a say in the governing of the community?

Things have changed, now adays we are no longer called to public meetings. There are few and few public meetings. In the same breathe, when they do call us, there are some members who are going to say that we are being called because they want something. People just stay at home.

But, where they say come and hear about matters regarding the community and we discuss the state of the community, grievances we have as community members or our plights, we do not hold these public meetings any more.

This is where the Makgoši fail today, if they consult the ‘Bagomana’, they conclude matters and do not discuss with us anymore. Will just hear once they have deliberated or when they announce the matter to us.

Some people have moved to more townships like Lebowakgomo or other neighbouring townships or even to the cities.

Q25: What kind of say?

Not much.

Q26: How do you perceive the relationship between traditional leaders and councillors?

You can never confirm these things. By law, they ought to work together. they have to act as one, but that is not the case. But you know, where people are concerned, there will always be disagreements and lack of cooperation.

But I know there are some in the municipality that do not want to work and cooperate with the Kgoši. They undermine them.

Q27: What problems do you encounter when working with traditional leaders?

Nowadays we do not hold public meetings regarding the community or our nation. Even if they hold it once a year, they can say that at this meeting the agenda is specifically about the nation of ga-Masemola, the needs, grievances, problems and what’s needed. What people are thinking.

We only gather now when there are complaints brought forward and an adjudication is to take place and a judgement given. But, never on our national issues.

Q28: What problems do you encounter when working with councillors?

By law they are suppose to now convene public meetings to hear the community concerns, but they do not hold any meetings. They do not include us in anything.

They do not have our interests at heart.

In leadership positions, you cannot just elect or appoint someone and expect that they are a leader. Leadership is more than the position.

The state is very political, hence, why government officials only consult and appoint each other for leadership roles. It is a political appointment.

It is not often where you will hear that a premier has gone to a specific community to hear their plight. In such a situation we as the people often wonder that is the premier sincerely going there to listen to that said community, or are they there symbolically in the sense that it is one of many events where he or she is there to appear, speak, take pictures and leave.

We sceptical because they hardly go down to the people. They hardly listen.

They know people know their stories and what they are going to say. Sadly, people know that what is being said will not be done.

Q29: From your experience, is the partnership between traditional leaders and municipal officials effective?

No.

Q31: Why do you say so?

Local government is a duplication of Bokgoši. Instead of cooperation there is competition.

Q32: According to you, how can traditional leadership play a more significant role in the

community?

even though the municipality is tasked with their former roles, they should be a return back to the holding of public meetings regarding the BaPedi nation of Ga-Masemola. People must be given a platform to talk on matters affecting their everyday, not in the sense of the everyday issues, but conversation that include our identity, what is happening in the community, the changes, what people are noticing. This is important because people are given the platform to discuss political issues regarding their political community. Bokgoši encompasses the gathering of people in the pursuit of their political struggles of the day, their ideas and thinking around coming together, living together, living for each other and in our own self interest as a nation.

Q33: What are the factors that have hindered the effective cooperation between traditional leaders in this area?

You can never know when a person understands something or does not understand something. The problem is in fighting. It’s the disagreements amongst themselves.

There is also greed between some of our leaders, they want to benefit more than everyone else.

If the ‘Bakgoma’ do not reach a consensus on an issue or decision, it stops there. The matter or decision wont go any further because the leaders themselves do not agree or see things the same way. Or even understand in the same way.

This is not an explicit no, or stop, but it is implied because the people who are tasked with mediating matters for us and to our benefit, are not one. So, there is no continuation till they agree. If they don’t agree, they won’t say they don’t agree. The matter will simply stop and no further action will be taken.

This has delayed and sometimes hindered the progress of our nation.

This scenario shows how the leadership of the government and the leadership of the state are different. From the state there is no political will or incentive to work for people, but in traditional authority, one or a few people can stop things because they do not understand or they do not like the person proposing, or they want to benefit more than others, hence, other leaders decide that if that’s the case, the project will rather stop.

Q34: From your experience, to what extent does traditional authority play a role service

delivery and development in the village?

It is not their role to play according to the Constitution. Their powers and authority does not extend to that.

Q35: How can a more meaningful and dynamic relationship be created between traditional leadership and the relevant role players in local and rural governance?

We need to think of a different system of working within our current reality. We need to go to the drawing board, more research must be done to find out what works, where and why.

How can the government structures be adopted to Bokgoši and how can Bokgoši be re-adjusted to focus on the community. Better cooperation must be built.

Modernisation has brought many obstacles that Bokgoši cannot tackle, but the government cannot tackle these obstacles unless it brings Makgoši to the table.

Q36: In your opinion, what does the practice of traditional customs give rise to in the

community?

living in harmony and peace with others and your environment. Our identity and being able to practice our customs.

Q37: How would you describe the relationship between traditional leaders and other leaders in the community? (Religious, educators, etc)

‘Moshate’ are invited to schools, are involved to the police station, they are called to public prayers. Even farmers invite the ‘Mošate’ to their programs. Even when individual community members start development committees and teams, the ‘Moshate’ is notified and invited to meetings.

When there are campaigns or programs, there is interaction between all the different leaders. So our various leaders in the community try to include each other, while also giving each other space to practice their education, health care, policing, farming, etc.

The downside is that if the one at the top does not concern her self with being interested and attending and being informed with everything taking place in the various sects, then no one will. If she gets tired, or is unable to do so, no one else can take up her role.

They meet yes, but nothing tangible ever comes from their interaction as various leaders in the community.

Q39: Do you know about the Native Administration Act of 1927?

No

Q40: What can you tell me about it?

What I can say that the apartheid government were the first to try and duplicate the Bokgoši system by creating their own kraals or destabilise and dethroning legitimate Kgoši’s through violence and intimidation. This throning of their own agents is the cause of some of the Royal position disputes of today. This opened up Bokgoši to the courts. Today people take each other to court, or drag their Kgoši to court while they are placed in the docket. Which was unheard of before.

In Ga-Masemola, we don’t have these issues. Our previous Kgoši’s encouraged and inspired some literally works and books on Batau. We have a very long history and fortunately, we know our lineage and where it starts. We know where our ‘Mošate’ started. Our KGOŠI was born 1911, he became Kgoši around 1927.I am talking about the one who we are under their leadership now. His father was the KGOŠI here. It is around the same time that administration started or was introduced in black areas.

White people have always made laws since they settlement here, but our Bokgoši came way before them and was not influenced by their laws until 1994. I’m talking about Ga-Masemola here.

Our Bokgoši was fought through many wars, wars that did not include white people. It is only in the twentieth century, late twentieth century with the introduction of constitutions and administration was Bokgoši influenced and impacted by white laws. You learn about Shaka Zulu, Dingane and many others who were fought battles and wars to retain the Bokgoši. They travelled to the Cape in the 1662 era before Waste Gamma came in 1649. At this time, Europeans had not yet settled in our areas.

So our history does not include white Europeans until much later on when they started stealing land and demanding settlement here. They did so with force, they moved from the Cape to Johannesburg, to Potgieter’s Rust, Pietersburg’s. These have white names because they are all the areas they invaded and travelled to. They got to these places and chased away the ‘Basotho’ and chased them away into the mountains.

Bokgoši was there before the above took place.

What you must know is that everything has been there before colonialism and white invasion of our lands. Even apartheid exist before them, that was something innate in people. But, because of when the whites arrived, they created and channelled a specific apartheid against all black people regardless of nationality. They made it seem like they started apartheid because they created administration structures which was smarter. They created a system based on race and the structures and processed of this system cater to racial discrimination and domination. They wanted to rule over others who are not white, rules and laws that people are forced or coerced to obey. We’re always had apartheid; we just didn’t legalise and legitimise these innate feelings.

For instance, they decided that black people can only live in specific areas and other areas were for white occupation only. White walk through here, blacks walk through here. This was made law. And you were prosecuted if you broke their laws.