Interview two – Retired principle and community leader in Ga-Masemola (Pseudo name :Mr Development Initiatives)

Agreed to recording and documentation of interview, but not to identify his identity.

15 June 2022

Place: His residence

On the same chilly afternoon, the researcher had scheduled the second interview with Mr Development Initiatives. Mr Development Initiatives is a teacher by profession who is now a retired principle. He has involved himself in many community building and projects including the creation of Masemola Radio and many others which he will discuss in the interview.

Upon arrival at his residence, one sees his field of produce having lemons, beetroot, onions and many others. He welcomes me in and notices the researchers surprise of his garden. He mentions that it is what he now occupies himself with as a retired professional. He mentions that he also sells the produce in the community including any other fruits and vegetables that are currently not in season. We have a short conversation about the importance of people growing and eating that which they grow themselves and how just on this topic alone, we touch on a number of concepts issues such as identify, self-determination and location. He gets our seats so we can be seated outside in the sun’s warmth.

Before starting the interview, all ethical matters regarding recording, writing and consent forms are discussed. I give him time to go through the documents and fill in that which he will allow for the interview.

Mr Development Initiatives is a very funny and welcoming individual. Our interview was flowed and he lead the entire interview because he believed if he shares all he knows before our interview, I am able to think of more questions and questions I had not thought of until getting on the field.

The first interview consists of him talking to me and explaining as far as he can, considering the time, of the people of Ga-Masemola and where they come from.

**“Ke tša ko Woolworths”- Ke ngwana wa Sehlapelo**

Q1: When you talk about tradition, what are you talking about?

When we talk about tradition, we are talking about a number of things. Traditions include norms, culture, customs, etc.

Q2: What do you mean by norms, culture and custom?

It depends on what you or I follow. It is a way of doing things, i.e., procedure. For instance, when you and I have a disagreement, there is a way that the disagreement is mediated between us. In the first place we have to consult our families. We consult the family elders, the ‘kgoro’ of our specific family, at this stage it is not the ‘kgoro’ of Mošate. Previously, only the male relatives of the family were consulted, however, now this consultation includes women as well. If we still cannot reach a resolution to the disagreement as families, then we consult further and seek the assistance of the ‘Kgoro’ of Mošate, meaning the broader community. A ‘Madi tsela’ will then be consulted, they will take up the matter for us in the community. ‘Motseta’, ‘madi tsela’, who is the Traditional Authority messenger acts as a mediator between us and is always neutral in all matters. Should we as a family and a ’kgoro’ not be able to reach a resolution to our disagreement, the ‘Motseta’ will want to know how we handled the before consulting further and taking up the matter with the Royal Family. The ‘Motseta’ is the middleman in our community matters and is the only one tasked with taking up matters with the Royal Family regarding this community and not any other community. It is only when the ‘Motseta’ has delivered the matters to the Royal Family, that Kgošikgadi is able to participate in the matters. This is our procedure for mediating between disagreements between us as members of Ga-Masemola including Kgosikgadi. This is our protocol.

The point of me telling you this, is because I want you to see that we have a way of doing and being. There are protocols that we follow in the resolution of everyday conflict in the community.

We do not run to the police or magistrate when an issue or conflict arises, but we first consult our families, ‘Motseta’, the community and then the Kgošikgadi. We have procedures for addressing grieves, disagreements and conflict between family members, between community members and with the Kgošikgadi because we want to maintain the co-existence of us as the Ga-Masemola community.

Kgoši or the Kgošikgadi is ‘Seshego sa renna’, meaning that she is the custodian of our culture. How? Via practices such ‘diKomma’. It does not matter that she is religious and Christian, when people want ‘diKomma’, she has to give them access to such practices. She can’t stop ‘diKomma’, or any of our customs. She is the custodian of the culture of the people.

Another point is that Kgoši or Kgošikgadi is the custodian of the land. It is she who is tasked with looking after our land on our before. She is the executor and is the one that controls the land and oversees it, but it is not their land. They do not have ownership to the land but are safe guarding it for the people. The people who have gone before, the people who are alive and present today and the people who are yet to be born.

The importance of a Kgoši or Kgošikgadi is that he/ she facilitates diKomma.

What I have explained above is ‘Bokgoši’.

Another important point to add is that, historically the Kgoši was not permitted to work or offer himself up for labour. In the past there were designated fields, ‘his fields’ called ‘Muta’ where the community had to sow, maintain and harvest the fields. This was to ensure that there is always food at the royal palace for in case any member of the community, especially women and children who were hungry would have access to food. If someone from elsewhere found themselves in our village at night, in need of a place, the Kgoši would ask certain members of the community to accommodate this stranger so they may have a place to lay their head and fill their stomachs over the night. If there was any person that was destitute and in need of help, they would be welcomed in the royal palace because the people, i.e., the community, provided for the ‘Kgoši’.

Another point, when we have weddings in the community, each and every person who is wedding and slaughtering cows, ought to take ‘le hla kore’, which a specific part of the cow and take it to ‘Mošate’. This is what we call ‘sesheba sa Kgoši’. This is so the Kgoši enjoys the wedding with you even if they are unable to be there physically. We also take along a drum of freshly brewed traditional alcohol, which is called ‘di bego’ for ‘Bakgomma’ so they may drink and fill they stomachs so they are able to attend to people who come to them for assistance or guidance. This is what we call ‘se sheba sa badiše ba kgoši’. These men look after people and should not go to their own homes and eat food there. In the ‘Mošate where they work, they should be taken care of because they work for the community and should therefore also be taken care by the same people who they help and work for. Their roles require them to be at ‘Mošate’ the whole day, so the above ensures they are able to do their work and are accessible at all times.

There is also an induction called ‘Botugo’ which takes place when one gets married. This induction or practice is a process where you orientated and re-introduced and welcomed as a married woman/ man in society. The different BaPedi groups from the various communities, ‘kgoros’ under the Kgoši’s leadership will come together in a secret location to welcome you as a bride/ groom. Other married women from the various villages celebrate with you. For this occasion, specific regalia ‘di tito’ ‘di ntepa’, attires and jewellery is worn. There is singing, name praising and many other cultural practices which take place on this occasion…. [ WE TAKE A BREAK BECAUSE HE HAS TO ATTEND TO A VISITOR] – 19:25

REMEMBER THE ABOVE IS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED HISTORICALLY

We have a conversation about ‘lobola’ and how historically men use to wed, particularly the bride’s wealth.

Historically when a boy child gets married, we announce the wedding. To the people whom we announce, we say you have a cow, which means that ‘une letshwela’. This translates to saying that you have to take a ‘le tshwekwana’ towards ‘makgadi’. This is what you call ‘lobola’. The woman to be married, belongs to the ‘kgoro’. You see the ‘tseka’ that will marry her, do not belong to her, it’s for her family and relatives. This soon to be wife is considered the senior wife, the first wife. She was married by the ‘totu’ ya le di relatives. The first wife, the husband cannot play with her because re ya mo ‘seka’ because she was married by the kgoro of the family. She is not married to the husband, the husband is only there to comfort and protect her for us.

If the husband wants to marry someone he loves, he’ll have to contribute the ‘tuto’ himself, without the assistance of the family.

When this wife gets married, on the day of her wedding, previously only on Saturdays. Saturday morning at the bride’s home, the lobola has to be paid and brought to her home. There were specific rituals conducted after the lobola is delivered. When she gets married, ‘Borefe ba tau’ have to be brought. ‘Borefe ba tau’ means that you marry with fives things. This is 5 fives, it can be 2 cows, 2 or 3 goats. These represent the 5 late Kgoši’s. ‘Ba na ba mathejwane’- “Bore ba tau” is the common name.

Before the cow is slaughtered, they call one of “ba gwengana’” the male relatives of the husband. In some instance you’ll find that the husband is not there during these proceedings. A senior male relative, preferably one who is close to the husband and senior to him. They announce to the bride that she has to enter into a room with this ‘ba gwengana’ while the cow is being slaughtered. The family will announce to them in the hut once the cow is dead.

‘Mohlobulo’, meaning before, girls and boys did not wed, while having children out of wedlock.

We continue the conversation regarding certain customs practiced before, particularly involving weddings and how they would proceed. He also shared with me the secret practices that took place especially with royal families and their lineages.

The importance of family planning for both men and women. He discusses the various practices practised before to encourage men and women not to have children before wedlock. He even mentions that there were rituals performed ensuring that both men and women obey their families and respect the community’s way of life. These rituals had implications if not followed. There are responsibilities for both the castors, the family and those these rituals are performed for.

The importance of protocols is highlighted and how everything done is not done by chance or absent minded. This is because of the implications of everything done at all these rituals.

We also spoke about what happens in cases where either the married man or married wife cannot have children. The family protocols involved in maintaining the family and continuing the legacy of the family name.

…38:00- 59: mins- This is an explanation of some of the rituals preformed for weddings and he explained to me what happens with everyone involved in the wedding.

Cow; blood; water; wood; white; unseen, family; blood-bonds; soul-ties; idioms; coexistence between seen and unseen spheres of life;

When the Kgoši wants to marry someone that he loves and admires, he has to do so from his own kraal. The villages contribute nothing because she is not their ‘Mma se tshaba’. The one who is to become our leader is not born from love affairs or from the king because he would die. He would be a stillborn or worse. The candle wife is not the wife on the Kgoši, but our mother.

He also explains confidential processes of the Royal Family which I will not mention because of respect and discretion. He was explaining to me the complex system of Traditional Authority and the importance and ensure to its continuity through its leaders and follows.

When the future Kgoši assumes his position as the Royal head, he has to build his own home, outside of where the present, outgoing Kgoši resides. When he marries the candle wife, he has to clear the land and make a suitable home for her. ‘U tsheya ma rapho’.

A marriage certificate in Ga-Masemola, proof of marriage is ‘sifuka’. You have to go get the ‘sifuka’ from ‘Mošate’, which is a symbol to everyone in the village that you are getting married. This is proof that you are married.

He explains what happens once one dies having small children and what happens thereafter. Family members will full in the role of the parents and the importance of what he explained above and how easily people in the community will duly fulfil their roles because of the intersection of the seen and unseen. The ramifications of doing certain rituals at weddings and how it does not stop once the wedding celebrations conclude. Rather, that from doing certain rituals, they tie the family into the future. They tie roles and responsibilities.

‘DIKOMMA’

I hear people today saying that ‘dikomma’ do not serve a purpose, however, they do not understand the historical role it served. ‘Dikomma’ historically served to discipline children who were reaching adolescent stage and being unruly. Before, boys and girls were taken either to the river or the mountains respectively to be ill-treated. But this ill treatment was to mould them. This had the effect of discipline and transforming the boys and girls who went there. Once back home, they were seen to be changed and disciple because of the ill treatment. The ill-mannered stage which characterises adolescents would be left at the river or mountain where the boys and girls were schooled. At these respective initiation schools, the boys and girls would be taught the mannerism and roles of young men and women in society. The rites which take place in one’s lifetime where explained such as family planning, pregnancy, marriage, death and many others. By the time you come back you are grown. You have grown in ways that enhance your character and state of mind.

Historically, because people did not dress as we dress today, when boys and girls were reaching adolescent age, the community elders use to see this through changes in the bodies. The under garments of boys and girls would start revealing their private parts, therefore, signalling to them that it’s time for ‘diKomma’. The community elders would approach the Kgoši and ask him to institute ‘diKomma’ because the community children are growing up and should therefore be moulded in the right way into young men and young women.

Even before ‘diKomma’, there are other practices which take place before they are sent to the river or mountain to prepare them mentally and psychologically. They are preparing them for what to do once they are at the school of ‘Komma’.

The reason I am telling you all the above is because I want you to understand that the Kgoši is the custodian of our custom. Even if people no longer practice some of these customs, that is on them. However, the Kgoši has to give access to these customs to those who still want to continue to practice them. People need access to their ways of life.

GOD IN SEPEDI IS CALLED – ‘HO PE YANE’

Historically people respected their culture and did not mix with those who were different. This is because as people we do not subscribe to the same beliefs and conduct ourselves in the same ways. There were even songs which acted as reminders to people of the implications of mixing with others. The songs which describes situations in which people did mix and what happened as a result. Some of these songs were derogative and as a result have been banned.

Everything that was done before had to been seen in the long term and holistically. Every sphere of life was connected. Identity, belonging, health, mental capabilities, etc.

Death

Mourning rituals are explained

He highlighted the importance and significance of women. The power that women possess and the implications of her energy and power.

Historically every important life challenge was thought of and protocols set in place to counter the challenges. Birth, death, illness, conceiving, miscarriages, education, family, legacy, secrecy.

Everything that is happening today has happened in the past, however, in the past we planned for everything and had long lasting solutions to challenges and most importantly, we were discreet.

Because we are the same people in breath, life, outlook and future, we took decisions for the betterment of everyone. Men and women are appreciated and groomed in ways that speak to their respective life journeys. Prepare them for the unexpected and unconceivable.

The problem today is that people are indoctrinated and not educated. People are dislocated by the times and their leaders, they do not know who they are, where they come from and where they are going.

Today you find people being prideful that they BaPedi children speak English and not their mouth tongue. They say, sePedi will not find them a job, but as you can see today from your own peers, you all speak English and went to white schools, but you are unemployed. They have taken over your mind, spirit and tongue, what chance do you have against them?

Weather

Before there used to be specialized people who would forecast the weather for the year so as to given an indication of the type of harvest to expect. Even the Kgoši would participate in these weather forecasting rituals.

Naming

‘Ngwana wa moshimanyana a gweleli’, meaning that the boy child’s legacy does not die. Meaning that, should a man die before wedding. His family will marry a wife for him and who will have children who will be named after him. ‘Wa tsoshwa’, his family will bear children for him.

Folk laws

‘Ho pe yane’- was a song we would sing. In this folk law we would call the names of all those who came before us, our forefathers. We would call to God, but unlike in the Christian belief that Jesus was the middleman, we knew our ancestors would connect us to God. Our ancestors are our cable to connect us to God. Our ancestors are pure people of God, they were good people, hence we include them in everything we do, especially when we pray. When we say that someone ‘ke o ho pe’, it means that, that person is a good person.

Everything I have told you falls under the preview of the Kgoši or Kgošikgadi. Her role is so significant that unless you live here, you will never know because it does not concern you to know. how we live, where we live matters, matters. Nothing about our life is left to chance or the invisible hand of the free market. We construct our lives every day, through how we live. We are our first leaders because we make the rules and laws we live under together.

Interview Two- Part Two – Retired principle and community leader in Ga-Masemola (Pseudo name :Mr Development Initiatives)

Agreed to recording and documentation of interview, but not to identify his identity.

21 June 2022

Place: His residence

Why don’t we have our own written laws, or by-laws from the past?

When we talk about tradition, we are talking about oral history, passed down from generation to generation. We did not have the skill of writing, but we had the knowledge of passing knowledge from one generation to the other. Through folk laws, songs, dance, etc. We do our history that is recorded and passed down, we just do not have it in written form. That’s why we have the so-called ‘diema’. ‘Diema’ are actually our laws, equivalent to your Roman Dutch laws.

‘Melato ya tšemo re e seka melwaneng ya matšemo’, meaning where I have done you wrong, we settle the matter on the spot. We don’t delay or go somewhere. We cannot go solve or discuss our difference in Cape Town whereas the place where the matter happened or the problem arises is here, in Limpopo.

Some of the issues which occur between people should not be heard in the Regional or magistrate courts. They should be resolved traditionally because whatever mistake that is bring committed by someone, it is not for the first time that that mistake is committed. Someone presently, or forty fifty or even a hundred years ago or 10 or a hundred people have committed the same crime and there is/was a judgement or punishment. We can make reference to those judgements. There law is always, there is always laws that govern us people. Each year we know that we’ve had such a case which was adjudicated in a particular way.

Every mistake has its judgement and punishment because there is always rules and laws. Every rule and law has its judgement and punishment for non-compliance.

Relevance of provincial and national traditional houses

I do not see the relevance or need for these houses because most of these appointments are political appointments from a political party rather than the people whom they should represent as traditional leaders and state officials.

Let me make an example, when a man/ husband is fighting with his woman/wife, we would call your respective families and other family heads, as well as any family head in the community who is able to sit them down and begin mediation talks and redress or conciliation.

Today, a person runs to the police to open a case against the man or the wife. At the police station they do not ask you if you have addressed the matter as respective families of the man or woman. They do not ask if you have been to the ‘Moshate’, they don’t ask anything. They won’t send you back and ask if you have addressed this matter as a family, as family elders or family heads.

People end up saying that ‘Bokgoši’ has no relevance or play, that family elders are irrelevant and patriarchal, but we are experiencing high levels of violence and abuse to children, women and men, higher death rates, increased crime, increased divorce rates and ongoing divorce settlement cases, etc. however, people have by-passed their traditional leaders and ran to police stations to receive case numbers and not peace and mediation.

If the importance and significance of Bokgoši was more than just recognised, but acknowledged, when you get to the police station, they should ask you if you have approached your family and discussed the matters as a family, amongst family elders and heads, was it discussed at the ‘Mošate’? And what was the outcome or way forward from these discussions.

Just like in our ‘Mošate’ when you go there to report abuse by your wife or husband, they ask you if you have discussed the matter as a family, amongst the elders and family heads and what was the outcome. It is only when we amongst ourselves as the family, elders and heads are unable to reach consensus or an outcome, then can they intervene. If they are also unable to reach consensus or outcome, then you are able to approach the magistrate. You cannot simply shoot straight to the magistrate,

Yes, at the magistrate court, they will not turn you away, but what is the role of traditional leaders then? If you have the financial resources to approach the magistrate, you may do so, but what about those who do not have the means to access the magistrate court?

Traditional leaders are being deprived that privilege and opportunity to serve people. And people in turn will be denied the privilege and opportunity to get justice or just mediation and reconciliation.