Interview Ten - Ga-Masemola Royal Council Advisor and Masemola Traditional Council member

(Pseudo name- Royal Rev. Dr)

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

Royal Rev Dr was a male nurse by profession who worked at Matlala Hospital. He left nursing and attended the ‘Chief’s Son College’ called ‘Bowa phara Ngkwe’ then from there he followed theology and he perused his doctorate. He is a theologian who is free to think, free to interpret the bible.

22 June 2022

Place: Masemola Traditional Council Court Hall

The interview questions were conducted in both the SePedi and English language. The researcher then followed ethical protocols presenting the study information documents and interview consent forms. After all ethical matters were addressed, the researcher then begun the interview.

**‘Selfishness is killing us and the current mode of survival is killing us’**

Q1: Where do the Ga-Masemola BaPedi come from, what is their history?

Our origin is that we are MaSwazi. We are the children of Matlejoane I. He birthed Mokwena, who then birthed Matlejoane II. There are different theories with regard to the children of Matlejoane II. We have Mogashoa, Seloane, Phaahla, Masemola and Tladi. You can from this linkage trace the people of Ga-Masemola. They are the children of Matlejoane II.

The children of Matlejoane II all had different ‘Mošates’ and out of them, came many ‘Makgoši’, who are they descendants. For instance, the Ntsabeleng clan, they are descendants of ‘Kgoši’ Masemola. Before residing in the Thabampshe area, they had resided here in the community of Masemola. So they too, are the descendants of Matlejoane II.

Q2: What does it mean to be of BaPedi BaTau origin?

The first factor is the geography in which we find ourselves, and the language which we speak, we call it our official language. And the culture which we follow, all of these are what make up what we call the BaPedi.

Q3: Can you tell me a brief history of the BaPedi and their roles during colonial and apartheid periods?

I have mentioned that ultimately, we landed here in Ga-Masemola and it has been a long time since then. We fought for this piece of land against other BaPedi from the Sekhukhune area. We fought some wars that ultimately led us here.

As you might know about the back mountains, that’s where they say that ‘Kgoši’ Maboewe, the father of ‘Kgoši’ Tseke settled. With him we also fought many wars, with the forefathers of Mohlaletse.

We conquered others because our weapons at the time were indigenous trees which use to grow here . There is a mountain south from here which we call ‘Swana le nhlane’ and the central mountain at ‘Psereng’, when the BaPedi confronted us and they were underneath these trees and we on top. We would kill the cattle of the BaPedi and put them up a tree called ‘Mohloko’. Only to find that the tree was poisonous. This killed many enemy soldiers.

So I can say that this is our piece of land and we fought for it. There was constant interference by other groups in our areas. We also had to fight of the Ndebele. ‘Kgoši’ Moboewe II fought and died in battle in the Stoffberg area in a war of survival. All the ‘Makgoši’ fought great wars including the leading ‘Kgoši’ Tseke IV.

Tseke III is the only ‘Kgoši’ who did not participate in war because he ruled during the period of ‘enlightenment’ and wars were no longer a solution or option.

Q4: What is tradition?

Tradition are the rules and regulations of a certain group. And out of these rules and regulations, they make up a culture.

Our culture in Ga-Masemola includes that when we bury, our heads face east. This is because we moved from Lake Chrissie.

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The way that the bible came to us or how it was introduced in the black world, set aside our cultures. It also put us as a people to the side. The colonialist mission, to Christianise blacks and nothing else. They claimed our culture was satanic, it is barbaric. This has come back to haunt us today. There has been a total westernization of the mind, which we now have to deal with.

We need to be liberated from the western culture. When we think about things, we must use our own minds. It must not be a foreign mind which interprets things.

Tradition has many continuous factors, it has a history, the past. The problem is that we broke the gap, from the 16th and the 19th centuries. Most destruction and domination of our cultures started during these periods. The 1800s especially, where Christianity came in . it is when the money system started. It is when the school system started. It is when we were captured by the western cultures. Today it is not easy to come out of captivity and this culture. This is because the next generations after the imposition of these cultures, grow up knowing the status quo.

It only through education that you realise that this is not our culture. This is a wrong. We feel like we cannot correct the situation, we feel very barbaric to correct the situation.

Our cultures were stolen from us. We are trying to bring back that culture. We are sort of freedom fighters for our religion.

Money has made us slaves.

With our culture even if someone is 50years old, they can still get married. This is done so that the children can have an identity.

The underground is the real world, it is the true world, where only the truth works.

A product of the apartheid era. The mind is captured.

Q5: What is your interpretation of customary law being subject to the constitution?

It’s our individual identities and cultures subject to westerns identities and cultures

Q6: What is the community’s role in continuing the rules and protocols of the culture, what contribution does the community make in tradition?

First of all, we as the people are not under the traditional leader or traditional authority. Traditional leaders are the custodians of the culture.

Take a look at our Komma, the community at large comes out in their numbers, from those physically in the community, to those who are situated in the cities due to work and school. The community at large gathers at this rite. The Komma does something to the minds of our people. They experience the out of this world experience through this rite. Hence, their anticipation, their excitement, their pilgrimage home, their gathering and the continued practice of this rite.

This should signal to you the importance of the institution of Komma.

The people are the custodians of culture. I have gone back to the bible and confirmed this. I Have written numerous articles, presentation, I have been on numerous radio stations and continue to practice and preach this historical fact. The people’s role is to obey their traditional leader and follow their traditional leader.

Here is Ga-Masemola, the people strongly follow their traditional leaders and the rules and protocols of their culture. It is just our nature, we are a culture living nation, tribe.

Q7: What is a ‘Kgoši’ and ‘Kgošikgadi’?

They have the King and Queen. The titles we currently use in the English language were the status given to us by white people. The term ‘chief’ was the term given to a prefect at school.

The ‘Kgoši’ cannot be a ‘chief’ or traditional leader, this is wrong. Think of the words, CEO, which stands for chief executive officer, the term does not amount to King or Queen. It is wrong to use this word to refer to our ‘Kgoši’. The ‘Kgoši’ is the father of the nation, the ‘Kgošikgadi’ is our Queen mother.

Q8: Historically vs now, how have the roles and functions of ‘Kgoši’ and ‘Kgošikgadi’ changed?

They have changed because historically, their role was to govern, but now with the political change that happened in 1994 with people having their own households, their own stands, their children are indoctrinated as oppose to educated, people have amassed their own wealth and make their livelihoods independently, therefore, they no longer live under the traditional system of a ‘Kgoši’.

Before people knew that the lands they were farming or sowing on belonged to the ‘Kgoši’. So they respected the soil owner, the owner of the land and meaning that they respected the ‘Kgoši’.

Today we have this paradigm shift because of financial emancipation.

The church is another reason why ‘Makgoši’s powers and authority has been reduced or constrained.

Anything which can make people not go to ‘Go bolwa’, DiKomma, is a thorn to ‘Makgoši’. One of the institutions which make people not go to the institution of DiKomma is the church and the western institutions of clinic or hospital circumcision and their health care system. If a black Christian can take their child for circumcision at a clinic or hospital, then they understand the importance of doing this rite. But they do not comprehend the significance of conducting the rite with our very own indigenous knowledge systems.

Traditional authority has a challenge with the new municipal system and their councillors. It’s the local municipality, district municipality and provincial structures, they all claim to replace traditional leaders and their structures. This is the cry of most traditional leaders, they feel as though, they have been replaced. Councillors and political leaders are now doing the work previously done by traditional leaders. They have taken over their roles and functions.

The land that we are currently on, Kgošikgadi Makgatle does not have the title deed to this land. She only has a PTO. What is that? Can you imagine the blood shed during the wars for this land, the lives lost. After all the blood that has been shed, imagine the government then comes and says that this is not your land.

The present government system has a president, while we had Kings. Now this is the shift I am referring to.

….. the problem we are also facing is that people do not have an interest in such matters which define their everyday existence. People are not interested in these important matters. Even if the municipality can call them together to address a specific issue, they do not come.

The ANC government has tried to engage people of this matter, because their position has always been that traditional authority should form part of the social, political, legislative and economic environments of South Africa. However, during the infamous CODESA negotiations, compromises were made. Since the 1800s, we’ve lived under the white system and their cultures. That did not stop post 1994, but rather continued under new conditions. The ANC had imagined that the powers and authority of traditional leaders would not be reduced or affected, but they were wrong.

The system of white domination does not attract people; hence, people are not interested when called by the municipality or governing party. I must also mention that today; they do not even attend the gatherings of the ‘Mošate’.

Modern society is busy. People are busy with their own lives. people do not see themselves spending a day at a municipal or ‘Mošate’ gathering. They are constantly going to be on their watches and looking at time. They are checking the time to fetch their children from school, to go to work, etc.

The right system is what is pushing out traditional leaders to the side. The Bill of Rights is problematic. The Constitution itself is a poison to traditional leadership. The constitution is also a poison to the people because it divides people between the ‘have’ and ‘have nots’. As an ordinary citizen, if you don’t have, your dignity goes down. At the expense of the one that has nothing, the one that has something is entitled to have a say or to be respected. The people who have nothing have to respect and adhere to the one that has something in order for them to get something, even if it is something little.

People are captured. People are captured by capitalism.

Q9: What is your opinion about the local, provincial and national houses of traditional leaders and their roles?

We have these institutions, but the important question is, ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL? Organisations like CONTRALESA, are they functional? Are they taken to task and by who? Does the government adhere to what they say?

Unfortunately, we see them on our TV screens crying. So they also have their own battles.

Q10: : Why were some sections of the Native Administration Act 38 of 1927 still not repelled post 1994 considering the impact the legislation has had on policy formulation in South Africa?/ In the former Transkei region?

Seventy percent of the ANC is still the white government. It is a continuation of the white government. They just removed a white face and replaced it with a black face, but the system is still the same. Even the laws, you can see that it is a power struggle.

These legislations are still alive through the present government system. How South Africa is governed today is still the same way that the Native Administration Act ruled. Especially the 1954/1957 Acts.

We find ourselves still living under the tribal segregation laws and we do not know how to remove ourselves from this reality. We still call each other Swazi, Pedi, Zulu, etc.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add?

In the democratic dispensation we live with different people from different places who practise different cultures from us, others do not even follow any culture. They don’t even care about it and they are just ignorant. It is not their fault. They think there is nothing better than what they are doing. There is nothing better than who they are presently. They know no better.

Today people whether academics or policy makers know very little about ‘Bokgoši’ because of the church system and the government system. They do not know that the ‘Kgoši’ is their ancestor, they do not know that ‘Kgoši’ is their owner. They do not know that the land belongs to the ‘Kgoši’. They do not know that they too belong to a ‘Kgoši’. They do not know the true powers and influence of a ‘Kgoši’.

We are the descendants of one person. People do not know genealogy. They do not know that a ‘Kgoši’ has powers over their lives. Power and influence.