Interview Four - Queen Mother of Ga-Masemola, Chairperson of Ga-Masemola Royal Council and Masemola Traditional Council; Limpopo House Board Member (Pseudo name- Kgošikgadi)

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

19 June 2022

Place: Royal Palace

On a warm Sunday morning in this ‘close-knit’ community, the researcher prepares for an early interview with Kgošikgadi Masemola. It has taken the researcher two years to finally have this sit-down interview with Kgošikgadi due to unforeseeable circumstances from the researcher’s side.

The researcher made use of the Ga-Masemola’s ‘uber special taxi’ transport to go to Kgošikgadi’s residence. By a ‘uber special taxi’ the researcher is referring to private vehicles turned into shuttles to take you in and around the village. It costs more than a taxi minibus because you can either split the fare with others or have a special trip like this trip. The driver is a young man in his early twenties who is very energetic and happy about this trip because of the fare.

He safely drives the researcher to the interview destination under the melody of upbeat Amapiano music. The researcher arrives fifteen minutes before for the scheduled ten o clock interview with Kgošikgadi Masemola. Upon arrival at the door the researcher is greeted by one of the live-in family staff members. The researcher is welcomed in and directed to the upstairs of her highness’s beautiful home where the interview would take place. Her grandchildren playing and running around. The children are curious of this stranger and follow us up into the upstairs area.

Their baby sister pleaded them to go downstairs with her, with no success. Kgošikgadi Masemola appears and they excitedly wait for her to reach the top, where they point her to the researcher. She explains to them what we have to do and why they need to go play downstairs, afterwards, she’ll find them there. Excited to play with their grandmother they tell her, they’ll wait for her here and won’t make any noise, but of course she knows them, she then resorts to bribing them with some juice. They follow her downstairs. A few minutes later, Kgošikgadi appears and the interview begun.

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.

Q1: What Pedi tribe does the people of Ga-Masemola come from?

The history of where we come from, is very long. It includes a lot of things, hence, I would rather we not go into it because you find that I might miss out important information trying to summarize it for you.

We are currently working on a book project which traces back our history. I am certain this book will be complete by the time you conduct your PHD research study. Then you can use it for this bigger project.

However, we the BaPedi do not originate from here at Ga-Masemola, but we came from Swazi. We travelled and settled in various places, up until we found permanent settlement here in Ga-Masemola.

Q2: What does it mean to be a BaPedi?

Q3: Can you tell me a brief history of this tribe?

Q4: What is tradition?

You know that we are different groups of people not just in Ga- Masemola, but in the world more broadly. Each group, or nations of people have their own tradition or customs. Tradition is how people choose to lead their lives, how they dress, how they eat, how you talk, the language, etc. There are traditions where people go to diKomma, there are traditions where people do not go to diKomma, but are Christians. So, traditions differ according to how people choose to lead their lives, according to their belief systems.

Q5: What does tradition mean?

‘Go ye thetha gwa bathu’. ‘Se retho’ shows people where you come from. ‘Se retho’ traces your family member’s lineage.

Q6: What is the value of tradition?

You know the problem is that I want to use deep SePedi, but I cannot because you will not be able to understand me because I will speak in real SePedi, not the condensed one that you speak.

How can I put it, as I have said, we as people differ according to the above which I have mentioned. How we live, how we dress, how we eat, etc., and these distinguish one group of people from the next. You are able to see someone from Ga-Masemola from how they dress. When you are able to follow the traditions, or customs which you have chosen for yourself, it becomes easy for you to be yourself. You self-actualize the rules and laws which you want to live under. You show pride in who you, and where you come from.

Q7: What is traditional authority?

Bokgoši is hereditary. For us to say that someone is a Kgoši, he is not appointed or elected. He has a birth right to the Royal position. He is not chosen by the people or any group in society, but rather through his bloodline.

In SePedi tradition or customs, I can argue that Bokgoši ‘ke ba mosadi’ and not ‘ba monna’. Why do I say that, because a Kgoši can marry any number of wives from two to ten, who we call ‘Ba huma kgadi’. How many as he chooses, and have boy children from his wives but in a situation where he is married to wives with children, but he passes on before marrying a candle wife, the principle wife, ‘ Makgoši’. If the Kgoši has passed on before marrying ‘Mago sechaba’, you cannot take a wife from the smaller houses, and make them ‘Makgoši’. Their sons cannot become Kgoši because they are not born from a ‘Mago sechaba’. What is going to happen is that the Royal Family are going to marry a candle wife, the principle wife for him from a specified royal kraal, who will become ‘Makgoši’ for the nation. It is this principle wife who will then give birth to the next Kgoši. Once the candle wife has been married, she will become the ‘Kgošikgadi’ till she gives birth to the next heir to the throne. Even though the Kgoši has passed away, the candle wife will give birth to the next Kgoši who is not the child of the late Kgoši by blood. For as long as the principle wife is from a royal kraal and has royal blood, she is fit to give birth to the next Kgoši.

The Kgošikgadi will occupy this position till her son is old enough to take the position of Kgoši in the nation.

Q8: What is the basis of traditional authority?

A hereditary birth right. It is only those from royal kraals, royal families, who can become or give birth to a Kgoši/ Kgošikgadi.

What are the characteristics of Bokgoši?

Continuity, coexistence, respect, community, empathy and self-pride. I can even say education because our system teaches and educates our people.

Q9: What is a traditional community?

You know that any given community is birthed by the Kgoši and the ‘ndunas’. The Kgoši, who is the senior traditional leader, along his ‘ndunas’ who are under him. The ‘ndunas’ operate like a Kgoši because they lead specific villages or kraals which are under the leadership of the Kgoshi. Here in Ga-Masemola we have Mmphane, Malope, Thabampshe, etc. all these communities have ‘ma ndunas’. We also have foremen, who also assist both the Kgoši and the ‘ndunas’ lead in the communities.

Not all matters that arise in the communities reach my audience because of the above people who I have mentioned that help the Kgoši. They adjudicate like the Kgoši in their respective communities. It is only when they cannot find a resolution to the issues that have risen in their respective communities will they then approach me in Ga-Masemola.

So, a traditional community is a community which exercises shared leadership between various structures of a Traditional Authority. The Traditional Authority of Ga-Masemola share leadership responsibilities with their communities’ members according to our values, norms and customs.

Q10: What defines a traditional community member?

Their language and how they dress. Our community values, norms and customs are transmitted through how we speak and how we dress. How we journey and mediate through our rites in life.

Q11: Who does not qualify to be traditional community member?

A person who does not speak our language. It is easy for us to see what you are not from here by how you speak. We know you are not from here by your language and how you speak and dress.

Q12: What is a Kgoši/Kgošikgadi?

A Kgoši is someone who has a birth right to a hereditary leadership position in a community or nation. The candle wife, who is the principle wife only becomes a Kgošikgadi when her husband, a Kgoši has passed away. Upon his passing, the candle wife, assumes his leadership position. She is no longer ‘Makgoši’, but rather ‘Kgošikgadi’.

A Kgoshi and a Makgošikgadi lead together and each have their respective roles and duties to fulfil in the community. Even the Kgošikgadi, who is the wife of a late Kgoši plays just as significant role as the Kgoši.

Q13: What roles and functions do traditional leaders perform in the community? (Historically vs Now?

Before we did not have many challenges as we have like today because previously people respected and followed traditional authority. Today, more people think they can challenge our leadership.

Before, our communities built their own infrastructure through low levies and taxies contributed in the community.

Before, if someone lived on the soil and land of a Kgoši, they ought to respect the traditional authority which the Kgoši represented. If it was found that you are guilty of an offence and the consensus and adjudication by the Kgoši was to be banished from the community. The Kgoši was permeated and authorised to ask that person to leave the community. ‘Go nyatsa Kgoši ke go thluga’. You were asked to go live where you will do as you, please, but not in the community of Ga-Masemola.

Before, when someone committed a crime, he/she was punished by the community itself. For instance, if someone was found stealing, the community would apprehend that person and the community at large would be called. That person was either beaten by the community or put in what we called a ‘strong room’ with the intent of changing that person’s behaviour, because even that said person’s family would participate in the public punishment so as to show to the culprit that we as a community do not approve of theft or this behaviour. This had the effect of changing the behaviour of that person because he/she is a child of the community, hence he was disciplined by the community as they saw fit.

Today we have what we call the Bill of Rights which confers rights to people only based on property rights. Not rights that are informed by any customs or tradition. Rights that do not carry even responsibilities. These are not rights which can be located in any of the historical communities located in the geographical area of Southern Africa, but rather universal human rights. These universal rights infringe on the rights of ordinary South Africa’s to self-determination and self-actualization according to the values, norms and customs which people have decided for themselves. This has had the effect of encouraging selfish and wrong behaviour. People need to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong and adjust their behaviours accordingly.

Anyone from any country can come into the community of Ga-Masemola and destabilise the community, but the Constitution protects them. As I had mentioned earlier that as people, we are different and are guided by different customs and belief systems. The idea of universal human rights supersedes the ideas, protocols and customs that we as people have chosen for ourselves. You cannot ask people to move out of your community because you will be abusing their rights to decide where and how they want to live. The state does not allow that. But the community at large suffers due to this.

Today people do as they please because they know a Kgoši cannot do anything or have a say because of the law. People intentionally challenge the Kgoši because they know he cannot do anything to punish unaccepted behaviour or negative lifestyles in the community.

Q14: What has changed?

As I have mentioned above, the introduction of the Western Democratic Constitution and the Bill of rights system and the kind of ideologies and behaviours these systems have bred and encouraged before 1994, but especially after 1994.

Q15: How do you perform these functions? How does traditional authority work?

A Kgoši does not lead alone, but he leads with ‘Bakgomma’ and ‘Bakgomana’. I work with the Ga-Masemola Royal Council, and the Traditional Council of Ga-Masemola who form the Ga-Masemola Traditional Authority. Through these structures and the composite elders, ndunas, foremen and other community leaders and members, we lead together every day through the representation of our tradition through how we talk, dress, behave and lead our lives.

‘Bakgomma’ and ‘Bakgomane’ are royal men who are here every day in the Royal palace waiting for anyone who seeks help. They tend to cater to offences brought by men and young men. I, the kgošikgadi and the royal women mostly attend to matters brought by women and young girls.

The Traditional Council adjudicates matters brought to the tribal office. This council adjudicates between the everyday issues of community members who feel aggrieved by other members. These are open deliberations open to every member every Tuesday and Thursday in the tribal office court hall.

The Royal Council only steps in when the Traditional Council is unable to reach a resolution on a matter between community members. The Royal Council sits in at ‘Mošate’ and not in the tribal office hall. These seatings are not open to the community at large, but rather are attended by the Royal Council members. Most matters brought here come from the ndunas. Matters that involve the ‘ma ndunas’ does not include the Traditional Council, but only the Royal Council. There are other structures which deal with institutions such as diKomma, which also bring their matters to the Royal Council and not the Traditional Council.

I, Kgošikgadi, am the chairperson of both the Traditional Council and the Royal Family Council as well. I am the final judicator in all matters of both councils if we are unable to reach consensus in the respective councils.

Q16: Where does it stop draw the line?

Where blood is involved, i.e., stabbings, shootings or murders. That is the jurisdiction of the police.

Rape and all sexual assault matters.

Sometimes in these very serious matters, you find that people do not want to involve the police but would rather prefer I listen to the matter and help in finding a lasting and acceptable solution for the parties involved. People sometimes want mediation and peaceful resolution as oppose to exposure and imprisonment. We encourage people to report serious crimes to the police, however, you still find that people want me to assist instead. You cannot force people to go to police stations.

The honest truth is that we deal with so many matters including the above, because people do not want to include the police. People from this community often prefer to find solutions that will enhance rather than destroy family and community bonds. People always tend to want lasting solutions which will restore peace between aggrieved parties. The police will give you a case number and then you are on your own. There is no open mediation and discussion between people. Even the victims do not find closure or therapy. But how we listen, discuss and give time to listen to people’s grievances, makes the best difference because they feel heard. The feel they are not alone in seeking justice and that at any point in time, the traditional authority members are available to lend an ear, eye and support. The process of finding peace is not a one stop shop, but rather a continuous process that aims to mend relations and change behaviours.

Q17: What is your relationship to the state? Has is always been like this?

What I can say is that what the state has done post 1994 with the construction of local government, is a duplication of structures. Traditional leaders already perform the functions of local government. That is why you will find that there is no proper cooperation between traditional leaders and local government officials, i.e. municipal officials. There is a competition of power and authority between the two structures because the municipality assumes that the Kgoši wants to take away their powers and the Kgoši assumes the municipality wants to take away their powers. This is because we are doing the same things.

The municipality is at an advantage because they have a budget. The municipality collects rates and taxes and as a result has the funds. We are no longer allowed by law to collect any of these. But you will still find that people see traditional leaders as their primary local government structure.

The municipality can call for a community meeting, but no one will show unless I tell and ask the community to come and participate, they will not. They do not resonate with municipal officials as much as they do with me and other traditional leaders.

Like I mentioned before that the municipality has the resources and budget to do things in the community, but people do not have confidence in them. Unless I am involved in some agendas, the community will not participate because it is not about budget or resources, but people’s perception that they are listened to and consulted in matters that concern them.

Q18: What roles does your community require you to perform?

Myself and all the other leaders who represent the Traditional Authority of Ga-Masemola must give people access to their tradition and customs. When they want to practice ‘dikomma’, weddings and other rites, I must be available to offer them access and guidance through these rites. To us as the people of Ga-Masemola our lives are intertwined between the living, unliving and the seen and unseen. We are the custodians of the ways of life of the Ga-Masemola people.

I am their mother, I am here to listen, comfort, mediate and guide the community according to our values, norms, customs and traditions their forefathers have left for them. We are custodians of our heritage resources in their many forms.

Q19: What does traditional authority represent? Who does it represent?

The system of traditional authority represents ‘bathu’. People who look like me and you. It represents history, identity, being, place, people and time. It reminds us of our past glories, it forces us to be one with each other and the environment and it encourages the continuity of people. Their ideas, language, how they dress, speak and many others. It is a system of doing things. It has structures and institutions in which our identity, ideas, laws and outlook in life are entrenched in the everyday.

Q20: Do people come to meet you? What do they come to meet you for?

Yes, they do. People come to me for anything and everything that we may come across in their lives, in their families, schools, etc. which may confuse them or distress them. We are here to mediate and guide the everyday. We are here for everyone.

I cannot mention one thing, because people come to us about their material wellbeing like land, water, etc.; their physical wellbeing when they are not well or one is pregnant and needs to get to a hospital, their spiritual wellbeing for rites such as when a child is born, when someone marries, death; and mental wellbeing, say someone out of the blue is said to be losing their mind, or is experiencing depression. The scope is very wide my child.

Q21: How does a day in your life as a traditional leader look like?

I attend meetings and travel almost every day in interest of my people and the Ga-Masemola Traditional Authority. Because I am part of the provincial council, I also have those duties to attend to. It is very busy my dear.

Q22: How is your current relationship with the Makhuduthamaga municipality?

We respect everyone, especially those whom we do not share the same ideas or views. Personally, we get along, however, in terms of co-operative governance, our working relationship is not good.

Q23: Are traditional leaders given opportunity in the council meetings to make decisions

on matters directly affecting their areas?

There are IDP meetings where we are invited, however, the ultimate decisions are made by the Municipal council. We participate in the meetings, however, only as procedure.

It is not all traditional leaders who are invited to sit in the council meetings or IDP meetings. There are limited number of seats for traditional leaders in these meetings so we as traditional leaders also have to among ourselves nominate candidates who will participate in the municipal meetings and represent us in the municipality. But the number of seats afforded to traditional leaders in municipal councils depends on the side of the municipality and as well as other factors.

The traditional leaders who do participate in the IDP meetings also do not have a say in all matters. It is depended on the municipality’s invitation to their meetings. As I mentioned before, their presence is just procedure and symbolic because they cannot cast a vote in decisions to be made. They are merely just there to fulfil quotas.

Even though traditional leaders do not have a say, we still encourage our members to attend so as to represent their communities. They are not decision makers at all. But that will not stop our leaders from lobbying for their people in these meetings even if their votes do not count. It’s what they call ‘ex officio’.

That is why I prefer to not be nominated because it tends to end in conflict.

The municipality will approach us with finalised plans regarding a potential project in the community, but when you look, it’s a project plan that has come as a pre-package with no consideration of the area, what the people need. Most often than not, municipal plans and community expectations or needs to not match. A municipality will want to do a project that is not in line with the community profile or does not have the proper context specific background of the community which may hinder or prevent the project from happening.

It is a battle between those who have resources and those who do not have.

Q24: What is your role in rural local governance?

We are not decision makers, however, because the municipality tends to have exclusive planning sessions on community projects, which conflict with community expectations, we try to bring people’s concerns to municipal officials. We try to reconcile the people’s expectation and the municipal plans. We represent the community at municipal meetings and represent the municipality at the community level to encourage to participate in meetings called by the municipality. We try to act for both so that there is no deterioration in the low service delivery we already get and, in the community, to encourage them to participate in deliberations regarding matters that concern them.

I lobby for traditional leaders, women and children and our communities at provincial and parliamentary spheres. I was nominated to the Limpopo Traditional House board and there I attend meetings and discussion on traditional leadership and its proper role in the governance of their people. Particularly in rural local governance

Q25: Is there a working cooperative governance between traditional leaders and municipal

workers? Please explain.

No, because we often do not agree because of the fight for local governance position and competing claims to power. There is a duplication of structures, but one structure has resources and ours does not have.

Q26: Is traditional authority in your view adequately represented at the local government

level?

No, our traditional leaders have an ‘ex offio’ status in the local government structures, meaning that we cannot vote. We do not make the decisions that affect us, but our communities as well.

Q27: How would you measure your current performance in local and rural government?

I would rather we skip this question because you cannot rate someone who does not make the decisions. As far as we are concerned, our people are the only ones qualified to rates us based on what we are doing considering the fact that we do not have resources.

As leaders we sometimes get it wrong, but our primary aim is to be there for our people.

Q28: Is the community under your leadership been able to receive service delivery and

development? Why is that?

We have a water issue, we need to create jobs for our people, we need to build tertiary institutions for our children. There is much that local government still needs to provide for our people.

He who holds the pocket, decides the projects.

The lack of cooperation and coordination between municipalities and traditional leaders has had the effect of delaying and in some instances denying service delivery to people. We do not control the budget or make decisions about service delivery or development.

This is not to say that individual community’s members and our leaders are not starting initiatives, but the final decision even on some of their initiatives are also depended on the decision makers in government and not us.

Q29: What is your relationship to the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders?

As I have mentioned earlier, I am a member of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders. I am nominated by other traditional leaders in the province to represent them at this provincial level.

It’s not every traditional leader that can have a meeting with the premier, the MEC or the president. So, hence, I was nominated. At this level I am in a position to lobby for the rights of traditional authority, traditional leaders and our communities. Because I am part of state structures by virtue of being a member, I can have access to these senior state officials.

Limpopo has five districts with Local Houses, which each nominate traditional leaders who will represent them in the local and provincial houses and nationally. In Sekhukhune we nominate twenty people, myself included to our local house. But, of course, the number of nominations depends on the size of the district. I am not so sure about other provinces.

Sekhukhune is the biggest district; hence, it has twenty traditional leaders who make up the local house who are nominated there. Then from those twenty members of our districts nominations, nine will then form part of those who are members of the Limpopo House. Then eleven remain at the local house.

In the local house we nominate a chairperson and four other members who will work with them. We call them the executive.

In the province, where the nine members are sent from the district, we then nominate members for our executive. There are a total of thirty-six members in Limpopo House.

In then provincial house, we nominate again those who will represent us nationally.

I form part of the three traditional leaders who represent the provincial house nationally. The three of us represent the BaPedi, Matsonga and BaVenda, of which are the main cultural groupings in the province. Also, it has to be two men and one woman.

Q31: What is your relationship to the National House as a traditional leader? How do you

communicate in your official capacity to the House?

The national house consists of twenty-three members.

Myself and the other members of the House meet regularly at our meetings and work together well.

Q32: What are some of the challenges faced by traditional authority?

Our biggest challenges are at our local house because the local house are not funded at all. The executive is not compensated for the work they do. They do not even receive stipends. There is no budget for the local houses. So as a result, they do not meet frequently.

The provincial house has more budget than all the other house, even though it is also not enough. The executive is subsidized with monthly salaries, car subsidies and housing in Polokwane. They are the only members who are fulltime and have day-to-day programmes. The rest of the members come only when they are called to attend meetings.

The thirty-six traditional leaders in the provincial house are part of committees. The executive, planning, heritage, social development, gender, justice and land committee are the profiles in which traditional leaders have to partake in. We all fall under a specific committee.

Each portfolio committee meets up and discusses regarding the matters which fall under their committees.

When it comes to land, the municipality wants land from us, but land is not something that we just sell off for profit. It’s nothing to play about. This land is not my land, but the people’s land. I am just the custodian of the land. We cannot sell land for development purposes, but we can lease land for development so that ownership belongs to the people. The people must get their share and be reinvented into the people, not the state. We do not know who is the state, but we know each other. You know I am Kgošikgadi of Ga-Masemola. We do not know who the municipality is going to then sell the land to, because we do not know who the state is. Who it represents, why it is buying land in our country. You must not forget where South Africa comes from, how we got to our current reality.

There are efforts to change and undermine traditional authority because of the duplication of the local government system, however, as you know, local government is facing many challenges today along us as traditional leaders.

We are not decision makers and therefore, cannot make decisions that affect our people.

Q33: Is traditional authority still necessary today?

Yes,

Q35: Why?

The state is trying to undermine ‘Bokgoši’, but the state cannot function without traditional leaders. People need to know who there are, today we talk about the ‘national question’, ‘the black question’ and many other abstract concepts because people are lost. People are dislocated and disorientated by western domination and the universalisation of the liberal constitution and the type of virtues and behaviours it encourages and incentivises.

Traditional authority is a holistic system that covers not just leadership and governance issues, but it deals with the everyday. We are custodians of times where people like me and you were victors. Our customs and traditions attend to the complexities of life and death, not just leadership and authority. It’s not just about control or rule over others, but its control and rule of people by people and their ideas, history, politics, family and so much more.

If people are allowed to be themselves and live under rules which they have chosen themselves, there is respect among members, there is coexistence between members, there is mutual rights and obligations. I am the Queen mother of my people, but I am not above them, hence I live with them. I cannot favour between them; I cannot treat them differently because I am their mother.

Today, we as traditional leaders are the ones pleading with people to go to police stations, to attend municipal meetings etc. if we stop, people won’t bother because they recognises us as they first call when anything happens in their lives, communities, etc.

Q36: How has your approach to dealing with requests for intervention changed over

time?

Our processes of peace and mediation have not changed; hence people continue to be guided by traditional authority. people are encouraged to go to the police station to report matters because we are mandated by law, however, people still choice to come to us.

We are still guided by respect and our traditional protocols to dealing with matters which arise in the community.

Q37: Today, how would describe the changes seen taking place in traditional institutions

and structures since 1994?

A lot of the changes are actually initiated by government and the courts and not us traditional leaders. The altering of our structures and how we function has always been the goal of the government system.

It also depends on a number of other factors, but what I can say is that we, in Ga-Masemola have maintained how we do things according to our customs.

Q38: Do you know about the Native Administration Act of 1927?

No

Q39: What can you tell me about it?

Q40: What should one know about traditional leaders today, that is not popularly known in

academic discourse?

When there is potential development project which the community, or state wants to initiate, you first approach the Kgoši. The Kgoši will notify and gather the ‘ma ndunas’ and foremen and consult with them. Then after, the Kgoši will then call the community together to inform them of this project. In the community meetings, the project is broken down and explained. In the community meeting, the advantages, disadvantages and benefits are weighted together.

If a traditional leader does not do the above, and he goes and facilitates a private meeting on his own accord and receives anything from the above, then he is stealing. If a Kgoši does not consult those whom he leads with and those whom he leads, then he is not leading for the community, but himself. We do find these types of leaders.

But everywhere where money is involved, be it tradition, the state, church, etc. you will always find greedy people. However, with us true Kgoši’s and Kgošikgadi’s you find that there are less corrupt and greedy people than in government, the church etc., because of the birth right to the supreme position. I am a mother to all, not just the children I give birth to.

Before we didn’t work and were provided for by our people through the Royal fields which belonged to us all, but the various state governments have infiltrated our system through the subsidy systems and duplicating our local government structures.

We want to eat, speak, dress and live the way we choose because of the significance of having a self-created identity, belonging, history and continuity. We want to create our own jobs in ways that are involved by who we are. We want development to be localised to Ga-Masemola traditions and customs. We need the coexistence of the living and unliving, and the seen and unseen.

Q41: Why do you think people still prescribe to tradition, this way of life?

People want peace, stability, coexistence and continuity. We have fought for many years and for many things, but people want to live according to their fathers and mothers and many of those who have come before them.

You live a happy and fulfilled life them you speak your mother tongue, when you live among those who live and look like you. When you are one with the seen and unseen, when you are able to appease both your living parents and family and those who are no longer living but still live with us. You are reassured that many of those who will come in the future, will have access to how you lived and make use of the varied secrets and knowledge that your ancestors have left for you in you and, in your neighbours and in the place or places you have lived.

You are a different person just by how you speak and dress, your outlook is grounded in that you are not alone and will forever have a place of belonging in our community and in the unseen world.

You should see people during dikomma, you’ll understand why. Their esteems and pride come out; they are different people.

Q42: Should traditional leaders be given more power?

Yes,

Q43: Why?

Government must allow people’s voices to be heard. Our people want us to led them. For many years there have been forces trying to do away with traditional authority, but it has not happened. It will not happen, as long as the ‘black person’, i.e., brown skin being exists, we exist alongside them to guide them and protect them. To give them access to who they are before the imposition of colonialism, apartheid and white domination in general.

The governments use law, policy and the budget to undermine us, they must use the law, policy and the budget to reinstate our powers.

Q44: Is there anything you would like to add?

Historically, Bokgoši was won through violence and war. The more brutal a Kgoši was the more people feared him and followed his authority. the more people he killed and conquered; the more people gave allegiance to him. Through the wars and battles, people came to the realisation that they have fought and died enough. They realised that people shouldn’t die or be conquered before a leader is found or chosen.

Today, Traditional leadership and the position of Kgoši or Kgošikgadi is a hereditary position, which is a birth right. No one can change that. The people know who they are and where they come from.

An elected or appointed person has to lobby the interest of those elect or appoint them in government structures to further the interest of government. Whereas a Kgoši or Kgošikgadi is an agent of people, passed, living and future. At all times you have to be impartial. You have to represent your people in all their differences and spheres. I am their Queen mother who is there to take care of them in ways far more significant than the material wellbeing.

We give people access to life portals that cannot be accessed outside of us. We are custodians of certain histories and victories of brown skin people. Remember, today the pen is mightier than the sword because you can write fallacies and untrue statements about people you have not meet, who you don’t know because you positioned to do so, you have privilege.

Remember South Africa’s racial component, it continues to dictate who is worthy of leadership and who is not based on their skin colour and their culture. Inherently as leaders, whether from government or traditional leadership we can have our faults and mistakes, but brown skin people are judged harshly simply because we are brown skinned.

Colonialism and apartheid continue to destroy our societies, but the conversation about traditional authority, especially in your circles, focuses more on black leaders and not so much on those who continue to subjugate and discriminate against blackness and black thought, black leadership and black systems of being and behaving.

We are still living under indirect rule. You cannot do anything without the state wanting to control it. And I ask, who is the state?

Q45: how is your relationship with other leaders in the community, i.e., religious, health, education, etc.?

I get along with every member of our society. Remember I am their mother; I cannot choose between my children. I may have difference of option or ideas or lifestyle, but they are all my children. I am invited to all the different programs from church services, school merit functions, family planning awareness programs etc. They know I will come to anything they organise, especially community prayer sessions and disputes between SGB members. I keep track of every sphere of our society so I know what is going on with my people.