

**BATSWANA WOMEN'S SONGS: VEHICLES  
FOR ENCULTURATION, CONTINUITY AND  
CHANGE**

by

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

1. My mother, Motshabi Norah Motshelanoka, who with her unalloyed support guided me to what I am today. She is a caring, loving and Christian mother. Even in the dark days of her illness she enriched my life with faith and trust.
2. My late grandmother, Augustina “Mmadintwa” Sennelo, who guided me and taught me folktales, songs and proverbs that made me love my culture. She empowered me with morality that helped me learn society’s values and how to think independently and thus influenced my day-to-day behaviour. She always encouraged me to study hard in order to achieve my goals in education.

“ROBALA KA KAGISO MOTSHWENENG”

*(Rest in peace Motshweneng)*

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“ROBALA KA KAGISO MOPHIRING”

*(Rest in peace Mophiring)*

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“ROBALA KA KAGISO MOPHIRING”

*(Rest in peace Mophiring)*



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## SUMMARY

The research describes how the Batswana women use their songs as potential vehicles for cultural empowerment, continuity and change. The songs are regarded as a form of literature which is an integral part of culture and tribal life. From the traditional point of view, Batswana women participated in many rituals which had cultural significance. Through the songs women are able to teach culture to the younger generation, to maintain culture and its values, and also to change the culture by considering skills and knowledge that are needed for survival. The women's songs are a powerful force for social cohesion, as well as a tool for reinforcing a common identity. The songs express the values attached to the women's tradition, and also to communicate with the ancestors, who are believed to have power to cast a protective eye over the living.

The research depended mainly on fieldwork that was conducted in three Batswana villages in the North-West Province of South Africa between January 1996 and May 1999. The tribes selected are the Bahurutshe booMoilwa at Dinokana, Bakwena booMorare at Matlhaku and Batlokwa booBogatsu at Tlokweg. The information was gathered by means of interviews and a questionnaire for individuals and groups on the different stages of female life in order to establish the potential of the women's songs as vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change.

The study investigates the functions of the women's songs by means of the interaction ritual model as sources of social solidarity. Women's empowerment is viewed as the development of their knowledge skills and capacities for the purpose of social advancement and includes caring for and educating infants and children, as well as raising girls' consciousness and self-esteem. Furthermore, analysis is made of the lullabies sung to babies by mothers, older sisters and nannies, including game songs sung by young girls, which play a part in their socialization.

In this research the major focus is on the analysis of the formal role of the Central

Batswana women's songs in rainmaking and rites of passage such as initiation. The responsibility of girls in relation to the complex nature of human relationships, love and codes of morality and their specific contribution to domestic life is viewed from a broader perspective of interpersonal bonds within the community as a total entity.

The study of the women's songs is based on cultural continuity and change in marriage, childbearing, widowhood, and in economical and political life. The potential of the songs as effective tools for interaction and communication is investigated.

The study describes the performance of the songs in relation to the communication model in a particular setting where the meaning is circulated from the performer to the audience in face-to-face interaction who will then be expected to give feedback. The women's struggle for challenging the patriarchy and making their voices heard is carried out by means of the songs they perform. Finally, the performance strategies and poetic techniques of the songs are analyzed to determine how the songs are used in enculturation, continuity and change.

In Nnaemeka's (1998: 1) view, "We are making our voices heard. May the world stop and listen".

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek die wyse waarop Batswana-vroue hulle liedere gebruik vir akkulturasie en kulturele bemagtiging, kultuurhandhawing en kultuurverandering. Die liedere word beskou as 'n vorm van letterkunde wat 'n integrerende deel van die kultuur en die lewe van die stam uitmaak. Tradisioneel gesien neem Batswana-vroue deel aan baie rituele van groot kulturele betekenis. Met die liedere is die vroue in staat om kultuur oor te dra na die jonger generasie, die tradisionele kultuur en sy waardes te handhaaf en die kultuur ook te verander deur o.a. kennis en vaardighede te inkorporeer wat nodig is vir oorlewing. Die vroueliedere het 'n sterk sosiale bindingskrag en is ook instrumente wat gedeelde identiteit versterk. Die liedere druk die waardes uit wat deel uitmaak van die vroue se tradisie en dien ook as middele om met die voorvaders te kommunikeer wat, so word geglo, 'n beskermende oog oor die lewendes hou.

Die navorsing berus op veldwerk wat gedoen is in drie Batswanadorpies in die Noordwes-Provinsie van Suid-Afrika tussen Januarie 1996 en Mei 1999. Die stamme wat vir die studie gekies is die Bahurutshe booMoilwa op Dinokana, die Bakwena booMorare op Matlhaku en die Batlokwa booBogatsu op Tlokweng. Die inligting is ingesamel deur middel van onderhoude en 'n vraelys vir individue en groepe oor die verskillende fases in die lewe van vroue. Die doel daarvan was om die potensiaal van die liedere te bepaal om as middele vir akkulturasie en kultuurhandhawing en kultuurverandering te dien.

Die studie ondersoek die funksies van die vroueliedere deur middel van die interaksiemodel van rituele as bronne van sosiale solidariteit. Die bemagtiging van vroue word omskryf as die ontwikkeling van die kennis en vaardighede van vroue ter wille van sosiale mobiliteit. Dit sluit in die versorging en opvoeding van babas en kinders, maar ook om meisies bewus te maak van hulle rol as vroue en hulle selfwaarde te verhoog. In hierdie verband is die wiegeliedere ontleed wat moeders, ouer susters en kinderoppassers vir babas sing, asook die liedere wat jong meisies by hulle speletjies

sing as deel van hulle sosialisering.

Die hoofokus van die navorsing val op die analise van die liedere wat Sentraal-Batswana-vroue sing tydens oorgangsrites soos reënmaak en inisiasie. Die meisies se verantwoordelikhede binne 'n netwerk van menseverhoudings, liefde en moraliteit asook hulle bydrae tot die huishouding word gesien in die breë perspektief van die gemeenskap as geheel.

Kultuuroordrag en -verandering in liedere deur volwasse vroue in die verskillende fases van trou, kinders kry, weduweeskap en in die ekonomiese en politieke lewe is ook ondersoek. Hieruit blyk die potensiaal van die liedere om te dien as effektiewe middels vir interaksie en kommunikasie duidelik.

Die studie beskryf die uitvoering van die liedere met behulp van 'n kommunikasiemodel waarvolgens die kunstenaar van aangesig tot aangesig met die gehoor in interaksie tree en terugvoer van hulle af kry. Die vroue se stryd om hulle stemme hoorbaar te maak teen die patriargie word ook gedra deur die liedere wat hulle uitvoer. Laastens word die uitvoeringstrategieë en die digterlike tegnieke in die liedere ontleed om te bepaal hoe dit die potensiaal van die liedere vir akkulturasie en die handhawing en verandering van kultuur ondersteun.

Soos Nnaemeka (1998: 1) skryf, "Ons laat ons stemme hoor. Mag die wêreld stop en luister."

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **CONTEXTUALIZATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

### **1.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION**

In traditional African societies, oral literature is an integral part of culture and of social life. It is a collective art that embraces music, stories, poetry, dance, drama, idioms, riddles, proverbs and the oral history of the community. Songs provide a repository of traditional beliefs, ideas and wisdom (Kgobe 1997:40). The various genres, proverbs, stories, oral history etc., contain messages which unite the community and advance the understanding of Batswana culture by inculcating values, morals and knowledge in the society. These genres, especially music, dance and songs, provide inspiration during various ceremonies including recreational activities, performances of rites, social and political activities and communal work. The study will focus on traditional and contemporary Batswana women's songs as vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change.

It is important to define the term "culture" in relation to the study. Culture is defined by Conklin (1987:59-60) as:

...a design for living that is shared by a people and that includes values, customs, rules of conduct, knowledge, technology, language, and the arts ...  
It is passed from generation to generation through the process of socialization.

This is in line with Cunningham *et al.* (1997:24) who write

Culture is the shared products of a human group or society. These shared products not only include values, language, and knowledge but also material objects ... Although culture is shared it must also be learned by each new generation through the process of social interaction.

Stoffberg (1982:2) defines culture as the totality of human creations (materialistic and spiritual), such as language, customs, values and clothing, developed by an ethnic group during a process of adapting to its environment. Another important definition of culture is presented by Tylor (Blacking 1995:226) who sees it as that “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

These definitions make it clear that when we use the word “culture” we are referring to the attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours and communication patterns that can be learned and shared by people belonging to a clearly identifiable group.

The characteristics of culture will be discussed further in chapter 2 to clarify how and why the women use their songs in rituals that could lead to social solidarity. However, it is important to highlight one of the characteristics of culture namely, that culture can be transmitted. In traditional societies culture is mostly transmitted orally.

Here it is important to understand oral literature properly. Furniss and Gunner (1995:1) open an important perspective on oral literature and its relation to society when they emphasize that oral literature should not be seen as:

merely folksy, domestic entertainment but as a domain in which individuals in a variety of social roles articulate commentary upon power relations in society and indeed create knowledge about society.

Ruth Finnegan (1970:2) underlines the performative nature of oral literature by writing that

oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who composes it in words on a specific occasion. Aspects that contribute to the effectiveness of performance in oral literature include expressiveness of tone, gesture, facial

expression, dramatic use of pause and rhythm, the interplay of passion, dignity, or humour and receptivity to the reactions of the audience.

It is important to note that oral literature is based on oral tradition. As regards the oral tradition, Kaschula (1991:50) assumes that oratory in specific situations functions not merely to entrench socio-political norms and values, but also acts as a medium through which people encounter, engage and negotiate their position within the political structure of a society.

Let us focus on the findings and views of other authors and researchers on oral tradition. Finnegan, Lestrade, Nketia, and Owuor (as cited by Ogundipe-Leslie & Davies 1994) documented that in the African oral tradition, women are very visible not only as performers but as producers of knowledge, especially in view of oral literature's didactic relevance, moralizing imperatives and pedagogical foundations (Ogundipe-Leslie & Davies 1994:138). It can therefore be said that women play an important role in sharing knowledge through songs as a form of oral literature.

In this study it will be investigated whether the Batswana women use their songs to teach culture to the young generation, to maintain their culture and its values, and to challenge some of the unjust norms in an attempt to change their culture.

Despite the fact that women produce knowledge their voices are suppressed in patriarchal societies. As anyone who has taken an interest in the subject knows, African women have to contend with many problems. From the traditional point of view, African women in general and Batswana women in particular suffered exploitation under patriarchal culture and in the past colonial oppression. As they were sidelined and marginalized, there are still landless women who struggle to eke out a living in the rural areas. Those who are regarded to be fortunate are those who managed to have access to formal education during the apartheid era, for whom affirmative action has attempted to redress the imbalances of the past. Women are being oppressed and all too often their burden remains unchronicled and their heroism unsung.

There are, however, serious challenges facing women with regard to their visibility and presence in the social, political and economic spheres. If by visibility we mean the

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participation of women in social, political and economic spheres, then the goals of the movement to emancipate women are still far from being achieved. These goals can only be achieved once women experts in key positions in the public arena provide support to other women and help them to build up their self-esteem and self-confidence in order to enhance their future prospects. Women must keep in mind that no one will give them power and authority on a silver platter.

Virginia Woolf (Selden & Widdowson 1993:207) advances the notion that women, while indeed the victims of men, collude in their own domestic and professional victimization by acting as a “looking glass” for reflecting back to men their desired image.

Crucial issues pertaining to women’s expression emerge from the following contributions: Dikotla (1996:50-51) maintains that when a woman experiences frustration, she can communicate it through songs to the world around her. At this stage the songs are used as a vehicle for obtaining a measure of relief.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto’s (1996:349) view regarding challenging stereotypes is that survival as a fundamental issue in human interactions involves protest and affirmation. The individual’s motivation to survive often results in protesting against all forms of subjugation and oppression and in the process there is an affirmation of self-fulfilment and self-actualisation. Although all individuals in one aspect of life or another are confronted with the need to survive, it is often in the affairs of women in societies with numerous social restrictions that survival becomes a primary objective.

Bhabha (1994:172) states that

...a range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the affective experience of social marginality – as it emerges in non-canonic cultural forms – transforms our critical strategies. It forces us to confront the concept of culture outside objects d’art or beyond the canonization of the ‘idea’ of aesthetics, to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of

meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival.

Figs (1970:17) shows the unfairness of patriarchal perceptions of woman, particularly the fact that the image of women is formulated not by women themselves but by men. The image of women in a patriarchal society is presented to women in the mirror of men, and women have been taught to respond to this image. What strikes one about this image is that it is created by men, not by men and women jointly for common ends, not by women for themselves, and this can be seen to be the real difficulty – the fact that in the mirror the image is distorted. The women's songs could provide an alternative mirror they fashioned themselves as a corrective to this perception.

It is necessary to compare the effects of colonization and patriarchal culture in order to explore the women's need to change their culture. Colonization banished the colonized, mainly blacks, from their fertile land to obscure places, made the native invisible (and undervalued and underpaid his hard labour) just as in a patriarchy women are rendered invisible by keeping them in the domestic and private sphere and undervaluing their unremunerated but essential work. Karl (1995:3) maintains that women have the primary responsibility for their family's health and for the provision of food, water and fuel – work that is not only unpaid, but largely unrecognised as well.

Today Batswana women are struggling to redefine themselves as citizens of a new democracy, as well as persons who are fully participating human beings in the public and private spheres. Allow me to share with you the message from President Mbeki's speech, which I heard on National Women's Day on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2004, in his efforts to make the nation aware of the need to recognize women. He said that the government must address the matter of gender equality, provide a safe life for women, and implement the Constitution in order to achieve the objectives of gender equality and empowerment of women. Only in this way the cardinal role of women in society, but also in the processes of enculturation, cultural continuity and cultural change will be duly recognised.

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### **1.1.1 Enculturation, continuity and change**

As we saw above, culture involves the behaviour of people in relation to others and also in relation to other things in the environment. From the moment a baby is born it is incorporated into the culture of its mother, and as it grows older it will celebrate the cultural changes with rituals called rites of passage. Culture is the product of ethnic groups and also the various manifestations of their lives. Culture in this sense includes language, religion, social organisation, political and economic organisation, the education system etc.

Culture is a collective phenomenon since it is partly shared by people who live within the same environment where it was learned. In this regard Hofstede (1991:5) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”.

The individual's personality is based upon traits that are partly inherited and modified by the influence of others. Culture can be maintained or changed by symbols which include words, gestures and objects, as well as rituals and values, which are among the first things children learn.

### **1.1.2 Functions of songs in a ritual context**

Songs can be seen as expressing solidarity and as a way of channelling the focus of attention to what is being done. Songs exist in all societies with variations in how they are used and the nature of the sound that an ethnic group appreciates. Once people are assembled in a group there can, through ritual, emerge a moral solidarity which makes them conscious of each other and teaches them to respect the sacred objects that strengthen the group adherence.

Songs have the power to build solidarity between the performers and the listeners. They can be regarded as an identity discourse that enables people to create and express their relations with others within a social group. According to Furniss and Gunner (1995:118):

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It is in some cases a combination of the power of sung and poetic discourse

and the power of song or poetry in ritual situations which link the singer or poet in a very intense way to forces or influence that may be presented but not tangible.

Performing songs in ritual situations leads to a common focus of attention which can transform the potential solidarity into an actuality. This can happen when the members of the group pay attention to the same thing, and recognize the group in this action. The importance of songs in ritual context is thus that they can be a powerful force for social cohesion which binds communities together and reinforce a common identity. Kruger (2005:68) emphasises the role of music in rituals when he writes:

The ritual power of music making is related to its involvement of multiple forms of communication. What it means is that music making creates intense states of shared awareness through the combination of musical sound, bodily movement, visual imagery (e.g. costumes), feeling and thought.

### **1.1.3 Women's tradition**

From the traditional point of view, most women are seen as reliable, obedient, responsible and caring. They are adorned with the qualities of nurturance, rendering to men and children physical and emotional care. Women are often subjected to strong forces of socialization and acculturation in their societies. They are bound to subordinate roles and domestic chores that they should perform every day. Despite the fact that the women are often relegated to a minority status, it is known that they have always been the stronger sex. In patriarchal societies they are confronted with the need to survive even while they have to overcome numerous social restrictions. According to the data collected many women who live in oppressive conditions struggle to make their voices heard.

Women's songs have the potential to reflect women's life experience, not only thematically but also in the performance itself. Danish (Anyidoho and Gibbs 2000:169) states: "For the most part, the themes developed by these women writers are quite specific and strongly linked to the social condition of women".

Perhaps it should be indicated that historically women were portrayed by the patriarchy in a stereotyped way. Both ordinary women and those with the talent or genius to express their views often have a realistic view of the life they have experienced and the limitations of being a woman (Anyidoho and Gibbs 2000:168).

The empowerment of women will provide an opportunity to open the doors so that those who have been disadvantaged can assume their place in society as equal to their fellow human beings. There is a need to create a situation in which women shall be free from fear of tyranny and not be denied their fundamental human rights.

#### **1.1.4 Performance of the songs**

Music as part of a song is an interpretative art, because it can be interpreted, renewed and transformed by each performer through her own performance. Songs are emotionally meaningful or expressive and are transmitted to the audience.

Performance can be defined as the actual execution of an action in a specific place. A minimal definition of performance might be that a person does something in a demarcated space while someone else is watching. Performance allows a clear view of the interplay between content and context during the process of circulation of the message from the performer to the audience since it is an expression of the aim of the performer to engaged and maybe even challenge the emotions of the audience. Performance involves various signs and symbols operating in the performer-audience interaction and they are subject to collective and individual interpretation.

Mugambi (1994:62) points out that the manipulation of gender space is inherent in the very nature of the song genre, and that in most African contexts, to mention the term "song" simultaneously evokes voice, story, storyteller, performance, as well as images of musical instruments. This view is essential to this study, since the women use songs to transmit their culture to the younger generation, to maintain it, to challenge the patriarchal view of limiting their participation, to mobilise other women, and also to make the government aware of the legacy of oppression and inequality in our society that needs to be changed.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The main problems regarding the Batswana women's songs that the researcher will investigate are therefore the following:

- Are the Batswana women's songs vehicles of potential enculturation, continuity and change?
- What is the function of the songs in ritual context?
- To what extent do the songs tell about women and express an authentic female tradition?
- What is the relationship between performance of the songs and enculturation, continuity and change?

## **1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the research is to study the role of Batswana women's songs in order to:

- investigate whether the songs are vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change,
- establish the functions of songs in ritual context.
- determine whether the songs tell about women and express an authentic female tradition,
- identify the relationship between the performance of the songs and enculturation, continuity and change.

## **1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT**

Batswana women's songs are a form of communal property whose spiritual qualities are experienced by performers and listeners, and it demands time and patience to reveal their effectiveness in the processes of social solidarity and interaction. The importance of songs as musical composition can be related to Kruger's (2005:58) view of the role of music as a life strategy. He writes:

Music maintains or reproduces society, that is, humans employ music to ensure their survival by structuring social relationships and identity.

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## **1.5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

In this study, the researcher drew on three theoretical models to describe how songs might be used as tools for enculturation, continuity and change. The first, Collins' (1988) interaction ritual model, is an overarching approach that relates especially to rituals as tools for social interaction and solidarity. The second, Duncan's (1992) model of face-to-face interaction, relates especially to the transmission of culture and also to audience-performer interaction. The third, Tracey's (1967) model of communication, is employed only to analyze performance strategies and audience-performer interactions. These models will be presented in more detail in chapter 2.

## **1.6 METHODS OF COLLECTING MATERIAL**

### **1.6.1 Setting**

The researcher first did a review of the literature on culture in order to explore its essential characteristics and how it is changing in today's multicultural world.

Most of the information was gathered through interviews between January 1996 and May 1999. Fieldwork was conducted in the North-West Province of South Africa. The study focuses on the central Batswana, and the tribes selected were the Bahurutshe booMoiwa, Bakwena booMorare and Batlokwa booBogatsu. The researcher have chosen them since traditional culture is to a large extent still alive among them as they express it by means of the rituals they perform.

### **1.6.2 Sampling frame and sample**

At all three villages the sample of interviewees was drawn from all females for the following reasons. Firstly, the females have different experiences with regard to the roles of depending on their class, and secondly, the researcher wanted to capture different views of how they perceive themselves as women or girl-children. A sample of 100 females from each of the three villages was interviewed, some in groups of 20 to 30. Others were interviewed individually, giving a response rate of 100%. Of the 300 females interviewed 60 were minors, below the age of 12 years, and 130 were women

between the ages of 38 and 50. Of the remaining 110 interviewees, 40 were from 12 to 38 years of age, while 70 were elderly women. Group interviews, which were conducted within age groups, took about one hour while individual interviews lasted for 15 minutes. The total number of all interviews conducted is approximately 73.

### **1.6.3 Interviewing process**

The interviews with minors were structured while those with other age groups were semi-structured. The interviews were conducted in their first language, which is Setswana. Spokespeople were selected randomly from different backgrounds, that is: from rich and poor, literate and illiterate, Christians and non-Christians, single and married, initiated and uninitiated, normal and disabled. Some interviews were recorded on a tape recorder and other responses were written down. Some of the songs were recorded on videotape. During the course of the interviews the groups sang and danced on request, and the researcher gained access to wonderful performances of various songs. Interviews were conducted in good spirit and a relaxed atmosphere, except for interviews with a few old women who were not very forthcoming with information regarding some secret rituals. Consent was obtained from all the women after confidentiality had been explained and ensured. They were invited to participate freely when they performed songs which are used during secret rituals such as initiation, and they were assured that their names would not be recorded. The researcher managed to observe a rainmaking ritual as well as marriage and widowhood processions.

### **1.6.4 Questionnaire**

The basic questions for the interviews were prepared in advance. However, a few were informed by the findings of the group interviews. These were held with females at different venues and explored their perceptions and experiences of performing the songs as part of a ritual. They were asked about their socio-economic background, age, number of family members, creed, education, home, their work situations and perceptions of themselves as women. Married women with children were asked about the type of marriage, relationship, age, number of children and how and why they use the songs to control and teach the girls the culture.

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The questionnaire is included as Annexure 1 (see p. 237)

## **1.7 PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

More than 60% of the women in the sample spoke of having performed the songs in different rituals in society. This is a reflection that women, irrespective of their socio-economic background, used the songs as medium of communication and expression during interaction. In total, 142 of the women interviewed reported having participated in performances of rites of passage and that they use the songs to share their knowledge and teach their culture to the children. They however revealed that they also used the songs to express negative feelings of being abused and oppressed. 23 women felt that it was acceptable for women to be oppressed hence they performed the songs to soothe their feelings and relieve their frustration. 240 revealed that they used the songs to support each other, to socialise with other women, and to help each other in carrying out domestic chores, ploughing and hoeing. Women interviewed saw empowerment as the best way to obtain skills that would help them to cope in supporting and maintaining their families. Females who are minors revealed that they enjoy singing the songs while caring for the babies, playing and working at home, and also during break time at school. They also said that they wish to live better lives in future which will be different from that of their mothers.

The important findings from the interviews are: The songs are for women indeed the best way of expression and sharing experiences amongst the studied population. The songs also help them to remember the steps to be followed in performing rites of passage such as rainmaking, initiation and weddings. Middle-aged women and adult women are marginalised both at home and in their communities and they use their songs in an attempt to make their voices heard and to change the culture. The self-report estimate suggests that in a traditional setting the songs are the important means of communication and interaction in ritual situations. The songs are used not only for the transmission of culture but also to challenge some of the patriarchal norms and values.

The rest of this study will focus on a selection of traditional and contemporary songs by Batswana women, representing songs from different stages of a woman's life, namely

childhood, adolescence, married life, middle age, and the post-menopausal stage. Girls are included since they are being conditioned for their roles of wives and mothers. For the sake of simplicity, the researcher refers to her interviewees as informants. She put considerable effort into portraying middle-aged women as her core category, since they are at a stage where they have enough confidence to guide others through the pitfalls of life. In the past they experienced the oppression of a patriarchal culture and they are currently the forerunners in channelling the process of cultural change, particularly in the political and economical spheres, in order to find in life the happiness that they have been dreaming of.

## **1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical and analytical framework for this study. It will include a survey of the literature on culture, research into enculturation, continuity and change, women's position in the society, and their struggle to make their voices heard. Different views of the songs will also be presented. Three theoretical models that will be used to analyze the women's songs will also be outlined.

The focus of chapter 3 will be on songs that help enculturate children, subdivided into lullabies and songs for older children.

Chapter 4 will focus on the potential of the songs to maintain culture and its values in rites of passage, including rainmaking and initiation.

The fifth chapter focuses on songs for cultural continuity and change in marriage and childbearing, widowhood as well as in the political and economic life of women.

Chapter sixth focuses on the performance and the poetic techniques of the songs as a potential enhancement of their effects of enculturation, continuity and change.

The last chapter will present the final conclusions and map out the challenges that need to be tackled in future to ensure that women are empowered to be full and equal citizens of the country, able to participate freely in social, political and economical life.



## **CHAPTER 2**

# **THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Faced with the task of maintaining a balance between responsibilities at home and in society, African women have had to become resourceful. They use experiences of their culture to be successful and influential participants in society. In the researcher's view, it is vital to understand where one comes from in order to understand who one is. The way of life of one's community, that is, one's culture is an important facet of one's self-understanding. In today's multicultural world it is important to explore what is distinctive about one's culture as well as to try and grasp how it is changing. In the whole process one should try to establish what the uniquely valuable features of one's culture is so that they can be transmitted to the next generation.

### **2.2 AIMS AND OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER**

To reach this objective one needs, firstly, to define the term "culture". Secondly, the researcher presents definitions of the terms "enculturation", "cultural change" and "cultural continuity" in order to be able to judge the importance of women's songs in these processes. Thirdly, the role that songs and music play in culture is discussed. This chapter also highlights the position of women in society, the pressures women have to bear, and the extent of the prejudices against them. This is important, as one of the assumptions of the study is that the women's songs give voice to women and constitute an authentic form of women's writing that could challenge the existing

structures. Finally, models of analyzing women's songs are discussed in order to conceptualise the processes of enculturation, cultural continuity and cultural change. The study is based on the collected material and the guiding thread is the events and ceremonies of which the different songs form part at various stages of a woman's life.

### **2.3 THE AREA OF RESEARCH**

The North-West Province is inhabited by societies whose cultures and languages are in the main unrelated. Among the societies the majority are Batswana who constitute about 68% of the population. Batswana women constitute usually about 49% of the total Batswana population. The remaining 32% of the population include Zulus, Xhosas, Amandebele, Whites, Southern Sotho and Northern Sotho. The selected tribes are the Bahurutshe booMoilwa, the Bakwena booMorare ba Matlhaku and the Batlokwa booBogatsu. The Bahurutshe booMoilwa reside at Dinokana (meaning small streams originating from a source), which is located between Welbedacht and the Ngotwana River, about 37 km west of Zeerust. The Bakwena Ba Matlhaku occupy the land between the Khutong River in the east and the Groot Marico Dam in the west, about 55 km east of Zeerust. The Batlokwa booBogatsu live in the area between the Kgetleng and Tholwane Rivers, about 25 km southwest of Swartruggens.

In these three villages the people's way of life is now changing from traditional to modern. People no longer wear traditional attire. Traditionally the females wore threaded skirts and males wore animal hides, but today the women wear dresses or skirts and blouses, while men wear trousers. Today many people no longer regard traditional food as their staple diet. For some, traditional marriage customs have changed to modern ones. Because of the influence of Western civilization and Christianity some widows no longer wear mourning clothes and they no longer follow mourning rituals. In order to understand what is at stake in these cultural changes one should of course understand what culture is.

### **2.5 CULTURE**

The term "culture" is the main focus of the study. People's culture comes from their history or their roots and the group of people to which they belong. Culture focuses on

the traditions and religion of a specific group of people. A child learns basic rules of conduct in its family and in the environment. Culture is important because it provides for social interaction in which people learn how to act towards or respond to others in society. Each society or each group has its own culture, which differs from other people's culture. Societies operate according to their customs and beliefs which determine their way of life and their social identity. A society tends to mark important life events like being born, reaching adulthood and dying by means of rituals. Such rituals are important moments in maintaining or reproducing a society's culture. Culture changes all the time due to the influence of other cultures, innovations in the culture itself and changes in the environment.

### **2.5.1 Definition of culture**

Culture is an all-embracing term that includes many items such as education, religion, beliefs, behavioural patterns, language, social organisation, and political and economic organisation. Culture is therefore a way of identifying one nation to another nations. It is embedded on the history of a particular group. Pearsall and Trumble (1995) define history as "the total accumulation of past events, especially relating to human affairs or to the accumulation of developments connected with a particular nation, person or thing". Due to their history the culture of the Batswana will contain certain unique features that differentiate them from other ethnic groups.

The researcher will now clarify the main issues around the idea of culture. Culture can be described as the shared mindset that emanate from the interaction of a specific ethnic group within their social environment. Culture is the product of an ethnic group. It is complex since it includes many interconnected aspects such as language, religion, social, political and economical organisation, as well as education. It is based on the history of ethnic group.

Kaemmer (1993:8) states that culture involves all the techniques, values and symbols that individuals learn from their society and use in adapting to the natural environment, to the social environment, and to their own inner drives. Considering the combination of these three components of the socio-cultural system means that the artefacts created by humans, the patterned social relationships, and the approved types of expressive

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behaviour all work together to generate what is known as the way of life of an ethnic group, or socio-economic group.

Stoffberg (1982:1) defines culture as: “The expression of an ethnic group's speech, thought processes, actions and aspirations”. Regarding the above definition it can be said that the way a group of people performs their rituals reflects the group's culture. Kruger (2005:47) defines culture as a way of life, a view of life, and a strategy aimed at social survival. He maintains that these three components are interdependent.

From the above definitions, one can say that Stoffberg's (1982) and Kruger's (2005) definitions of culture are related in that a view of life refers to aspirations and processes of life while strategy of life is expressed by actions during interactions.

Hofstede (1991:5) describes culture as: “The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. This view means that the way of thinking of a group of people makes them live in ways different from other groups.

Hofstede (1991:7-8) identified four levels in the manifestations of culture, namely symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning, which is only recognized by those, who share the culture. Heroes are persons, alive or dead, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behaviour. Rituals are collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs to others. Since they are at the core of culture, Hofstede (1991:8) postulates that values are the aspect of culture that endures the longest and changes the slowest. Hofstede uses an onion diagram to show the manifestations of cultural change at different levels of depth.

Another substantial contribution to the study of culture, particularly to the way in which cultures respond to crisis or negotiate change is stated in Turner's (1977) work. He maintains that the world of social action, of community in process, is informed and conditioned by a structure of norms and values, rituals and symbols. Turner (Ryan (2001:59) defines the world of action as:

the repository of the whole gamut of the culture's values, norms, attitudes, sentiments, and relationships. Its representatives in the specific rites - and these may vary from ritual to ritual - represent the generic authority of tradition. In tribal societies, too, speech is not merely communication but also power and wisdom.

In our everyday life we display our culture without being aware because we have learned to internalize it. This is how people express their norms and values in the society.

From the above definitions it can be said that "culture" is a force that serves to create a strong bond within a group. It is a collective phenomenon that is learned. It has a long spell of life as it is passed from generation to the other. As long as the agents that serve to maintain culture are intact, it will continue to exist. It should however be realized that in global type of life in which we find ourselves today, culture cannot continue to exist in its original form. Given the situation explained above, cultural change takes place when a culture is dominated by or comes into contact with other cultures and also from influences emerging from the environment.

These definitions make it clear that when we use the word "culture" we are referring to the attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours and communication patterns shared by people belonging to a clearly identifiable group. It is important to consider the following characteristics of culture in order to understand its importance in relation to women's life. Firstly, culture is learned in that we acquire it from our environment. In other words we learn culture from our parents and the community in which we grow up. Secondly, culture can be transmitted from one person to another or from one group to another. Thirdly, culture is dynamic, in other words it is perpetually changing. Lastly, it is said that culture is ethnocentric, in other words most groups of people see their culture as being better than other peoples' culture (Robbins *et al.* 2003).

Having highlighted the characteristics of culture it will be useful to consider oral literature as a way of transmitting culture.

### 2.5.2 Cultural change

Cultural change is brought about by the influence of other cultures, e.g. as a result of missionisation, colonisation or modernisation. It also has its in-built ways of innovating and adapting to changes in the environment. Each of these aspects will be discussed below:

**Missionisation:** When missionaries arrived in Africa, they imposed the Christian religion on the Africans. Their first step was to suppress the local cultural forms of religion so that the Africans rejected their religion and accept the Christian religion. This process developed slowly but it eventually changed the religion of most of the African people.

**Colonisation:** Traditionally, Africans were subsistence societies. They aimed to reproduce for themselves and to feed their families. Before being colonised by Europeans their way of life changed very slowly even though they have traded with other people from time immemorial. The so-called mineral revolution in South Africa since the 1870s accelerated cultural change dramatically, causing many men to seek employment in urban areas. Each of these changes took African people another step away from a subsistence society and closer to industrialization.

**Modernisation:** The changes in the way of life led to social development in African societies. People believed that by wearing modern clothes, using modern objects and adapting to the present educational system, they become civilized and modernized. That modernisation as one of the causes of cultural change is stated by Inglehart and Baker (2000:21) in this way: “The central claim of modernization theory is that economic development is linked with coherent and, to some extent, predictable changes in culture and social and political life”.

In African societies, the whole process of despising things associated with the African way of life, and adopting things seen to be more progressive in the culture that are seen as being superior is one of the factors that have profoundly changed African cultures. Dominated cultures will reflect more changes than the dominating ones due to cultural emulation. The practice of emulating the behavioural pattern of the culture which is

regarded as being superior will overshadow the dominated cultures to such an extent that it becomes difficult to identify them as independent cultures.

In addition to the contributions made by the above-mentioned authors, one can distinguish different degrees of cultural change (Robbins *et al.* 2003): Firstly, cultural change may involve a break with the past in a fundamental way by incorporating a few new cultural elements. Secondly, a culture can be maintained with some adjustments emanating from the changing environment. Thirdly, cultural change may arise from a heightened appreciation of how people see things in other cultures. Lastly, cultural change involves people changing their behaviour. It is useful to consider the fact that culture is dynamic, in other words both outside and inside influences such as urbanisation, education etc. will bring about changes in culture.

### **2.5.3 Cultural continuity**

Beyond the matter of cultural change, one faces additional challenges of describing cultural continuity. Dominated cultures are not simply incorporated into dominating cultures. Kruger (2005: 56) writes: “Cultures usually change when they come into contact with each other (internal influence and external influence). This process of change is referred to as transculturation”. He (2005:56) goes on to define transculturation as the use of cultural symbols as signs of social adaptation as well as of resistance. Transculturation thus does not simply mean cultural domination or replacement. In other words, while some practices in a culture are influenced to change, the ethnic group will retain some items of their cultural vocabulary as a way of ensuring the continuity of their culture.

Regarding the process of cultural change Kruger (2005:56) says:

Culture in fact always is changing but not at the same pace. It is referred to as a floating resource in that people select from a large, ever-changing 'flow' or 'pool' of knowledge and skills that which is needed to survive under particular circumstances.

Equally relevant to the study of culture, it can be said that cultural continuity is a

process that depends on social solidarity. A culture will both change and maintain its original form. A culture is maintained and reproduced through, education, songs, symbols, etc. Even the culture of the nations that are regarded as superior will not remain the same, as they will also be influenced by the cultures they come into contact with. In this study the focus will be on how the Batswana women use their songs in performances of rituals in order to maintain culture and its values. In Setswana the central positive moral value is called "botho", which is believed to be achieved by cooperation, effective communication, personal responsibility, and the ability to evaluate and make reasonable judgements.

The term "botho" is translated by Kamwangamalu (Gaylard 2004:270) as "personhood" or "humanness" and described in this way:

Sociolinguistically, *Ubuntu* is a multidimensional concept which represents the core values of African ontologies: respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective sharedness, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, communication, to list but a few.

Taking up Hofstede's view that values lie at the deepest level of culture one can surmise that "botho" will be one of the things that will remain constant in Batswana culture despite changes on other levels. In this study the focus will be on how the Batswana women use their songs in performances of rituals in order to maintain culture and its values. The assumption that botho is an important element of cultural continuity will be investigated in the course of the analysis.

#### **2.5.4 Enculturation**

One may describe "enculturation" or cultural empowerment as the process by which people learn and maintain their culture. In fact to be more direct, culture may be regarded as power, because culture also establishes relations of power, for example between order-givers and order-takers in a patriarchal system.

Stein and Urdang (1967:470) define enculturation as the process by which a person adapts to a culture and assimilate its values. Based on this definition, one may see

cultural empowerment as enhancing the traditional values, beliefs, and norms of a group of people by means of cultural preservation as it serves their group's interests.

#### **2.5.4 Women's empowerment**

Empowerment can be defined as the process of developing or enhancing women's knowledge, skills and capacity that will lead to the recognition of their position and power to influence social changes. Through empowerment women will be enabled to take power and control their life situation. Furthermore, empowerment will help women to deal with responsibilities that increase with marriage and mothering. As a practical strategy women could use the acquired knowledge and skills in collective work systems, to help one another to share their workload. Women should also be thoroughly equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to take part in the development of South African society.

Batswana women have a contribution to make in public and private sphere. To participate in the ongoing development process, they need to be enabled and empowered to develop a sense of self-confidence and belief in their own abilities, and to use their own competencies. Through empowerment women should be able to utilise the present globalisation process to their advantage, economically, socially and politically.

Women can empower themselves in order to open the way for full participation in society. Karl (1995:14) describes the process of empowerment as both individual and collective, since it is through involvement in groups that people most often begin to develop their awareness and the ability to organize to take action and bring about change. Koen (1994:17) states, "through economic independence, women would be more able to resist abuse and domination, because they would be in a stronger position to leave abusive relationships". Women's songs can be vehicles for empowerment in these respects.

For the purpose of this study empowerment therefore means the following:

1. It is the process of bestowing power upon women by enhancing their skills and knowledge in order to have self-confidence and belief in their own abilities.
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2. It is the process of developing women's awareness of their position and their capacity to organise and mobilise themselves against domination.
3. Cultural empowerment is the process of assuming power and of investing in women's capacity to participate physically and mentally in values, customs, etc. which are shared by their society.

In sum, women's empowerment is the process by which women are given the capacity to be equal to men before the law, to participate effectively in decision-making that may transform the society by enabling women to live a self-fulfilling life free from moral or legal constraints both at home and in society.

## **2.6 WOMEN'S SONGS AND ENCULTURATION, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

This section will focus on the ways in which women's songs can be vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change

Singing songs is a way for Batswana women to express themselves, as well as a way of getting together with other women in times of happiness and sorrow. They used to compose songs on the spot to reflect a particular situation. The songs as a form of socialisation therefore expressed certain things that words cannot, mobilising women and building solidarity. Music forms an integral part of the songs.

In his definition of music, Blacking states that music is a primary modelling system of human thought and a part of the infrastructure of human life (Byron 1995:223). Music making is a special kind of social action that can have important consequences for other kinds of social action. Byron argues that in order to understand both a musical tradition and the contributions of individual composers to that tradition, a musical system must be understood as one of several different sets of symbols by which people learn to make public sense of their feelings and social life. It is therefore important to consider songs as a combination of music and words, which are sung, in oral performance. Other songs include both verbal and non-verbal aspects and have been composed purposely for teaching morals and values of a society.

Music, like language as a form of communication, enables cultural achievements, as is indicated by its ability to make people share feelings and thoughts, and particularly to share a commitment that springs from understanding and assimilation. The model for music is human nature and much music is therefore discovered rather than invented. In addition, the creation of music can be described as a sharing of inner feelings in a social context through extensions of body movement, in which certain species-specific capabilities are modified and extended through social context and cultural experience (Blacking & Kealiinohomoku 1979:6). This is why the study of African songs and music is important. In the words of Tracey (1967:47): “Musical arts of Africa provide a channel, a veritable fiord, into the heart of African spiritualities which may yet be a key to much of their distinctive character”.

Women’s songs as a form of music contain the following elements, namely sound, form, rhythm, melody and harmony. The above elements are presented by Ferris (1995:23) in this manner: “There are various elements of music that a composer combines in distinctive and characteristic ways to form a musical composition” (Ferris 1995:25). “Among the characteristics of sound are its highness or lowness, called the pitch of the sound, and its loudness or softness, called its dynamic level. Since music is never static, but continually moves in time, it always has rhythm” (Ferris 1995:31). “A melody is a succession of pitches conceived as a meaningful whole” (Ferris 1995:32). It “consists of one or more phrases, which are punctuated with stopping points called cadences” (Ferris 1995:37). “Two or more different tones sounded together produce harmony in music” (Ferris 1995:46). “When the elements of music are organized into a musical composition, the overall design of the work is called its form” (Ferris 1995:66). Form in music “is based on the principles of repetition and contrast. Repetition lends unity, symmetry, and balance to a composition, while contrast provides variety” (Ferris 1995:66).

The researcher observed that the women’s songs have two types of structures. Some are polyrhythmic, that is they consist of simultaneous, distinctive rhythmic patterns. Some are polyphonic, that is, they consist of simultaneous sounds or melodic lines. The melody of the women’s songs has stress and rhythm, which are derived from the spoken language and are influenced by tone. It is therefore clear that for sung words to be understood, melodies must rise and fall in agreement with the tones of the spoken

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words.

In addition to the various elements of music there are other participants in the communicative loop such as the composer, the performer who carries out the act of performing by singing and dancing, as well as the listener or audience.

The composer of songs or the person who adds new words to an established style of music is recognised as an important role player since she artistically expresses her feelings in words and melodies. Ferris (1995:19) argues, “Most composers of serious music have tried to communicate to their listening audience something of their experience, their personality, their mind, or indeed their soul”. This is also true for a communal form like the Batswana women’s songs.

For the songs to perform the intended function of transmitting a message, there must be a listener who is expected to receive the message and respond to it. Ferris (1995:21) considers the listener as the one who “must possess a fair measure of knowledge and experience in order for the cycle of creation, interpretation and appreciation of music to be successfully completed”. Knowledge encourages active listening and awareness of the quality of the performance as well as of the composition.

Performance is the channel through which the message is transmitted to the listener, enabling the audience to interpret the songs. Opland (1983:154) makes the following important point regarding performance:

The differences between performances, however, are not mere lapses of memory. The key to understanding oral style lies in the fact that the singer and the generations of singers who preceded him are unlettered. Each performance represents a new composition of the song, and it is this method of composition among unlettered bards which we call oral composition.

Bauman (1992:175) sees performance as “offering to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction, which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to the performance as a mode of communication and that is part of the essence of performance”. Bauman further emphasises that “at both social and musical levels of

analysis, performance allows a clear view of the interplay of content and context". He defines content here "primarily as specific bodies of music with definable and identifiable styles", adding that "[p]rescribed sets of behavioural rules and dogmas determined by secular or sacred contexts frequently dictate the actual organisation and internal contents of a musical performance".

Batswana women's songs are used in different ceremonies in which women are the main participants. Musical activities are mostly combined with such fixed occasions as festivals, rites, and religious celebrations. The adult informants indicated that in traditional occasions there are prescriptions regarding roles, responsibilities, the general framework and the performance of traditional rites (such as girls' initiation programs) that may have the potential to promote solidarity.

Traditionally, music as oral performance has been accessible to the whole community. Its origin is somewhere in one human mind and it is developed and shaped into the forms in which they are now found by hundreds of other minds as they were passed down through the centuries (Gwinn 1995:91).

One may differ from this view, since the songs which are performed in restricted ceremonies such as initiation and in specific spiritual entities are not accessible to all but to a special group of people.

Slobin and Titon (1992:3) present a model of the elements of song performance that embraces music, performers, audience, time and space. "Music is placed at the centre of the event, and is sung and played by performers, who are surrounded by their audience, and the whole event takes place in its setting in time and space. The description of the social organisation of music refers to how a group of people divides, arranges, or ranks itself, while the sum total of musical ideas and performances is irregularly divided among the people in musical culture".

The ability of the songs to reveal meaningful messages depends on the performer who initiates the process of communication and the audience who receives the message. The performer's artistic skills have the power to absorb the audience who will also be able to interpret the non-verbal message.

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In order to establish the importance of women's songs in the performances of rituals, it would be best to consider the position of women in the society.

## **2.7 THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY**

In this section the researcher will firstly sketch the present position of women in society. Secondly, the focus will fall on the historical background to women's position in Batswana culture. Thirdly, the modern ideal and current developments relating to the position of women will be outlined.

### **2.7.1 The present**

As far as the position of women in South Africa is concerned, Koen (1991:14) stresses that "they are often not regarded as adults who are capable of taking responsible decisions regarding their own bodies, and are in some instances regarded as legal minors who need the consent of their husband or another male relative". This is still largely true of Batswana women today. Despite legislation and policies that have created conditions conducive to gender transformation, women are still the hardest hit by poverty, unemployment, and lack of technical or professional skills. The struggle for political freedom might be over but the struggle to free women from the shackles of underdevelopment, discrimination, abuse and inferiority is still going on.

Concerning the status of women, Walker (1982:xxii) argues that, regardless of the way in which the sexual division of labour in the family underwrites women's general subordination in society, for many women motherhood brings with it a degree of social power and emotional satisfaction which reflect their social empowerment. At the same time, the restrictions on women's mobility directly tend to affect their access to resources, both for themselves and for their children.

Delphy (Horn 1990:27) points out that married women are dependent on their husbands in order to achieve a particular class position, irrespective of whether or not they have a classic relationship to production. He identifies the existence of a domestic mode of production in terms of which married women give their labour power in exchange for

being maintained in the class position of the head of the home. Women and men therefore enact their roles in quite different domains, as Young and Turner argue:

...the domain of women is naturally one of privacy and domesticity, whereas men control the public arena of technology and culture. A logical extension of this claim is that the sphere and role of women is one of relative powerlessness, that can only be overturned if women enter the public, male dominated realm or create a public world of their own (Tower, Pershing & Young 1993:11).

The marginalisation of Batswana women is similar to that which occurred among Germanic tribes as noticed by Willink (1975:454) in Anglo-Saxon society, namely, that a woman was under the control of a man, first a father or maternal uncle, then later a husband to whom she had to be loyal in the prescribed ways.

### **2.7.2 Historical perspective**

Traditionally, Batswana women are expected to be industrious, obedient and respectful to authority and to circumcised male youths. Leadership roles of the women are restricted to their immediate family structures. From the researcher's personal observation, in Setswana customary law, a woman's role is to care for her husband and children and to create a comfortable home for everyone, particularly her husband. According to the adult informants, women remain minors all their lives; they are under the domination of men. They are always under the strict marital power of a husband or a male heir. A woman has only a limited capacity to own property and her husband dictates her code of conduct.

Women are allocated many domestic chores, including the education and training of young children. They often have the major responsibility for their family's health and for the provision of water, fuel and food. It is essential to note that some Batswana women and women from other ethnic groups are the sole breadwinners and child-raisers. Sabiti-Kaluli (2001) confirms this situation in his report on youth migration in the North-West Province of South Africa. He reports that industrialisation, migration to the cities, the resultant family disintegration and the destruction of the cultural family unit has seen a lot of women become single parents.

It is important to recall that the women in South Africa have demonstrated their strength during the hard times of apartheid when they became servers and leaders of people. They have always been there not only for their husbands but also for the nation as a whole. Women demonstrated their capabilities when they became heads of the families during the time when the Batswana men were forced to provide cheap labour in towns, especially in the mines. Mereotlhe (1998:16) writes that "... as a result of [migrant labour] and other socio-economic problems brought about by family disintegration, single parenthood mushroomed".

### **2.7.3 The modern ideal**

President Thabo Mbeki, in his speech during the celebration of Women's day on 9 August 2004, urged all South Africans to be committed to gender equality so that the country could realise the goal of liberating women. He said that while a lot had been done to correct gender imbalances, an important challenge was to mobilise the "millions of women in our country to actively participate in the struggle for their emancipation and gender equality" (Makhado 2004:1).

According to the new South African constitution, women have the right not to be discriminated against on grounds of gender, creed and race. Nevertheless, in practice, it is still a man's world in many ways. This is true of some of the women in the three villages investigated in this study, because they are still not given the chance to participate in decision-making, neither in the private nor the public sphere, and are often the victims of all three kinds of discrimination.

Feminists made women aware that they play essential roles in society. Women were traditionally regarded as providers and creators of life. It was assumed that the biological role of women determined their power. Ironically, the progenitive force that determined the women's power also became the source of many of their challenges. The next section will focus on how women made their voice heard.

## **2.8 WOMEN'S WRITING AND THE FEMALE VOICE**

Women are faced with two kinds of experience. There is what could be called

imaginative experience and real life experience. Will their unheard voices tell their experience and make a lasting impression on the patriarchy? Although the voices of some women are largely unheard, unrecorded and often suppressed, just as women's control of their own sexuality is often denied, the feminists want "the assimilation of women and their issues, their methods, their concerns, their language, their habits into a mainstream completely redefined by that transfusion" (Parker & Meese 1992:5).

Feminists such as Frances Harper and Anna Julia Cooper recognise the need to avoid confining women to the domestic sphere of influence within the community. They strongly defend the need for higher education of women and expose the ways in which arguments against educating women are tied to ideologies of female sexuality, which define intellectual power as a less desirable sexual attribute for exchange in the marriage market (Carby 1987).

Spender (1982), as quoted by Tower, Pershing and Young (1993:12), says it is a common assertion of contemporary feminism that women's experiences, values, and meanings have been excluded from what have been designated and reported as society's experiences, meanings and values. Women have to counteract this by highlighting their own perspective and experience as part of their struggle to be equal to men. Feminist scholarship is part of this struggle as it "undertook the task of reconstructing a female perspective and experience in an effort to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized them" (Green and Kahn 1985:1). In other words, they want to develop an authentic female tradition that gives women their own voice.

This presents feminist writers with a dilemma, however. Some female writers present their own African backgrounds and their own female experiences in a way that poses a challenge to patriarchy, while other female writings show few signs of a desire for social and economic change. In other words, they are satisfied with the reigning stereotypes and expect other females to accept it. African female writers thus

do not present one common view – quite the contrary. They do not unite under a feminist banner. They do not all necessarily desire change, some also defend traditional securities. Often they show their female protagonists as torn, confused, in a milieu of cross-cultural conflict (Bruner 1993:viii).

As female writers write from their own experiences, women who are affected most profoundly by their femaleness write about the difficulties experienced by females. Anyidoho and Gibbs (2000:170) quote Mariama Ba who writes:

The woman writer in Africa has a special task. She has to present the position of women in Africa in all its aspects. There is still so much injustice ... in the family, in institutions, in society, in the street, in political organisations, discrimination reigns supreme. As women we must work for our own future, we must overthrow the status quo which harms us and we must no longer submit to it.

In order to know about the efforts of female writers, it would be necessary to focus on the question of theme. Semanya (2001:54) captures this quite tellingly: women writers are intent on affirming the space, position and status of women in the literature they write. However, it is also true that women themselves often perpetuate the cruel practices of the system that oppress and dehumanise them. Semanya (2001:55) further maintains that in their literature (as in their lives) some women writers affirm and elevate women, firstly by showing how oppressed or victimised they are and secondly by shifting the woman from being an object to being a legitimate subject.

In her attempt to exploit the potential of the female voice, Danish (Anyidoho & Gibbs 2000:165) maintains that the immediate recognition of the woman's voice is that it has power. In the case of transformation of women's position in a society, the voice is concerned with females and their inner thoughts, emotions, actions, and admissions of vulnerability.

Another concern is how writers portray women in literature. Are they leaving a proper legacy for the coming generations? Some feminist critics are concerned that this might not be the case. Xaviere Gauthier (Davis & Schleifer 1989:465) sums up this second dilemma when she says:

If women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process. But if they begin to speak and write as men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated. It is history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt.

Jones (1989:5) quotes Ogunjipe-Leslie who believes that female writers have two major issues to concentrate on in their writings, as feminists have posited that the woman writer has these two major responsibilities: first to tell about being a woman, secondly to describe reality from a woman's point of view, a woman's perspective. In my opinion, female writers should also challenge the government on the issues of women's freedom, equality and empowerment.

Another worrying aspect is the lack of awareness in women's literature of the need to expose their historical experience in order to develop a consensus as to how they best can negotiate the future. In other words, women's literature often fails to reflect on the link between the past and the future expectations.

Paying much attention to oratory, one may agree with Nnaemeka (1994:138), who argues that the centrality of oral performance at important junctures in the life cycle, and the visible presence of women at such ceremonies make their active participation in oral literature imperative. Furthermore, the oral tradition is in many instances transmitted by women.

Nnaemeka (1994:138) argues that women are not only performers and disseminators of beliefs, cultural ideals, and personal /collective history, but also composers who sometimes transform and recreate an existing body of oral traditions in order to incorporate woman-centred perspectives. This is strengthened by Maryse Conde's assertion that "when so many women can stand up and shout slogans for emancipation or deliver political addresses for the benefit of the ruling parties, what prevents them from taking a pen and writing about themselves?" (Nnaemeka 1994:139).

In their songs the Batswana women most certainly tell about their experiences from their specific perspective, affirming their space, position and status. The songs express an authentic female voice, in other words. At the same time the songs highlight both the dilemmas of female writers in Africa: the tension between challenging the patriarchy and maintaining traditional securities as well as the tension between speaking and speaking as a man (which would entail silencing the female voice). By recording and analysing this corpus of authentic female songs, this study can, however,

make an important contribution to developing an authentic female tradition in Batswana literature.

## **2.9 MODELS FOR ENCULTURATION, CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

In this study the researcher will apply the following three approaches to evaluate whether the women's songs are vehicles for potential enculturation, continuity and change, namely 1. Collins' (1988) interaction ritual theory, 2. Starkey Duncan's face-to-face interaction model, and 3. Hugh Tracey's communication model. These approaches will be briefly outlined below.

These models are relevant to the study because they focus on how people communicate with others in the process of transmission of messages and sharing of information, ideas and attitudes. These models explain how people interact face-to-face in their common participation in performances of rituals while they have a common focus of attention.

### **2.9.1 The interaction ritual theory**

The first focus will be on Collins' (1988) notion of interaction ritual as a framework for analysing the women's songs as a tool for potential enculturation, continuity and change.

This model was designed to answer the question of what makes social order possible. It also explains the variations in the ideas, moral feelings and social attachments that take place in various types of groups, the mechanism that produces solidarity and the ideas and feelings in social ritual. The model is based on the assumption that ritual is best exemplified by religion. The model partly explains how rituals, both formal and informal rituals of everyday life, create solidarity in a society.

Collins' theory of moral solidarity sees society as being held together not by coercion, but rather held together by some form of precontractual solidarity. Precontractual solidarity may be seen as the beliefs, behaviour, religion or moral conceptions which people have in common before they form a group.

Durkheim (Collins 1988:189) sees religion as a social practice or type of action that creates feelings of solidarity by interaction between people. What is essential are not the beliefs, but rather the ways in which religions divide the world into sacred and secular realms and prescribe how people should behave toward the sacred. Behaving towards the sacred constitutes ritual.

Durkheim thinks that the choice of a sacred object is arbitrary; anything can become sacred, but once the group has chosen something the sacred object becomes a device for expressing their identity and for distinguishing themselves from others. The sacred object thus becomes a symbol of society. People feel they are dependent on the sacred symbols, since they represent powerful forces worthy of respect, but at the same time feel that they participate in the sacred objects. This Durkheim regards as an expression of the relation between the individual and society. The individual forms part of society but society is larger than the individual. The individual depends on society for language, ideas and even consciousness and morality. In this regard Collins (1988:191) writes: "Religion is moral, because all morality is social. Moreover, society permeates our intimate self, so that it does not feel external, but it also determines what we feel we want to do".

In Batswana society the sacred objects are the gods they recognize such as God and the ancestors (*badimo*), who are the late great grandparents, as well as their totems, that is animals or plants like the hare or *mogodire* (a type of plant) which they honour as sacred. The ancestors, God and totems are sacred objects since they are powerful and worthy of respect. According to Collins (1988) sacred objects are guarded by taboos and approached only in ritually proper ways such as chanting and dancing. Durkheim (Collins 1988:192) describes rituals as "special forms of social action which recreate the feelings of membership and which revitalize the sacred objects". Collins maintains that the importance of participating in a ritual influences the individual by providing a heightened sense of energy and emotional direction, emotional support, renewed confidence, sense of one's own capabilities, and a special boost of enthusiasm and energy to group leaders which emanate from their position for being the focal centre of the ritual. According to Durkheim (Collins 1988: 192), a ritual, then "is a kind of energy-producing machine, a sort of social "battery" for charging up individuals.

Participating in rituals gives a feeling of strength and support, which individuals can then use in their daily lives”.

In his formal model of ritual, Durkheim (Collins 1988: 193) uses religion as a convenient instance for understanding the mechanism of social solidarity. This mechanism has variables and processes with differing strengths. The amount of social solidarity is a variable outcome of the causal conditions. The strength of a group’s coherence depends upon their personal ritual experience. Durkheim’s interaction model of ritual contains the following elements, namely

1. The physical assembly of a group of people.
2. Their common focus of attention and mutual awareness of it.
3. A common emotional mood.
4. Sacred objects: symbols which represent membership in the group

These in turn result in:

5. Enhanced emotional energies and confidence for individuals who participate in the ritual and/or who respect its symbols, and
6. Righteous anger and punishment against persons who show disrespect for sacred objects.

Durkheim's formal rituals are intentional ceremonies. Bergesen (1988) calls them "macro-rituals", because they are oriented to the larger macro order by invoking the entire society, the state and the entire cosmos in religious rituals. The rainmaking ceremony in the Batswana society is an example. Bergesen calls rituals of smaller but permanent groups, such as weddings and feasting, which are performed by family groups and neighbours and friends "micro-rituals" (Collins 1988: 197).

Goffman presented interpersonal rituals (Collins 1988) as being more private, they bring together temporary groups, and occur throughout everyday interaction. This can refer to the love proposal among the Batswana. About this Goffman (Collins 1988: 198) writes: "Such rituals, though, are not without larger social significance. Though they are mild and taken for granted, they are pervasive throughout everyday interaction: and added together in a mass, they shape the pattern of social inclusion and exclusion.

which makes up the mundane reality of stratification, as it is acted out on the micro level”.

Goffman (Collins 1988:198) made a distinction between "intentional" and "natural" rituals. In intentional rituals the participants are aware that they are performing a ritual, and they are conscious of their sacred objects as being worthy of respect. Natural rituals occur spontaneously or accidentally. Both kinds of ritual are characterized by some degree of co-presence, common focus and common mood. Intentional interactions produce a stronger focus of attention, stronger emotional energies, and a higher number of membership symbols and stronger pressures to conform. In this study, the performance of lullabies and game songs will be regarded as natural rituals.

The division of labour in Batswana society is the area where females are most exploited. In relation to this we will focus on Durkheim's view of mechanical and organic solidarity. He made a distinction between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity has high physical density, which leads to a strong and particularized collective consciousness. It includes concrete and reified symbols and intense punitive rituals against violators. Communal work (*letsema*) songs will serve as an example of mechanical solidarity type of ritual. The organic solidarity type is derived from moderate or low density of differentiated interactions. Its characteristics are individualism, abstract and relativistic ideas, as well as routinised trust of distant social relationships.

Goffman (1967) studied what he called interaction rituals, that is, rituals that hold together small or temporary groups in everyday life. He refined Durkheim's model theoretically by further analysing the mechanism that makes rituals possible. He distinguished "frontstage" and "backstage" regions of rituals. The frontstage refers to a place where performance occurs and which is physically suitable to make a certain impression or facilitate a kind of performance. The backstage refers to a place that is hidden from the frontstage and where material implements are kept, or where the performers gather before and after the performance for rehearsal and planning (Collins 1988:203). Goffman's notion of "frontstage" and "backstage" regions can be compared with James Scott's (1990) view of offstage and onstage in his theory of hidden transcripts. Participants in ritual rehearse their performance secretly, that is offstage,

and during the real performance they perform onstage in full view of the audience. Scott (1990:10) states that the common class position of the subordinate groups and their social links thus provide a powerful resolving lens bringing their collective hidden transcript into focus.

Batswana society, like other communities, is stratified along different dimensions of power. In the horizontal dimension there is stratification in terms of popularity and friendship inside a particular group, while the vertical dimension stratifies the society according to power (giving or taking orders). Collins (1988:211) describes the power dimension of frontstage and backstage in terms of four principles, namely 1. the principle of order-giving rituals, 2. the principle of ritual coercion, 3. the principle of anticipatory socialization, and 4. the principle of the Bureaucratic personality. The first two principles are relevant this study and will be described in more detail below.

According to the principle of order-giving rituals people who give orders are self-assured, proud, or even arrogant and they identify themselves with the official ideals like that of the patriarchal authority. Those who take orders become fatalistic, externally conforming but privately alienated from authority and the official ideals in whose name they are given orders. Order-takers ignore or criticize order givers privately in the backstage region.

The principle of ritual coercion makes a link between the amount of coercion and the deference required of order takers: the more coercion and threat there is in order-giving, the more deference is demanded of order takers. In other words the dominant class will be more arrogant and egotistical while the lower class becomes more externally conforming and personally alienated.

On the network dimension, that is, the sociable dimension of members of groups among themselves, Collins' model focuses on two principles, namely social density and social diversity. It is formulated from one of the ingredients of Durkheimian model of rituals, namely conformity.

Principle of social density: Persons who have more experience of social density will conform more to the group's customs and beliefs than they will expect others in the

group to conform. Conformity will lead to moral significance as symbols of group membership that result from their behaviour and ideas. This can be associated with performance of initiation programme among the Batswana.

The principle of social diversity is affected by the extent to which an individual participates in a diverse network, as opposed to always being exposed to the same people and the same situations. This depends on the level of experience of particular individuals or groups.

In order to understand the participation of Batswana women in the rituals, it is best to focus on Collins' (1988) historical typology of ritual cultures. Where there is low inequality and high density the rituals centre on group inclusiveness. The group is more superstitious and has high emotional tone that leads to fear. Examples of this are dances and feasts. Where there is high density and high inequality there is impressiveness and fear. The ritual becomes a resource of class domination, for example illustrating the impressiveness of chiefs. The rituals are performed with costumes. High inequality and high social density is elaborated by high diversity, such as historical change - for example, modernization. In this situation there is less inequality, a decline in collective ritualisation, and people choose whether to attend an event or not. There is a less compulsory deference ritual.

The researcher believes that the application of interaction ritual theory, specifically the theory of moral solidarity, religion, the formal model of ritual, intentional and natural rituals, interpersonal ritual, two dimensions on stratification, power dimension, and historical typology of ritual cultures, will lead to the understanding of the importance of the Batswana women's songs in enculturation, cultural continuity and change.

### **2.9.2 Starkey Duncan's model of face-to-face interaction**

I shall now outline Starkey Duncan's view of face-to-face interaction in order to understand the scenario that exists in the views of composer-performer-audience. Duncan (1992:21) defines face-to-face interaction as "the term which suggests occasions when people join together in talk or otherwise jointly sustain a single focus of attention. However, also pervasive in everyday life is less focused interaction in

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which participants make adjustments in their actions in response to the presence of others”.

Duncan’s aim is to present a model of communication whereby culture is transmitted from one generation to the other implying some notion of quasi-continuity. In his view oral composition can be added to or subtracted from at any time and by different people, whereas a written work has a fixed text. Furthermore, oral literature differs from written literature in that it depends on the artistic expertise of the performer that has to be interpreted by the audience, whereas written literature establishes communication between the minds of author and reader. This is true in that the reader will be able to understand what the author is saying if the words used are familiar.

According to Duncan (1992:22), face-to-face interaction emerges “when each of at least two participants is aware of the presence of the other, and each has reason to believe the other is similarly aware”. He thinks that “interaction may occur even if there is no perceptible communicative action by either participants. Interaction occurs as soon as the actions of two or more individuals are observed to be mutually interdependent”. Interaction includes different kinds of action. The components of face-to-face interaction include the use of language, situation or context, and strategy. Each of them will be analyzed in the following paragraphs.

An important component of face-to-face interaction is the use of language, which includes “the way words are pronounced, elements of intonation or prosody, syntax and semantics”. There is also “quality or manner of speaking, such as variations in loudness and pitch beyond those involved in intonation, tempo, resonance, pauses, and nonfluencies, together with no language sounds such as laughing and sighing”. Face-to-face interaction also includes non-verbal actions such as “facial expression and bodily movements such as posture and gesture; the way in which interactants space themselves and orient their bodies to one another and how they arrange themselves in relation to the physical layout of the environment; and the part played by touch and smell” (Duncan 1992).

Duncan’s notion of situation or context as a component of face-to-face interaction “involves an apparently large set of cultural categories that applies to the participants,

their relationship, the social setting of the interaction” (Duncan 1992) as well as other factors. For a participant, the definition of the situation refers to the circumstances that lead to the performance of certain actions at a specific time. The situational requirements of conventions lead to the use of a given convention by participants which provides information on the categories and values the participants assign to that situation (Duncan 1992:26).

Goody (Bauman 1992:16) argues that “from the standpoint of communication”, the characteristics of oral tradition in a society is that firstly,

Interacting effectively is taking place in face-to-face situations, a fact that gives a special importance to the individual who communicates information. Secondly, the fact that virtually the only store of information is human memory means that it is always susceptible to selective forgetting and remembering. There are techniques for preserving special kinds of information. But, unless deliberately directed, memory bends to other interests, tending to set aside what does not fit.

This is important in the analysis of the songs because the audience will only be attracted to pay attention if the words and gestures are used tactfully to deliver the message.

The above description of face-to-face interaction highlights a scenario between the performer and the audience, which is carried out by means of both verbal and non-verbal messages. It is now necessary to look at another model to see how the messages circulate from the performer to the audience in the process of communication.

### **2.9.3 Hugh Tracey’s model of communication**

Presenting Tracey’s model as her point of departure in analysing the material the researcher believes will simplify the process of understanding how the Batswana women use the songs. It can be learnt from Tracey that for the women as performers to force the audience to react emotionally, the women must have the necessary intention and artistic skills. One may therefore analyze the women’s songs from Tracey’s view (1967:49) that “[t]he music is not looked upon as thing but rather a means of force. If it

has force enough of the right kind, then it should produce the right effect”.

Tracey proposes his model of communication with the aim of trying to classify his own impressions of music. It is a reflection of his own understanding of how music is conveyed from the performer to the listener. Tracey’s (1967) model of communication basically focuses on the two-way process of transmitting messages. The model has two different persons namely the musician (performer) and her audience, each with its own identity or spirit, and a character or soul. Between the two persons lies a gap, that blank in their reasoning between cause and effect which can only be crossed by the force of artistry or by some magical agency. Tracey (1967:49) says that “the artistic cause must have sufficient potential to flash across the gap like an electric spark and so stimulate sufficient interest without which the soul of the listener cannot expect to respond”.

The model is made up of the addresser or performer, the message and the audience. Between the addressor and the audience lies a gap, which represents purpose and direction. The addressor, by means of both the intention and the skills to convey the message, should cross this gap. The skilful soul of the addresser and the responsive soul of the audience are seen as interactive complexes. The artistic activity that connects these two souls implies that the researcher will have to discover whether the women’s songs create a powerful enough force to enable the women and their audience to communicate with one another.

Having presented what the three models entail it should now be focused on the theoretical framework for the analysis.

## **2.10 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS**

The main thrust of the research will be an analysis of the Batswana women's songs based on Collins’ interaction ritual theory, Tracey's model of communication, which is basically useful for the transmission of messages, and Duncan's model of face-to-face interaction, that will be used to analyze the performance techniques used in the songs. Interpretations of the contents and contexts as well as poetic techniques of the songs will be made. This theoretical framework will highlight the role of the Batswana women songs in enculturation, continuity and change.

Reflecting on the models namely, face-to-face interaction, interaction ritual theory, and the model of communication, the following questions will be answered in the course of the analysis:

- What do the songs do in ritual situations and which relations of power are involved in such situations?
- Do the song contents and performances present ritual elements such as physical assembly of a group, a common focus of attention, a common emotional mood that create feelings of social solidarity?
- How do they present these elements?
- Do the songs teach culture to the young generation?
- Do the songs show signs of both cultural continuity and change?

## 2.11 CONCLUSION

From the views presented in chapter 1 it is clear that culture has been an important tool for describing solidarity. This chapter focused on the definitions of culture, enculturation, continuity and change, as they are the main topics of the study. Culture as a collective phenomenon is learned from one's social environment. During its development it is subject to continuation and to change. People's culture affects almost everything about their life, and its differences manifest themselves by means of symbols, rituals, heroes and values.

The researcher's argument is that resourceful women as performers use various elements of music such as sounds, melody, and rhythm and dance to make their songs powerful tools for teaching the children culture, for maintaining culture, and for changing culture.

In traditional society women occupy an inferior position. Although they are challenged to maintain a balance between their responsibilities and accountability, they are marginalized and oppressed. Stereotyping, disrespect and inequality have been ways of silencing women's voices in the public sphere.

The researcher wishes to reiterate that the views of female writers should be adapted in the context of orality by including particular aspects of African writing. African women writers should also strive to write in such a way that their writing illuminates the human condition. Only when women look into the past and identify where things went wrong will they begin to make necessary changes that will see African literature contributing to a better future of humankind.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THE ENCULTURING POTENTIAL OF SONGS FOR CHILDREN**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

For the purpose of this study enculturation has been defined as the way a person learns and adapts to a culture and assimilates its values. From the traditional point of view, the mother mainly is the facilitator of this process to her child. Cultural empowerment can be seen as part of the multiple tasks assigned to women. This is the area where the women will use their knowledge, skills and capacities to teach their children well. This includes caring for and educating infants and children, as well as raising girls' consciousness and self-esteem. The facilitation of culture is pertinent to the discussion in this chapter, as it has bearing on the analysis of lullabies sung to babies by mothers, older siblings and nannies, as well as game songs sung by young girls, which play a part in their socialization.

A core family is generally made up of a father, a mother and a child or children, though other variations also occur. In some situations, due to death, divorce or not being married, there is only one parent. Children are born either within marriage or before marriage. A child born within a marriage is legitimate and it is expected that both parents share custody and guardianship. An illegitimate child, in Batswana society (*ngwana wa dikgora*), is considered to be a vulnerable member of society and it is the

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responsibility of the mother to provide it with shelter, food and clothing. In rare instances the father of the illegitimate child or children provides guidance. Nevertheless, mothers remain by and large responsible for educating their children. As girls are trained to be mothers and wives, they are conditioned to obey the prescribed rules set by the patriarchy and socialized to identify closely with the family. The function of songs as key elements in the way that mothers educate their children will be explored in this chapter.

In traditional Setswana society, women, as part of their unrecognised portfolio, have had to educate young children and raise them into mature persons. The researcher deliberately employ the term 'unrecognised portfolio' to highlight the many unseen responsibilities of women in the division of duties, which include unaccredited skills acquired through prior learning. Many skills that women possess and exercise are unrecognised and under-acknowledged, in short, taken for granted. If by means of songs, Batswana women can draw attention to some of these hitherto unrecognised skills, it may be said that they possess skills and knowledge that should be highly prized in a culture. Traditionally, from the age of about ten, mothers have taught their girls to cultivate the land. In the majority of households in the past, mothers have taught children the customs, morals and values of their people by means of telling stories, and this included songs. Today there is compulsory schooling for both boys and girls to empower them with knowledge and skills. The education of girls in patriarchal societies has always amounted to acquiring only the skills that are needed to serve men. Figs (1970:31) puts it this way:

A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to men. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman of all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.

In Batswana society, even though boys and girls start school together, in most households in the past girls did not pursue higher education, as it was believed that they would marry and increase the lineage of another family. By contrast, boys were allowed to study to a higher level in order to enhance the dignity of the father's lineage. Today the situation has changed in that every child has the right to education as outlined in the

constitution.

Women's intense involvement in educating and training young children took the form in part of socialization by means of songs. Songs have become a medium of communication involving eye contact, body language and gestures that add a lot to interaction. Children have a repertoire of songs designed for them which the women as facilitators use and transmit. These songs involve the whole pattern of upbringing, including customs, beliefs etc. They are classified as cultural games (*metshameko ya setso*), since playing the related games includes learning the morals, values and capacity to perform domestic chores. The songs as part of music are learned as Levine (2005:19) writes: "Children are exposed to musical activities from the moment they enter the world. As they learn language they learn to sing, as they learn to walk they learn to dance". This is true for the studied villages because even toddlers were able to join their mothers and dance during the recording.

Contemporary African women generally accept caring for their children as an essential part of their lives, even while working or studying. Although Western civilization has brought many changes to the social set-up of Africans in general, cultural games still play a very important role in the upbringing of children. Cultural games are an enculturation tool since they transmit customs and beliefs from one generation to the next by word of mouth and performance.

In this chapter the cultural songs for Batswana children will be presented in two categories, namely lullabies, sung to babies or infants, and game songs, performed by young girls. They both educate children in their traditional ways, and contribute to the maturing or growing up process. The songs are referred to as game songs because they incorporate the actions of playing in the performances. This is believed to make the songs enjoyable to the children and also to attract their attention.

### **3.2 AIM**

The aim of this chapter is to show how mothers and nannies use songs to educate children. In addition to the cultural knowledge they transmit, songs teach skills such as the ability to listen, and awareness of rhythms. Songs are frequently incorporated into

stories or may be embodied in games. Concerning the educational importance of the latter, Moore (1970:20) says: “Game songs...help to bridge the gap between the child’s home and the outside world”. As children develop, they become socialized to be part of their own age group and to be able to take part in rituals such as the rainmaking ceremony.

In this chapter the researcher analyzes the songs used in teaching and educating children, both boys and girls, in order to determine whether the songs are vehicles for enculturation, which, in this context, is defined as capacity building, skills development and consciousness-raising. The aim is also to establish how the songs contribute to enculturating girls and help them to attain the knowledge that they will need to serve as the future custodians of the social values.

### **3.3 OVERVIEW**

The chapter is divided into two sections, namely lullabies (*mekirietso*) and game songs for older children (*dipina tsa go tshameka*). During the interviews the researcher heard about nine lullabies and only five of them were recorded because of their relevance to the study. Lullabies provide typical examples of how the mother communicates with her baby. The songs also have home educational value, since they help to enhance the baby or infant’s skills and sense of observation. The songs for older girls indicate how girls are prepared for responsibility and further how girls inform the community about their unequal status and treatment, that is, how we can discern the beginning of the women’s voice in their songs.

### **3.4 LULLABIES (MEKIRIETSO)**

Lullabies can be regarded as natural or spontaneous rituals that mothers, sisters or nannies enact unconsciously. They are characterized by some degree of co-presence, a common focus of attention and a common mood, and shared emotional energies. Lullabies, a form of oral art used by mothers, are a means of communication with their babies. The function of lullabies is to evoke gentle and soothing feelings in the baby. Some lullabies may be the expression of the love and pride of a mother for having given birth to a fine healthy baby. Before birth as well as immediately after birth the

child comes into contact with its mother by means of its senses such as hearing and sight, which enable both of them to communicate during the early stage of life. This view is strengthened by Duncan (1992:21) by saying: "Interaction is generally accepted as the vehicle for such crucially important and interrelated functions as establishing the parent-infant bond, nurturing and guiding the social and cognitive development of the child".

Finnegan (1970:299) points out that lullabies are governed by social rules or conventions:

Lullabies provide a good example of the way in which what might be expected to be a simple, natural, and spontaneous expression of feeling in all societies, a mother singing to her child - is in fact governed by convention and affected by the particular constitution of the society.

The conventions are practices which include the experience and knowledge of expressing love, of caring and also of teaching the values of the society.

Each society has its own culture, which is presented to children from the earliest stage of their lives. In this manner lullabies for an African child are different from that of an Indian child because they differ in customs, values and beliefs. By singing a lullaby to her child the mother not only interacts with it but can also teach it some cultural knowledge. The child is able, for example, to notice and understand the relationship initiated by the mother. Traditionally, when a Motswana woman gives birth she and her newborn are separated from other family members under the care of an elderly grandmother of the baby, until the umbilical cord falls off (*go latlha kalana*). The informant Mmake Motshelanoka, interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1996, said that during this time of separation neither the father nor the grandfather is allowed to visit them because it is believed that if they see the child before the umbilical cord falls off, the baby's belly button will grow big and remain like that for the rest of its life and hence its body will be disfigured. This piece of wisdom will probably be taught to girls as they grow up so that they will obey the rule to prevent their babies having big belly buttons.

Motherism is described by Walker (1982: xix) as a politics of resistance, which affirms obligations traditionally assigned to women and calls on the community to respect

them. It is further claimed that the identification with motherhood has generally been interpreted as evidence of women's conservatism and acceptance of patriarchal values and institutions. The researcher disagrees with this view in that she believes that mothering is based more on biological matters and less on cultural impact. This is because a woman is only recognized as a mother after giving birth.

Immediately after the mother has given birth it is traditional that a walking stick (*mopakwana*) be placed in front of the door where the mother and her baby are kept in confinement to symbolize no entry. It is believed to be a practical matter of protecting the baby from other people who might have infectious diseases or who practice witchcraft, which might kill the child. The isolation phase is often a time of hardship and new responsibilities for the mother. At this time the child's mother would traditionally have the opportunity to introduce her child to its ancestors (*badimo*) by means of lullabies. Such a lullaby focuses the mother's attention and enhances her emotional mood, thus strengthening her belief in the ancestors. She becomes ready to receive a blessing from the ancestors for being a mother. The following is a lullaby frequently sung to communicate with the ancestors. It is a traditional song that has existed for a long time. The purpose of this lullaby is to reflect the mother's spirit while she communicates with the ancestors.

Badimo baetsho wee  
 Badimo baetsho wee  
 Hei hei  
 Hei hei badimo baetsho  
 Amogelang 'sea la me  
 Sea le tswang tlapeng  
 Tlapeng la badimo  
 Hei hei  
 Hei hei badimo baetsho

*Our ancestors hey*  
*Our ancestors hey*  
*Hey hey*  
*Hey hey our ancestors*

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*Welcome my baby*  
*Baby from the rock*  
*Rock of ancestors*  
*Hey hey*  
*Hey hey our ancestors*

(Rock of ancestors refers to an unknown place where it is believed that the ancestors are staying.)

This lullaby was recorded at Dinokana in Puwaneng Section on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1998. It was performed by a new mother who stood near a burning fire, while observing the movement of the smoke from the fire. The vertical movement of smoke is an indication that the ancestors have accepted the mother's request. This is a form of ritual interaction between the mother and the ancestral spirits that can strengthen emotional solidarity. The common poetic technique in this lullaby is repetition. The function of repetition here is to add rhythm and to emphasise the message of requesting the ancestors to welcome the child. In calling on the ancestors the woman is able to raise her self-esteem, since she has experienced the process of giving birth and has achieved the status of motherhood.

There is parallelism which is reflected by the use of the same words in consecutive lines. This adds rhythm and emphasise the message of inviting the ancestors. The type of parallelism which appears in this lullaby is the repetition of sentences such as:

Badimo baetsho wee  
 Badime baetsho wee

Another form of repetition that can be noted is repetition of words that occurs in the form of linking. In this case the word in the consecutive line reverses the pattern set up, for example:

Amogelang **sea** la me  
**Sea** le tswang **tlapeng**  
**Tlapeng** la badimo.

In this instance the audience was the female family members as well as the baby's siblings. It was performed in the evening. It must be noted that mature males including the baby's father were at that stage prohibited from seeing the baby, as they are believed to bear evil spirits that can retard the growth of the baby. The main reason for this lullaby as part of a traditional ritual is to arouse the ancestral spirits, to present the child to them, to invite the ancestors to shower the child with blessings and to protect it against witchcraft. It thus also creates solidarity between women. This ritual of respect for the ancestors is furthermore transmitting an important traditional value.

According to my informants interviewed at Tlokweneng on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1998, namely Mpheng Tlholwe, Mmaotshubeng Magosinyana and Nthathane Nkwe, the mother's lullabies also express her appreciation and confirm her acceptance of the precious gift of the child. The mother's gratitude to the ancestors is confirmed by the words "Baby from the rock, Rock of Ancestors", since it is believed that by having a child one has thus been blessed by the ancestors and by extension, by God. This lullaby is empowering in the sense that the woman has been blessed with a child, and that her status of mother is recognized. This status derives in part from the skills and knowledge about childbirth that she will be able to share with other women. Finally, the performer expects the audience to share her joy at having given birth, thus performing one of the important functions of ritual, namely to create a common focus of attention.

The above-mentioned informants also said that during the child's first month in life it is exposed to the world on the night of new moon (*kgwedi e roga*) in the presence of all family members including the males. This custom is still observed regularly in the three villages. The mother, now free from her initial hesitation and uncertainty, is confidently looking forward to giving the child proper guidance in life and to school it in her culture. One way she gives guidance is through lullabies, as can be seen from the following song:

Kirr! kirr!  
 Kgwedi ya nana ke ele  
 Kirr! Kirr!  
 Kgwedi ya nana ke ele  
 Kirr! kirr!  
 Ke ele kgwedi ya go nana

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Kirr! kirr!  
 Ke ele kgwedi ya go nnana  
 Kirr! kirr!  
 Nnanna nnanna kgwedi ya go

*Kirr! kirr!*  
*Moon for baby there it is*  
*Kirr! kirr!*  
*Moon for baby there it is*  
*Kirr! kirr!*  
*There is your moon baby*  
*Kirr! kirr!*  
*There is your moon baby*  
*Kirr! kirr!*  
*Baby baby your moon*

(Note: Kirr is an onomatopoeic sound, which is produced by placing the tongue against the hard palate and it expresses happiness. Its function is to make the song interesting in the baby's ears.)

This lullaby reflects the mother's spiritual and social feeling while she is asking the ancestors and relatives to accept the baby as a family member. The above lullaby was performed at Tlokweng in Monneng Section on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1997 and also at Matlhaku on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1997. On both occasions the baby's maternal grandmother performed it in the evening at the door, while holding the baby up in the sky facing the moon. This is part of a ritual which indicates a shared consciousness between the grandmother and the audience. Metaphorically associated with a successful life ahead for the baby, the moon also signifies the beginning of life. The phrase *Kgwedi ya nnana ke ele* is a metaphor which refers to the child's first month of its life. The term *kgwedi* is derived from the word *ngwedi* (moon) which is part of the universe. The audience was family members, relatives who have been invited to observe the ritual to welcome the new child. In this lullaby there is repetition of words which functions to add emphasis to the message of dedicating the baby and incorporating it into the tribe. For example:

**Kirr! Kirr!**

**Nnana nnana** kgwedi ya go

The informants, Mmakeitirang Legotlo, interviewed on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1997 at Dinokana, Khutsafalo Mosome interviewed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1997 at Matlhaku, and Ketshabile Nkwe interviewed on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1997 at Tlokweg, explained that since the moon is a source of light, it represents a bright future for the child that will be achieved by means of endurance and determination. This lullaby predicts a bright future. Thus it might be said to bind the mother and child, and it also creates solidarity between the mother, the child and other family members. It expresses caring for the child and demonstrates that one should focus on nature as a source of life.

For the purpose of cultural affirmation, after this ritual of the new moon, the mother and her child stay indoors till the end of the second month. They will then live with the rest of the family again. According to Batswana custom, this isolation does serve a practical purpose in the sense of letting the mother rest after giving birth, and protecting the very vulnerable child. In this context the mother is entrusted with an important responsibility.

At the end of the baby's second month on earth a special occasion known as "to remove a stick" (*go tlosa mopakwana*) is celebrated: the child has passed the foundational phase of its life, in other words it has undergone all the necessary rituals to protect it against diseases. My informants agreed that from that time the mother is permitted to have sexual intercourse again. To express his gratitude for having a nephew or niece the mother's brother (*malome*) donates a sheep that will be slaughtered for meat and its skin (*letlalo*) will be used to carry the baby on the back (*go belega*).

Many lullabies are performed for soothing as well as entertainment. For example, when data was collected, the young girls performed the following lullaby while demonstrating their skills of caring for infants:

Ga o nke o lela tsetsenyana-kgabe

Ga o nke o lela tsetsenyana-kgabe

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Ngwana'a tlhare sa mopipi

Tsetsenyana-kgabe

Mopipi le motlopi

Tsetsenyana-kgabe

*You never cry tsetsenyana-kgabe*

*You never cry tsetsenyana-kgabe*

*The child of mopipi tree*

*Tsetsenyana-kgabe*

*Mopipi tree and motlopi tree*

*Tsetsenyana-kgabe*

This lullaby is a spontaneous ritual performed by children in an unselfconscious way. There is interaction among the boys and girls who are organized in a group. Their common focus of attention is to play the game of caring for a baby. Their common emotional mood enhanced their emotional energies and confidence of performing. The lullaby is a praise song, which aims to soothe, comfort and to calm the baby. It was performed at midday, in front of the baby's home at Tlokweg in Raseekana Section. In this place, about fourteen children and teenagers were playing house. The participants, about ten of them, stood in irregular lines, the boys' line parallel to that of the girls. The girls moved to-and-fro with their hands on their backs as if they were rocking babies, while the boys were clapping their hands. The girl who had been carrying the baby on her back took the leadership of the group.

In the words of this song, the child is praised for being charming and cheerful and not crying. The phrase *ga o nke o lela* (you never cry) is an indication that the child is healthy and well cared for. The name *-kgabe* is derived from a term *makgabe* referring to a skirt made of loose threads, and worn by girls. The term *tsetsenyana-kgabe* is a nickname referring to a baby girl, hence the word *-kgabe* referring to a girl's traditional skirt. The phrase *tlhare sa mopipi le motlopi* (mopipi tree and motlopi tree) denotes types of medicine used to cure babies and infants. The song enhances the girls' knowledge of traditional medicines that are acknowledged in Batswana culture to be effective preventative and curative medicines for children. At times the baby responded during this performance by laughing or even by swaying slightly as the girls sang. It is

also empowering in the sense that the girls are publicly demonstrating their skills in infant care and their young male counterparts specifically acknowledge this.

It might be argued that the perpetuation of the female role as caregiver and the traditional division of labour is potentially exploitative because in practice girls who care for younger siblings were often kept out of school. Now the situation has changed because the constitution of South Africa guarantees that every child has the right to be educated. The song is culturally empowering in the sense that girls get informal education at home that enhances her skills. There is repetition of sentences, which adds rhythm to the lullaby and emphasises the message of praise while educating the baby, for example:

Ga o nke o lela tsetsenyana-kgabe  
Ga o nke o lela tsetsenyana-kgabe

As lullabies form only a part of a set of actions associated with childcare including feeding, burping, dressing and playing with babies, their most conspicuous function in Batswana usage is to encourage babies to listen and interact with the singers. Furthermore, lullabies have the more obvious and universal purpose of soothing, calming, and reassuring the baby and building up a sense of security. Milubi (1988:24) says: "As in any form of poetry, lullabies are able to evoke feelings. They evoke gentle and soothing feelings in one's ears".

The following is an example of a lullaby, which explicitly aims to teach communicative skills to the baby or infant. As the words indicate, the baby is instructed to respond as requested:

A o ko lele nnananyana 'mme  
A o ko lele nnananyana 'mme  
Nnana lelahihii!  
Ngwana' mme ngwana' mme  
A o ko lele nnananyana 'mme  
A o ko lele nnananyana 'mme  
Nnana tshega hahaa!

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Ngwana 'mme ngwana 'mme

*May you cry mother's baby*

*May you cry mother's baby*

*Baby cry hihii*

*Mother's baby mother's baby*

*May you laugh mother's baby*

*May you laugh mother's baby*

*Baby laugh hahaa!*

*Mother's baby mother's baby*

This song was performed by a group of young girls who had a common focus of attention for caring for infants aged between six and nine months old while they were playing in the backyard (*segotlong*) under a tree at midday. The girls were sitting in a semicircle facing the audience. Each of them rocked the baby in turn. Each was given the opportunity to demonstrate the action of rocking with her sibling while other members of the group were singing. If the baby imitated the requested sound the group sang loudly to show that the baby had responded as required. The derivative noun *nnanyana'mme* is a possessive name, which reveals that the girl is the biological sister of the baby. The audience was a group of boys and girls from the ages of seven to twelve, of the same age group and some older than the performers who observed the performance and participated by clapping hands in time to the rhythm. It was recorded on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1998 at Matlhaku Village. The baby was stimulated to develop a spirit of observing and listening. The skills of listening, observing, responding and communicating are encouraged in the baby. The song reflects moral solidarity in that it raises the self-esteem of the young girl siblings who are demonstrating to their male counterparts their skills of caring for and teaching babies.

In this lullaby there are two types of repetition namely, repetition of sentences and repetition of words. For instance repetition of sentences appears as follows:

A o ka lele nnanyana' mme

A o ka lele nnanyana' mme

The repetition adds emphasis to the message of socialising the baby as it develops. Repetition of words appears as follows:

Ngwana 'mme ngwana 'mme

The above repetition can strengthen the mother's self-esteem of having a child as she is observing the girls' performance.

The audience's participation by clapping hands or joining in the dance may reinforce the self-esteem of the young girls but may also reinforce the idea that girls should take care of babies. The audience were delighted and many of them were surprised by the baby's reaction.

Sometimes the girls do not only use lullabies for rocking the baby or infant but also as platforms to raise their dissatisfaction. In such instances the songs either represent or contain a direct challenge to the mother's stinginess, experienced by the girls as an indication of failing to thank them for their performance. In the following song the girl-nanny communicates her exploitation:

Kunkuru lele  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 O tla belegwa ke mang  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Mmaago o tima babelegi  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Babelegi koma  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Ba rekwa ke serope  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Serope sa namane  
 Kgaotsa nnaka  
 Kunkuru e lele  
 Kgaotsa nnaka

*I am lulling you*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*Who will carry you on the back*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*Your mother is stingy*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*To honourable nannies*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*They are paid with a thigh*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*The thigh of a calf*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*I am lulling you*  
*Keep quiet baby*

The song was performed by a nanny (*mmelegi*) at Tlokweng in Lengeneng Section on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1997. The purpose of the song is to raise awareness of the unrecognised work of childcare and also to raise awareness of the nanny's honourable skill. The nanny performed boldly by using a strong voice and danced half kneeling to elucidate her request for better remuneration. Let it be highlighted that in Batswana culture, a signal of respect of young children is to bow their heads when speaking to an adult person. But in performing this song the girl looked the adult woman in the eye – because she enjoyed and accepted her work of caring for the baby, while on the other hand she boldly challenged the baby's mother to reward her for the honourable job she was performing. The song was performed in a shade of a tree at midday. The audience were girls between the ages of five and thirteen. The baby's grandmother was busy weaving a mat near the performer. The reflection of mother's stinginess occurs in the sentence *Mmaugo o tima babelegi koma ba rekwa ka serope sa namane*. In this song the girl reveals the mother's stinginess by making indirect comments about the exploitation imposed by the mother. This is a conventional part of this lullaby. She danced by stamping her feet and her open hands facing upwards. She had a pleasant face as an indication of her enjoyment of the work. The nanny was hoping that the grandmother would inform the baby's mother of her request to be rewarded.

It was said by Gaboutlwelwe Matsafu, interviewed on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1997 at Tlokweg in Lengeng Section, that the thigh of a calf is the most delicious meat and is therefore the best reward for a person who is doing an essential job. It can be said that the nanny was raising consciousness about the unrecognised work of caring for children. The performer was at this point in time the sender of the message, which she reinforced by means of body movements. The receiver would be expected to interpret the song and inform the baby's mother from whom she expected feedback.

In conclusion, lullabies might be said to be vehicles of enculturation whereby mothers communicate with the babies, and also in terms of building the skills of young girls to care for babies and infants. By demonstrating their skills to siblings and male counterparts, they frequently improve their self-esteem and pride in their skills. In some instances, as with the nanny, the song aims to highlight the girls' request of better recognition for the work of care giving. The nanny has followed convention by asking indirectly in a song and this is acceptable in the cultural context. As regards mothers who have just given birth, lullabies celebrate their newfound status as mothers who are respected for their knowledge and this gives them self-esteem. As the children grow up they are in a position to learn action songs as will be indicated in the following section.

### **3.5 SONGS FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

The focal point of this section is songs sung by older girls, both lullabies and game songs, and their potential for cultural empowerment and change. For this section 16 songs were performed but the researcher selected only eight of them for recording. Young girls sing many of the songs when responsible for caring for younger siblings. The game songs in this section have the elements of ritual as identified by Collins (1988) in interaction ritual theory. In these songs the participants were organised as a group, they have a common focus of attention, they have mutual awareness of their focus, sacred objects enhanced their emotional energies and confidence, and where necessary the violators were punished.

The informants, Mmatshukudu Tiro, interviewed on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1997, at Dinokana, and Motsei Bogatsu interviewed on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1997 at Tlokweg, said that the delegation of duty of caring the baby on the back is based on the assumption that a girl,

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because of her small back, is physically fit to carry the child and cannot harm the legs of the baby. She uses a supple sheepskin (*thari*) to carry the baby on her back. Through songs the girl (normally its sister) communicates with and orients the baby to the external environment.

From an early age girls take part in many tasks that are assigned to mothers. The researcher observed in the three villages that there are circumstances where mothers are absent, for example employed as domestic workers in town or involved in communal work in the fields. After school and during school holidays girls are required to take the full responsibility for babies and infants, and are also required to instruct babies as if they are speaking to mature persons.

Batswana girls are socialized to identify with the family and the private sphere, while boys are brought up to act in the public sphere. From the researcher's personal observation there is a clear indication that parents often treat girls and boys differently. Mothers teach girls to be gentle, obedient, and to consider other people's feelings, while the boys are taught to be assertive, strong and to hide their feelings. Another surprising thing about men is the way they relate to children. When children do well in life they belong to their father but when they get out of hand they belong to their mother. This is an indication of male power that undermines women's capabilities.

Circumstances which impose adult responsibilities on girls force them to learn some family responsibilities in certain ways at an early age. The following song, a common lullaby still performed and intended to comfort, to sooth, to calm and to lull the baby to sleep, was recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1998, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1998 and 6<sup>th</sup> July 1998 at Tlokweg, Matlhaku, and Dinokana respectively. A girl of nine years performed the song as she carried the baby on her back.

O tuntulala  
 O nnana robala  
 O tla robala leng  
 O nnana robala  
 O phimole dikeledi  
 O nnana robala

Keledi tsa makgowa  
 O nnana robala  
 Ngwana'mme robala  
 Mme o etla  
 O nnana robala

*Oh close your eyes*  
*Oh baby sleep*  
*When are you sleeping*  
*Oh baby sleep*  
*Oh wipe the tears*  
*Oh baby sleep*  
*Tears of white people*  
*Oh baby sleep*  
*Mother's child sleep*  
*My mother is coming*  
*Oh baby sleep*

The baby's sister took the responsibility of caring for the child on behalf of the mother. She earnestly requested the child to close its eyes (*tuntulala*) so that it may easily fall asleep. The baby's restlessness might be caused by its longing for its mother. She promises it that its mother will come home soon. She compares the baby's tears with that of white people because it is believed that white people do not cry easily since they are well cared and provided for. The song was performed as an expression of the girl's exasperation because the baby does not want to sleep. She performs the song by moving to and fro while the child is on her back, and this is repeated till the child falls asleep. The melody is smooth, peaceful and rhythmical and is sung very softly. In this song there is a repetition of the vowel sound **a** which adds rhythm, and it conveys the special emotional power of the nanny's wish to lull the baby to sleep, so that she can have time to rest, as indicated by repetition of *O nnana robala* that is sung five times, for example:

O **tuntulala**  
 O **nnana robala**

Girls given such adult responsibilities often are socialized to accept traditional female roles. The informants, Mosidi Legotlo, interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1996, and Mmakgosietsile Moilola, interviewed on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1997 at Dinokana, said that a girl is entitled to receive food and presents in return for the voluntary job she is rendering, hence it can be said in Setswana the proverb ‘mabogo dinku a thebana’, literally meaning to recompense for service rendered. In other words the girls learn the proverbs and the values they express. Lullabies are also part of the cultural heritage that the children learn through singing.

Due to women’s increasing responsibilities in social and economic spheres, girls are traditionally expected to act on behalf of the mothers while the mothers are absent at work. In the following song the child is left in the care of its sister under the surveillance of a relative and away from home. Whenever the baby cried the sister felt homesick as in the following song, which was performed by a girl of ten in her attempt to control her emotions. She was just expressing the routine and conventional emotion associated with the song which might tell us about traditional views on emotions and values. It was recorded at Tlokwen in Lekubung Section on the 12th December 1998:

Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
 Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka  
 Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
 Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka  
 Ke tlhoafaletse baetsho kwa gae nnaka  
 Ke tlhoafaletse baetsho kwa gae nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka  
 Iyee I-yee nnaka

*Horseshoes keep quiet baby*

*Horseshoes keep quiet baby*

*Shame shame baby*  
*Shame shame baby*  
*Horseshoe keep quiet baby*  
*Horseshoe keep quiet baby*  
*Shame shame baby*  
*Shame shame baby*  
*I am longing for my family at home baby*  
*I am longing for my family at home baby*  
*Shame shame baby*  
*Shame shame baby*

The song has a sad and melancholy tone, which is strengthened by singing it slowly and softly with a flowing pace. The performer pretended to be crying while she performed it. She also raised her audience's awareness of her responsibility. The girl's ability to cope with overload is cultural empowerment. The listeners were fieldworkers who were busy hoeing in the field. The song has enculturating potential in that it teaches her the conventional way of feeling and thinking. The girl was being enculturated by caring for the child, and by so doing she sets an example of self-sacrifice to younger siblings and other girls. The song also has the potential of relieving the girl from too much responsibility in that the listeners might respond by sending a message to the girl's family, entreating them to help, for example, by having a sibling share the task. The song conveys conventional emotions that confirm traditional values and moral solidarity, because some of the audience were sympathetic towards the girl while others expected her to be strong.

She regards the baby as *Tlhako ya pitse* (horseshoe) because it hugs her back like a horseshoe, maybe because it is restless. She may be trying to soothe the child so that it stops crying and goes to sleep, so that she may also have an opportunity to catch a nap.

There is a repetition of sentences and phrases in this song. This type of repetition occurs when the words in the first sentence are repeated in the next line. In addition to adding rhythm, it also stresses the message, emphasising key words. The examples are the following:

1. Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka  
Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka
2. Iyee I-yee nnaka  
Iyee I-yee nnaka
3. Ke tlhoafaletse baetsho kwa gae nnaka  
Ke tlhoafaletse baetsho kwa gae nnaka

In this example the key words are “didimala”, “tlhoafaletse” and “I-yee I-yee” that carry the message of the song.

It often occurs that some women are forced by circumstances to have children before marriage. Still today many woman have illegitimate children because men promise to marry them but later fail to fulfil their promises. According to Batswana culture a child before marriage is regarded as illegitimate (*ngwana wa dikgora*) and he or she becomes a victim to all forms of abuse and in most cases is seen as a stranger by the stepfather's family. It is noteworthy that though the child tends to behave well it is always referred to as an intruder and experiences frustration. The message conveyed in the following song consoles such a child and also encourages her to face the challenges of life:

Go ne go le ngwanyana  
A dutse letlapeng  
A ntse a lela  
Ka nako tsotlhe  
Ema ngwanyana  
Phumula dikeledi  
Tlhopha yo mo ratang  
O tshegetshege nae  
Tlhopha yo mo ratang  
O itumele nae

*There was once a girl  
She sat on a rock*

*She was crying*  
*All the time*  
*Stand up girl*  
*Wipe your tears*  
*Choose the one you love*  
*And laugh with her*  
*Choose the one you love*  
*Rejoice with her*

This song was performed by a group of girls who were playing in the schoolyard at Tlokweg on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1998. It was performed during break time. The purpose of this song is to encourage girls to be empathetic and to be comforters which is their common focus. It must be noted that it is only a game and does not reflect a real situation. However, the song is a ritual which indicates to the audience that the girls' common emotional mood leads them to be sympathetic to others. The song has empowering potential as it may comfort an illegitimate girl who was born before her mother was married and is ill-treated by her stepfather at home. The meaning of the song goes against Batswana tradition that sidelines illegitimate children. It can potentially encourage girls like these to face life positively and to let their problems go, and also to share their problems with others. Hence the song raises their emotional energy and confidence. The song can also build self-esteem by the empathy it evokes as well as the advice it imparts about forgetting the past and looking forward to a brighter future. The audiences were boys and girls between the ages of eight and twelve, who also expressed their enjoyment by either humming or clapping their hands.

Game songs are seen as a means of socialization, and they are characterized by singing that catch the interest of children who have reached a certain level of maturity. The physical movement embodied in the songs results in healthy entertainment as well as adjustment to the outside world. It is essential to highlight that girls' development is influenced by their interest in imitating domestic chores. Let it also be emphasized that it is a mother's duty to build up her children's self-esteem and this can partly be achieved by means of songs as a form of ritual.

Traditionally, Batswana children enjoy playing games together in the evening. The

children's common focus at time is the moment of sharing ideas and receiving guidance from grandmothers by means of stories, which are in most cases accompanied by game songs. This can be seen as a conversation ritual which can result in a little temporary cult that can build up its own pressures to control its participants. This is because the participants would respect the topic and at least temporarily believe in and also respect the mood that has built up. Some game songs function to empower children to adjust and cope in life and to advance their humanity. Endorsing this, Kgobe (1997:47) says: "While the games involved help to bridge the adjustment gap between the child's home and the outside world, the songs accompanying the games take up a large portion of their free time".

As one considers the present situation in the light of Africans in general and the Batswana in particular, there are some changes in the upbringing of children which are attributed to Western influences. Most boys and girls attend school together from the age of five until they have completed their higher education. In this way in many instances they would play together and get used to performing game songs together. In the following example the children were singing the song on their way to school:

Bana ba sekolo  
 Bana ba sekolo  
 Tlang sekolong  
 Tlang sekolong  
 Utlwang tshipi ya lla  
 Utlwang tshipi ya lla  
 Ding-dong belele  
 Ding-dong belele

*School children*  
*School children*  
*Come to school*  
*Come to school*  
*Listen to the ringing bell*  
*Listen to the ringing bell*  
*Ding-dong bell*

*Ding-dong bell*

(Ding-dong bell is a sound imitating the ringing of a bell, which is based on English school songs).

This song was performed at Dinokana on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998, in the morning near the main gate at Ikalafeng Primary School. The participants, both boys and girls between the ages of five and ten, about nine of them, were marching while waving their hands as if they were calling. They performed the song in a very happy mood, which is enhanced by the mutual awareness of their common focus which is to attend school and also the joy of singing. The audience were men and women who stay near the school and some women who were hoeing in the nearby field. The song was empowering in that it challenged men and women to send their children to school in order to be thoroughly equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills that can improve their way of life in future, which can also be seen as a form of social control. The song also reflects cultural change in that some members of the audience might encourage their relatives to register their children in schools so that they can learn and gain knowledge and skills that will release them from legal, social and political restraint.

This game song has repetition of phrases and sentences, which adds rhythm while emphasising the message of inviting other children to come to school in order to be empowered by means of education. Since the whole song is characterised by repetition the researcher considers only the most influential key words that are in the following example:

Tlang sekolong

Tlang sekolong

Utlwang tshipi ya lla

Utlwang tshipi ya lla

From this example the key word *tlang* (come) is a call that indicates that every child has the right to attend school. The other keyword *utlwang* (listen) reflects the expected response to a call that may empower the children with knowledge and skills.

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The influence of Western civilization on Batswana culture is reflected in the following song, in which children express their knowledge of writing:

Re banyana ba banyenyane  
 Re rutiwa mo sekolong  
 Re banyana ba banyenyane  
 Re rutiwa mo sekolong  
 Re bala nngwe-pedi-tharo-nne  
 Re bala A-B-C-D  
 Tshwarang ditlhogo le magetla  
 Le matheka le mangole  
 Opang diatla  
 Tibang ka setlhako  
 Re rutiwa mo sekolong

*We are small children  
 We are taught at school  
 We are small children  
 We are taught at school  
 We count one-two-three-four  
 We read A-B-C-D  
 Touch your heads and shoulders  
 And waists and knees  
 Clap your hands  
 Stamp your foot  
 We are taught at school*

The above song was performed by a class of grade one children at Thakadu Primary School at Tlokwenj. Its purpose is to show the advantages of education. It can be regarded as an indication of cultural change. It was recorded on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1999 at about nine o'clock in the morning. The participants, between the ages of five and ten, who constituted about fifty learners in the class, demonstrated their actions under the guidance of a female class-teacher in a relaxed atmosphere. They used their fingers to

demonstrate their counting skills. The alphabets were written in the air as if they were writing in a book.

The audience was a group of women, mostly mothers and guardians and a few men who were invited to the school to be informed about the learners' performance. The audience expressed their delight by clapping hands, laughing or even joining the performance. The song is empowering because it demonstrates and encourages the children's knowledge of reading, writing and knowing the parts of their bodies - essential skills that are vital to the foundation phase of their formal education. The song has enculturation potential, because the audience will be motivated and see the need to be educated at school as a way of living happily. Hence those who are illiterate may aspire to attend basic adult education.

Some songs lead girls to become responsible persons while, on the other hand, they condition them to accept and adjust to patriarchal culture. The researcher wishes to acknowledge that success in building self-esteem is a sign of a mother's achievement. It is the desire of every mother to have a daughter who is responsible and respectful and who will be able to deal with life's challenges.

By custom, Batswana girls wore skirts made of loose threads (*makgabe*) and they enjoyed using their skills to weave their own skirts. According to the informants, it was believed that girls from rich families such as princesses and other girls from the chief's lineage were easily recognized by the type of '*makgabe*' and beads (*dibaga*) they wore. Because of their social status, the rich girls were seen not only as leaders but also as honourable people who could represent their peer groups. The girls also performed songs that conveyed a message of admiring their skirts and of honouring girls from the well-to-do families. Let us focus on the following song, which was recorded in Kgosing Section at Tlokweg on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1998:

Moeteledi pele	:	Makgabe a a dirilwe ka eng?
Motsayakarolo	:	Ka ditlhale
Baamogedi	:	Mmamakgabe a ditlhale eya koo
		O ye ko gae o tlabetswe
		O tlabetswe nku tshwana

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Nku tshwana ngwana morena  
 Wa morena wa konyana  
 Konyana ya bo setshwene  
 Setshwene wa magwaane  
 Helee helee tsa bomang gape?  
 Tse dingwe gape tsa bomang gape?  
 O nnenne o itese  
 O name nkoto  
 Le lengwe nnaka

*Leader* : *What is this skirt made of?*  
*Participants* : *From loose threads*  
*Chorus* : *The girl who wears the skirt goes there*  
*Go home where they have slaughtered for you*  
*They have slaughtered a black ewe*  
*Black ewe for the chief's daughter*  
*Chief of the Konyana*  
*Konyana of the Setshwene clan*  
*Setshwene who is not circumcised*  
*Hey hey who else?*  
*Others for who else?*  
*Sit down and relax*  
*Stretch a leg*  
*One another baby*

The clapping of hands, dancing and the beating of a drum accompany the performance of this song. It functions not only as entertainment but also as a source of education. It is a ritual that creates moral solidarity by providing a heightened sense of energy and emotional support. In this song the merger of traditional and modern customs is indicated whereby preservation of Batswana culture and hierarchy occurs alongside Christian norms. The word *mmamakgabe* refers to the girl who is being praised and honoured for wearing an attractive threaded skirt (*makgabe*). The term *tshwene* (baboon) refers to the girl's totem (*seano*). Among the Bahurutshe, for example, "Tshwene is a king of all other totems". The girl's graciousness is indicated by the

phrase *o tlabetswe nku tshwana* (they have slaughtered a black ewe). Its significance is that this is the most delicious meat, which shows that she has the power to lead the group since she has royal blood. *Setshwene wa magwaane* (Setshwene who is not circumcised) indicates the influence of Christianity, which believes that the practice of circumcision signifies lack of civilization. The sentence *O name nkoto le lengwe nnaka* (stretch a leg one another baby) means that she should relax since her leadership role is recognized. This game song is characterized by playing with words to enhance the rhythmic pattern, as indicated in bold below. Which emphasise the message of being superior.

Mmamakgabe a ditlhale **eya koo**  
**O ye ko** gae o tlabetswe **nku tshwana**  
**Nku tshwana** ngwana morena.

The audience was women who observed the girls' performance and responded by ululating. They were delighted to notice that their children were promoting the Batswana culture. This song indirectly praises the honourable girl and also imprints respect for the traditional power hierarchy. The researcher thinks that this praise can motivate other girls to plan their future so that in future their children can enjoy the benefits of growing up in a well-to-do family. The song also upholds the present state of inequality and social stratification whereby one who is in power should have self-confidence from interacting with subordinates. This song can therefore be seen as having a developmental potential that influences the girls to be successful mothers.

In this game song there is parallelism that occurs by linking. Linking (*neeletsano*) occurs when the last element in one line starts the next. Its role can be regarded as adding dynamic stress and creating scope for unity to the meaning of the message by repeating the key words that tie the information in the whole song together. Linking emphasises rhythm in the song with the intention of forcing the listeners' attention who, in the process of communicating their response, may raise the girls' awareness of building up social solidarity. Here follows an example:

O ye ko gae **o tlabetswe**  
**O tlabetswe nku tshwana**

**Nku tshwana** ngwana'morena

The following song demonstrates the girls' complaint at being discriminated against. It was recorded at Dinokana in GaMokgatla Section on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1999. It was sung just conventionally.

Re jelwang ke motlhwa  
 Re na le batho  
 Re jelwang ke motlhwa  
 Re na le batho  
 Ijoo ba itlhopha  
 Ijoo ba itlhopha  
 Ntate ntetele go tsena sekolo  
 Jaaka abuti le nna nthute  
 Ijoo ke a lela  
 Ga ke sekate ke motho tlhe  
 Ga ke sekate ke motho tlhe  
 Ijoo ba itlhopha  
 Ijoo ba itlhopha

*Why are we bitten by wasps  
 While being with people  
 Why are we bitten by wasps  
 While being with people  
 Oh they discriminate against us  
 Oh they discriminate against us  
 Father allow me to attend school  
 Like my brother educate me  
 Oh I am crying  
 Don't see me as waste but as a person  
 Don't see me as waste but as a person  
 Oh they discriminate against us  
 Oh they discriminate against us*

This is a song that shows modern influences that result from cultural change. The girls are here raising consciousness about discrimination, asserting themselves and making a plea or request to go to school. It was performed by a group of girls between the ages of seven and thirteen years at school. It is a game song, which was sung for amusement to accompany their play. The girls made a circle and the leader stood at the centre. She initiated the song by means of actions that indicated that she was asking a question. The actions were demonstrated by opening her hands and by facial expressions that symbolize a way of asking questions. They then started singing. The other members of the group clapped their hands in three beats and one pause and repeated this four times. When they sang the phrase *Ijoo ba ithopha* (oh they discriminate against us) the girls grouped themselves into fours, and when they sang the sentence *Ntate ntetle go tsenu sekolo* (father allow me to attend school) they broke up the groups and went back to a circle.

In context the girls are not only raising awareness about their inferior status and treatment as girls and challenging the patriarchy but are asserting themselves in their request to remove the barrier of discrimination and to allow them to attend school as boys do, and also to accept that schooling is necessary. But nowadays everybody has to attend school. The audience was men and women, and the performers expected that the audience would receive the message and understand it, and in turn they might respond by allowing the girls to attend school and to ensure that boys share the responsibilities of the girls. This type of song occurs rarely in the material, but its emergence due to special circumstances is an indication of the girls' desire to resist domination and to gain knowledge through formal education.

The study in the three villages revealed that from time immemorial about ten percent of Batswana girls were sexually abused. The girls were shy to report sexual abuse to their parents. They accepted abuse as part of life and also as an indication of maturity. Perhaps it should be said that formal education enlightened girls to resist abuse. Vogelmann and Eagle (1990:219) argue that: "Schools and other educational institutions are considered to be places in which people not only acquire knowledge, but also learn to challenge and question undesirable social practices".

In addition schools are also places where girls are often abused as well. It must be noted

that sexual assaults on young girls occur everywhere. According to some young informants, interviewed at Tlokweneng and Dinokana, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1998 respectively, most incidents occur in the home of the victim or assailant. In the past it occurred rarely but nowadays it is increasing rapidly. It is therefore important that the women encourage their daughters to break their silence and lament the abuse.

The informant, Mmagaobuse Letsoku, interviewed at Matlhaku on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1999, revealed that their relatives sexually abuse many girls, but they never disclose it out of fear of their parents. Sexual harassment was imposed on girls of about 12 years and over who were developing breasts (*diolamelora*). Out of respect for their mothers and grandmothers the girls could not report this problem openly but rather resorted to other means of raising their concern. One such way was through songs, as can be noted from the following song:

Koko wee tla o nkgatlhantshe  
 Ijoo ijoo ke jewa ke tau  
 Koko wee tla o nkgatlhantshe  
 Ijoo ijoo ke jewa ke tau  
 Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng  
 Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng  
 Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng  
 Ijoo koko ke jewa dikobo

*Grandmother hey come and meet me*  
*Oh oh I am consumed by a lion*  
*Grandmother hey come and meet me*  
*Oh oh I am consumed by a lion*  
*Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me*  
*Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me*  
*Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me*  
*Oh granny I am being sexually abused*

This song was recorded at Matlhaku on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1999. The purpose is to raise awareness about the abuse of young girls. Although the song is conventionalized, it

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originated in the real situation. It can be seen as part of an intentional ritual in which the members are explicitly aware that they are carrying out a ritual. They are conscious that their indirect complaint as a sacred object which is worthy of respect. The girls' common focus of attention is to be protected from the abuse and they have mutual awareness of it. Their common emotional mood builds up a strong state of the ritual intensity. It is a modern song that reflects an increased openness in the wider society or world about the abuses by the patriarchy, especially sexual abuse. The informant, Mmakirileng Boikanyo, interviewed on the 13th January 1999 at Matlhaku, presented the historical background of this song. She related how the composer of the song was afraid to inform her mother that she was abused regularly and the girl then decided to go and tell her grandmother knowing that she will take further steps to warn the perpetrator and take the matter to the traditional court (*lekgotla la motse*). The song was performed by a girl of about thirteen years, who reported that she once ran away from her home because her neighbour had raped her. She was about to enter her grandmother's home when she broke into tears and started singing to inform her grandmother about the incident.

In context the song reveals the girl's request to be protected from the person who had abused her. Because of her respect for adults she indirectly told her grandmother about the abuse by using euphemism as indicated in the sentence *Ke jewa ke tau* (I am consumed by a lion). This image means that someone who is more powerful than her molests the girl. The phrase *Ke jewa dikobo* (I am sexually abused) literally means that the blankets, which were covering her body, have been torn. The word *dikobo* (blankets) is associated with sex because it is believed that sexual intercourse occurs at night when people are sleeping. Since sex is a private matter it traditionally occurs in darkness, hence the idiom *go ja tlhogo ya tshwene* (to eat a baboon's head) which means to have sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is metaphorically referred to as *go ja tlhogo ya tshwene* since it involves private parts of two opposite sexes which are not attractive to non-performers. Furthermore, a baboon is very ugly that is why it is associated with sex. The listener was her grandmother, and this was the first time she sang this song. The song encouraged other girls to break their silence. In context the performer asks her grandmother to protect her from the man who was abusing her sexually. This type of song is sometimes performed for entertainment and reflects the issues of contemporary times, in which women increasingly speak out about abuse.

The song has the potential to change the culture in that the girl's grandmother might take some action. Other girls might also feel free to speak up about sexual abuse so that they can be freed from their abusers. The song is also empowering in that it raises the awareness of other girls that sexual abuse is wrong, and it encourages the girls to voice their problem and not to remain silent.

Although the song is conventionalized its origin highlights the problem of being abused. It indicates indirectly that the girl remained obedient even in a tough situation. She is looking forward to her grandmother's response of protecting her from the abuse. The effect of the abuse might be that the girl will grow up having negative attitudes towards men and will never trust them.

The songs for older children can be seen as more educative than the lullabies. Some of these songs function to build girls' capacity regarding child raising and to develop their knowledge and skills. As girls at this stage are developing physically, spiritually and intellectually, their common focus of attention shifts to rituals that could change their lives. They are old enough to participate in rites of passage towards adulthood. They learnt values, morals and the capacity to perform which occurred during cultural transmission.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion it can be said that lullabies and games songs often are natural or spontaneous rituals. Women use lullabies and songs as vehicles of educating and guiding their young children. Despite being relegated to minor status, they are a source of unconditional love, warmth and support. In the songs there are examples of young girls raising awareness about the important job of childminding, which is an indication of cultural empowerment. The songs also have the potential to change the culture as they raise the girls' consciousness and empower them to resist domination by highlighting their dissatisfaction at being overloaded with responsibilities. They also may help them to give voice to their exploitation (as the "bold" nanny did). In this way the audience might be challenged to respond positively to the requests and free those who are affected. It is also indicated in some songs that the girls underscore the need to be protected from discrimination and sexual abuse.

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The following chapter will focus on mature girls and how their songs are used for cultural empowerment, continuity and change as expressed in performance of the rites of passage of rainmaking and initiation.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **SONGS FOR RITES OF PASSAGE AS VEHICLES FOR ENCULTURATION, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As a woman grows up she passes through different stages of life. Each of these stages has an impact on her way of life and physical development and brings new emotional and intellectual challenges. Like other girls elsewhere, Batswana girls become more aware of their culture as they grow up from childhood to adulthood. The researcher thinks it is important for people to know about themselves in order to understand the whole spectrum of their culture.

Batswana communities, being traditional patriarchal societies, subjugate women into an inferior role in terms of legal status. The resultant power relations between men and women promote the superiority of men over women to satisfy the male ego. Before considering the transitional process from childhood to adulthood, let it be indicated that the physical development of girls has an influence on their roles and responsibilities later in life. Batswana females use their songs for cultural empowerment and continuity in different stages of their lives.

The information obtained in interviews revealed that, in contrast to those of their male

counterparts, Batswana female songs for puberty focus mainly on socialising the participants. According to Mmasetlwe Motshelanoka, interviewed on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1998, the songs comment on the circumstances of womanhood, on the virtue of tolerance and responsibility as well as on religious beliefs.

In the previous chapter it has been explicitly indicated how the women's songs are used to enhance the enculturation of young children. The girls are growing from childhood to puberty, hence they become more aware of themselves than before and they need to perform certain rituals. This chapter will explore the extent to which women and/or young girls subscribe to the practices prevalent in their patriarchal society, as well as the manner of adjusting to the culture.

## **4.2 AIM OF THE CHAPTER**

The aim of this chapter is firstly, to investigate whether songs used in rites of passage might be vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change. Secondly, to establish whether the songs are instrumental in the performance of the rituals in order to revitalize and resuscitate girls' pride and dignity in their culture whilst stressing their common humanity. Furthermore, the researcher wants to determine whether the songs tell about women and express an authentic female tradition.

## **4.3 CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

The major focus of this chapter is songs used in performances of rites of passage such as rainmaking and initiation. These rituals focus on responsibility of girls in relation to the complex nature of human relationships, love and codes of morality and their specific contribution to domestic life, that can be viewed from a broader perspective of interpersonal bonds within the community as a whole. The focus here is to show the girls' contribution to social life, how they are conditioned by means of the rites of passage to adjust to the culture, and how they use the rituals to empower themselves. In rites of passage the transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by means of songs, which are incorporated in the ceremony.

#### 4.4 PUBERTY

The researcher thinks it would be necessary to give a brief overview of puberty in human physiology. According to Lefton and Valvatne (1988), puberty is a period of life when a child changes into an adult normally capable of procreation. The timing of puberty varies from person to person, and from country to country owing to genetic, environmental, and other factors, but usually occurs between the ages of 11 and 16. At puberty, both girls and boys experience a swift increase in body size, a change in shape of the body, and a rapid development of the reproductive organs and other characteristics marking sexual maturity.

In a girl the first observable change is usually noted in the breasts; the nipples start to enlarge, and a few months later the breast tissue begins to grow. A few pubic hairs develop, and she enters into a period of relatively rapid growth. The ovaries begin to produce oestrogen, causing fat deposits to develop on hips and thighs. The larynx undergoes minor structural changes so that the voice becomes less childlike. During this time girls experience their first menstrual period. It is the time when the young female begins to acquire more responsibility of caring for her body.

In boys, the first sign of puberty is usually accelerated growth of the testes. The first pubic hair may develop at the same time or a little later. At this time the penis grows, as do the seminal vesicles. Within the year the boy's height is apt to increase, and his larynx undergoes structural changes so that his voice becomes deeper. Regarding the physical changes in the bodies of boys and girls during puberty Lefton and Valvatne (1988:282) say:

These physical changes almost always take several years to complete, and the individuals experiencing them generally find them both exciting and disturbing, for they lead to both new opportunities and new responsibilities.

At this stage both boys and girls begin to be more aware of their sexuality than before. This is a transitional stage from childhood to womanhood during which girls become aware of themselves as mature human beings. They assume assertive roles and become responsible. Nevertheless, they are still regarded as minors in a patriarchal society. The adult informants said that in this stage a strong protest against subordination emanates

indirectly in the form of gossip and songs.

It is an undeniable fact that women participate effectively to enculturate the girls at this stage. They tend to allocate girls domestic chores and share the tasks with them. For this section the researcher heard about seven songs but only selected three of them for recording. Many songs at this stage appear to enculture the girls on the one hand and to teach them some domestic chore on the other. The following song, which reflects cultural empowerment that reinforces the idea of sweeping, is a good example of how women instruct the girls:

Feela, feela  
 Feela ngwanyana  
 Feela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng  
 Feela, feela  
 Feela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng  
 Mmangwane ke tšhobolo  
 Tšhobolo ya mosadi  
 Feela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng

*Sweep, sweep*  
*Sweep girl*  
*Sweep daughter don't eat amidst litter*  
*Sweep, sweep*  
*Sweep daughter don't eat amidst litter*  
*Aunt is very strict*  
*A very strict women*  
*Sweep daughter don't eat amidst litter*

This song was recorded at Tlokweng in Ledubeng section on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1997. It is commonly used in every home of the Batswana. The song has a dual purpose. Firstly, it teaches the girl the lesson of keeping her home clean. It might be assumed that it would have been a pleasure for her to learn the song were it not for threat that appears in the sentence *Mmangwane ke tshobolo* (Aunt is very strict). This can be seen as a threat to punish her if the work is not well done. This song affirms women's experiences, values

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and meanings of keeping the home tidy as valuable to the society since it promotes healthy living. As the girls perform the song they bring about a special enhancement of experience, which they learned, from mothers that cause a heightened intensity of communicative interaction that binds the audience to the performers. The girls learn to perform domestic chores with skills and responsibilities that force them to be observant. In this song there is parallelism of phrases and sentences that adds rhythm and also stresses the message, emphasising the key words of sweeping, for example:

Feela feela  
Feela ngwanyana

This is empowering in that the girls would make sure that they perform the work perfectly. Repetition of the word *feela* aims to emphasise the action of sweeping.

During this transitional stage the responsibility of preparing food for the family is allocated to mature girls, while the mother is responsible to see to it that each member of the family receives a meal. According to the informants, Motswatsieng Matsafu interviewed on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1996 at Tlokweng and Mmalerato Mokgatle interviewed on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1997 at Dinokana, in Setswana custom it is the women's and girls' responsibility to prepare the meal and feed the family as well as visitors.

Women employed outside the home are still responsible for the domestic work of the household and thus bear a double work burden. Hence they tend to involve the girls. The resulting involvement leads to accountability and therefore the girls do whatever possible to lighten their workload by means of songs such as the one below which expresses cultural empowerment, that of lightening the work of winnowing corn.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Kgankgathi, Kgankgathi Kgankgathi, magamma...
Baamogedi	:	Khikhikhi khikhikhi...
Motlhabeletsi	:	Nna mme o nthutile go setla A ntshwarisa motshe...
Baamogedi	:	Khikhikhi khikhikhi...
Motlhabeletsi	:	Motshe wa ntshuba diatla

		Diatla tsa tswa marophi...
Baamogedi	:	Khikhikhi khikhikhi...
Motlhabeletsi	:	Ke mosadi ke ka nyalwa Ka setlela monna'me bopi boleta...
Baamogedi	:	Khikhikhi khikhikhi Kgankgathi kgankgathi Kgankgathi Magamma Khikhikhi khikhikhi
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Triplicate triplicate Triplicate virgins...</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Khikhikhi khikhikhi...</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>My mother taught me to winnow She gave me a pestle...</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Khikhikhi khikhikhi...</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The pestle burnt my hands Hands developed blisters</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Khikhikhi khikhikhi...</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>I am a woman to be married I can winnow soft flour for my husband</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Triplicate, triplicate Triplicate virgins Khikhikhi khikhikhi</i>

The song was recorded at Dinokana in Gamokgatlha Section on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1997. Three teenage girls who belong to the Batshweneng clan and who proudly demonstrated their skills of winnowing performed it. The performance took place in the backyard during the day. As it was summer time the winnowing process took place under a big tree in a rural area. It must be emphasised that before the invention of machines, females had to perform the difficult and tedious task of winnowing by means of a pestle, which they held in their hands, and today there are still few families who winnow sorghum in this manner. The song functions in part to coordinate the actions of each one involved in the winnowing work.

As this song affirms women's experience and the value of preparing sorghum for meal, their experience brings about a special enhancement of knowledge, which causes communicative interaction that binds the audience to their performance. The girls are proud to demonstrate their abilities to winnow sorghum. The song can also function to strengthen the girls' wish to prepare meals. This is indicated in the phrases *Motshe wa ntshuba diatla, diatla tsa tswa marophi* (The pestle burnt my hands, hands developed blisters). This highlights the struggle by which they request to be assisted in doing the task. Repetition of the word *kgankgathi* differentiates the song from ordinary daily speech and emphasises the action of winnowing.

Three girls winnow in one mortar with up and down movement, while standing around it. The size of the mortar is about 40cm in diameter, with a height of 80cm. The length of each pestle is about 1m. They pound the corn until the husks are blown from the grain. The action is coordinated rhythmically in three beats, that is, each one of them would beat once and give the others a chance, and this action is repeated. As the girls are busy winnowing the elderly women from the same clan keep on motivating them by jubilating, using the sound *li-li-li-li-li...* while they wave their hands.

The words of the song highlight how the winnowing had been carried out, that is, by means of pestles. The audience was the women who watched eagerly how the girls were carrying out the task. The song is potentially empowering as an aid in teaching the skills and also the responsibility of providing food for the family. Nowadays it is more a reminder of the past than a practical necessity. The girls proved that they were old enough to be married since they demonstrated endurance and sacrifice by doing the task with blistered hands. The song also has the potential to be emancipatory in that the listeners, the adult women, might entreat the parents to help the girls by asking the boys to perform the job since the girls indicated that *Diatla tsa tswa marophi* (Hands developed blisters). The request might not always have had a positive response except where the listeners empathise with the girls.

Boys can perform the job much better than the girls because they are physically stronger. Perhaps it should be indicated that in Batswana culture, the boys would consider it demeaning to do work traditionally performed by women such as washing and preparing food. It is believed that if a man performs any task allocated to women it

will be an indication that he is bewitched, in Setswana *O apere jase*, literally meaning he is wearing a coat. Idiomatically this means that the wife has bewitched her husband to be her slave to perform according to her needs. However, there are some men who enjoy assisting their wives and girl-children in performing their duties.

The song also facilitates the proper execution of the task, while the words highlight the injuries caused by the pestle, which burns and blisters the hands. As a form of consolation the performers acknowledge that they are old enough to be able to carry out the duties on their own as is expressed in the sentence *ke mosadi ke ka nyalwa* (I am a woman to be married). In the sentence *Kgankgathi, kgankgathi, kgankgathi magamma* (Triplicate, triplicate, triplicate virgins) the word *magamma* (virgins) means that the girls are referring to themselves as virgins, that is they have not had sexual intercourse with men or boys, and the word *kgankgathi* (triplicate) means that they are working as a threesome at the winnowing. This is an indication of solidarity which results from a common focus of attention on winnowing. This song is still performed in communal work today to enhance the women and girls' spirits. May it be indicated that in the three villages there are still some people who prefer to winnow the sorghum by hand, believing that it is healthier to use homemade meal even if there is ready-made meal available, prepared by machines.

The researcher noticed that most of the girls interviewed were eager to talk about all pertinent aspects of their oppression. It was surprising when the informants, the girls, revealed that some girls have to stay outside their homes during the night to escape beatings by fathers, brothers or stepmothers. They also highlighted that at times they use proverbs in songs to emphasise an earnest request for emancipation. The following song is a good example of how the girls use proverbs to highlight their fear when they express the exasperation caused by cultural oppression. Here is one such song that was recorded at Matlhaku on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1999.

Ngwana yo sa lleng  
 O tla swela mo tharing  
 Ngwana yo sa lleng  
 O tla swela mo tharing  
 Heelang: Lelang basetsana

Le tla swela mo tharing  
 Phala e e se nang phalana lesilo  
 Phala e e se nang phalana lesilo  
 Heelang lelang basetsana  
 Le tla swela mo tharing

*The child who doesn't cry*  
*She will die in a carrying-skin*  
*The child who doesn't cry*  
*She will die in a carrying-skin*  
*Hey you cry girls*  
*You'll die in skin*  
*A doe without young buck is a fool*  
*A doe without young buck is a fool*  
*Hey you cry girls*  
*You'll die in carrying-skin*

This song was performed by a group of girls aged 13 to 16 in a royal kraal in the afternoon. They were unhappy about the oppression imposed by the patriarchy on them when they were instructed that they had to always respect their brothers and do what they order them to do. The action of raising their dissatisfaction is revealed in the sentence *Ngwana yo sa lelang o tla swela mo tharing* meaning that nobody will know the girls' problems if they do not inform adults. This can be seen as focusing on cultural change. This sentence is a proverb that can be seen as a hidden transcript in that it expresses the real message indirectly. This is in line with Scott's (1990:118) view that: "Subordinate groups require more than fragmentary practices of resistance – they need a counter ideology". The word *thari* means the skin in which a baby traditionally is carried on the back.

This song functions as a vessel for practical resistance and indirect confrontation with the dominant group. This is presented by means of a proverb *Ngwana yo sa lelang o tla swela mo tharing* (The child who doesn't cry will die in a carrying skin). The proverb is a form of hidden transcript, which emerged long ago and is used by the girls to struggle for their emancipation. The song is presented on stage to inform the audience

that the girls want to make their voices heard. Performance of this song off-stage might contain hidden transcripts especially in a way that it is performed as indicated in the proverb *phala e se nang phalana lesilo* (a doe without young buck is a fool). This proverb reinforces the traditional view that women should bear children. These proverbs are used by the girls for self-assertion that highlights their pain, which is caused by their minor status in a patriarchal culture.

There is a repetition of sentences that adds rhythm and also stresses the girls' struggle to make their voices heard in order to change culture. This repetition is presented in a proverb that becomes a means of negotiation and self-assertion. Here follows an example:

Phala e e se nang phalana lesilo

Phala e e se nang phalana lesilo

They hoped that by revealing their dissatisfaction, the patriarchy might attend to their problems. The song was particularly addressed to the chief and his headmen who were among the audience. The girls were aware of their inferior status and discrimination vis-à-vis boys and they were requesting to be freed from inferiority and discrimination, and advising other girls to raise their dissatisfaction. Based on this it can be said that the song addresses parents, specifically urging them to have time to listen to their children when they raise complaints about discrimination.

The audience were men and women who were gathered in the royal kraal, whom the girls believed could do something to remove the stigma of inferiority. The song has the potential to raise awareness of how unhappy the girls are about their oppression. Furthermore, the girls indicate also that they could advise the adults about the prevention of discrimination. The song has the potential to raise the status of the girls so that men and women might treat them the same as boys.

In this song the performers encourage other girls to lament the hardships like an overload of chores, which cause their dissatisfaction. They raise concern about the implied quietness of other girls, as indicated in the sentence *Heelang lelang basetsana* (Hey you cry girls). It is implied that the girls will never know what they are capable of doing unless they assert themselves and are not afraid to take the risk of making their

voices heard. In this regards Furness and Gunner (1995: xii) say:

Importantly, however, such social marginality does not make the artist powerless, it is often precisely such a position that enables the speaker artist to attack and occasionally to devastate.

So far we have concentrated on the Batswana girls' songs for puberty as an instrument for cultural empowerment and change. In this respect the parent-audience might heed their request by enhancing their knowledge and skills, and by supporting them to allow them to engage in collective work.

Let us consider the fact that the Batswana women played a significant role in the rituals and that the songs enhanced their participation. Traditionally, the two most important ceremonies in Tswana tribal life were rainmaking and initiation. These ceremonies are today performed seldom by some Batswana societies. During these ceremonies women prepared girls for responsible adulthood. In this regard Masiea (1973:105) says: "By custom girls have to be under the direct tuition of the mother while the father teaches boys".

Rainmaking and initiation rituals can be related to Durkheim's (Collins 1988) formal rituals, which are intentional. Bergesen (Collins 1988) terms them macro-rituals, because they are oriented to larger macro orders, by invoking the entire society in religious rituals. In these rituals the forms of physical interaction determines moral beliefs and symbols.

According to the informants, Batswana women have specific songs that are performed on ritual or ceremonial occasions at prescribed stages of the proceedings. It is believed that the ancestors, who possess special powers to provide for the community, assure the success of the rites of passage. The women interviewed indicated that the songs for a rite of passage might not normally be performed in other contexts unless there is a good reason for doing so.

The Batswana use oral literature as a repository of traditional beliefs, ideas and wisdom (Kgobe 1997:40). The researcher regards literature as one of the constituents of the traditional culture that is transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Concerning the importance of traditional literature, Jordan (1973:3) says:

Africans gave artistic utterance to their deepest thoughts and feelings about those abstract and concrete things that came within their experience, to their speculation about the origin of things, including men himself and the universe, to their interpretation of the struggle between man and the mysterious forces that surrounded him, and to their admiration for those individuals of the human race to who legend gave credit for the triumph of man over such forces, to their interest in the ways and habits of animals, to their traditional wisdom concerning conduct.

It may therefore be said that the success of oral literature as a medium of communication depends on the performer, the action and the audience. Amuka (Bukanya *et al.* 1994:10) states:

Communication consists of two basic components: the addressee and the communicator. The latter requires linguistic and cultural equipment that evokes appropriate responses from the addressed party, oral literacy genres embody this equipment whose effectiveness may only be felt if the addressee's five senses are culturally endowed to receive and derive meaning from the address. The responses, whether silent or loud are a kind of talking-back.

It can be argued that through oral literature the women are able to educate and inform girls to understand the values of these rituals in the society.

#### **4.5 THE RAINMAKING CEREMONY (*KOPO YA PULA*)**

Among the Batswana societies rainmaking can be seen as formal rituals (Collins 1988). Religion is considered as having the ability to produce moral solidarity, and invoking membership in the entire society. The rainmaking ritual may be said to be an intentional ceremony because it only occurs in a specific time of the year with the specific intention of making rain. In this ritual, Batswana women and girls perform rain songs which constitute a vital part of the prayers for rain.

In the olden days it was common among the Batswana tribes that annually, before

ploughing, a rainmaking ceremony was conducted. There are some Batswana tribes that still perform the ritual, but this now seldom happens. This is because some people still believe that they can only get adequate rain for their stock and crops if they request it from the ancestors. It must be noted that providing food and fuel for their families requires considerable sacrifice and dedication on the part of women. Women, as part of their duty to cultivate the land of the village, were entitled to follow the ways and means of rainmaking. They used songs to strengthen their focus of attention on the ritual and to highlight their common emotional mood while they mobilise themselves. Through singing they preserved a tradition and culture that date back to long ago, *Go tswa ga lowe* (From long ago). For the rainmaking ceremony seven songs, which were performed at my request outside the rainmaking context, were selected for study.

Interestingly enough, it had always been assumed that women are gossipers; hence it was a tendency of some husbands to prevent their wives from socialising. Even in hard times women struggled to raise their concerns by sending their representative to the queen, who in turn would propose to the chief to set a date for the rainmaking ceremony. In African customary law, the chief was looked upon as a link between the people and the ancestral spirits. The Batswana were no exception: they looked upon the chiefs as fathers of their tribes and providers of wealth. With regard to the chief's status, Dornan (1927:185) says: "The Chief was the spiritual as well as the tribal head of his people, and thus had power. He was the controller of the weather for the benefit of the tribe".

Wealth for Batswana was primarily based on crops and stock, which could not survive without adequate rainfall. The informants explained that during the summer months when there was a shortage of rainfall, the people experienced severe drought and even in some cases, starvation. The chief as a reasonable man would express some degree of care like that of a good father. He would order his assistant to blow the horn (*go letsa lepatata*) and assemble his people in his kraal. During that meeting, which was attended mainly by men as family-heads, the necessary arrangements were made for the rain ceremony.

From the chief's kraal the family-heads disseminated the news to the women, who in turn prepared the girls for the ceremony. The study in three villages revealed that the

women, who in customary law are minors, played a very significant role in the rain ceremony in patrilineal tribes like the Batswana. Other members of the society would be invited to the ceremony by means of songs such as this one below which indicates cultural empowerment and continuity and reinforces the idea of honouring the chief. It was recorded in Tlokweng in Moshaweng Section on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1998.

A re tsamayeng  
 Re ye Mōsate  
 Re yo ba bona  
 Iyoo kgosi e bitsa  
 Kgosi e bitsa  
 E bitsa batho  
 Ba tshwerwe ke tlala  
 Ijoo monna mosesane

*Let us go  
 We go to the royal Kraal  
 To go and meet them  
 Oh the chief is calling  
 Chief is calling  
 He is calling people  
 They are hungry  
 Oh thin man*

The contents of the song indicate that whenever there is a call from the royal kraal, the community must respond positively to show that *pilediwa e a lwelwa* (response to the call is fought for). The girls performed in a way that enhanced the ability of the song to honour the patriarchy. The type of repetition visible in this song is linking (*neeletsano*) which occurs when the last words of the first line corresponds with the first part of the second line. Linking is used to emphasise the message of the chief's call, to add rhythm and to force the listeners to respond to the transmitted message. For example:

Kgosi e bitsa  
 E bitsa batho

On hearing this invitation all the people in the community, including refugees (*bontholeng*), irrespective of age and sex, would assemble at the chief's kraal for an important ceremony.

A lucid picture of how the women participate emerges from their efforts to disseminate the message and to play a role in the ceremony. They are portrayed as experts in the performance of the ritual. The success of the rainmaker is in many instances enhanced by the songs that the women perform while accompanying the young girls to the ancestors' fountain. In the first part of the ritual young girls were sent to the ancestors' fountain. The informant, Mmamotswakgabong Sedumedi, interviewed on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1996, described this part of the ritual as follows:

Go tlhophiwa basetsana ba magammaana gore ba romelwe  
kwa nkgong ya badimo ka ntlha ya gore mebele ya bone e phepa  
ga ba ise ba robale le banna, ga ba ise ba kotangwe ke ntsi.

*Girls who are virgins are nominated and sent to the ancestors' fountain, since it is believed that their bodies are pure, they have never had sexual intercourse.*

According to my adult informants interviewed at Tlokweng and Matlhaku, the women would assemble all the young girls between the ages of nine and thirteen who had not yet begun to menstruate and whose breasts were starting to develop to perform this ceremony. This is different from the information from Dinokana, which indicated that the only girls who participated in this ceremony were those who were about to attend initiation school, and that Christians were excluded from taking part.

A girl from the royal family led the young girls, since it is believed that she has the power to communicate with the ancestors. As this ceremony was conducted annually, the Batswana women prepared the attire in advance. The girls wore skirts made of loose threads (*makgabe*) with beads (*dibaga*) around their naked breasts. Each girl carried a small clay pot (*nkgwana*) or calabash (*phafana*), which they used to bring water from the ancestors' fountain (*nkggo ya badimo*), which they would then pour into the rain

clay-pot (*setsaga*). Even though the women supported the girls with songs and ululation, they were not allowed to come near the fountain because it was believed that they were great gossipers and their unfaithfulness would anger the ancestors so that they would refuse to send rain. Before they left for the ancestors' fountain, the women and the girls sang at the chief's kraal as a sign of communicating with the ancestors. The following is one of the songs performed before their departure:

Nkgo ya badimo  
 Kwa mosi o kuang  
 Badimo betsho re a lla  
 Ijoo re tshwerwe ke tlala  
 A pula a e ne matsotsoro  
 Re thuseng setšhaba

*The ancestors' fountain*  
*Where there is smoke*  
*Our ancestors - we cry*  
*Oh we are hungry*  
*Let it rain heavily*  
*For us to help our nation*

This song was recorded at Tlokweng at Garasennelo Section on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998. The women earnestly appealed to the ancestors' righteousness to provide people with rain. This song affirmed women's experiences, values and meanings as valuable in the society. They had a strong belief that the ancestors would also give ear to their plea to feed the nation. This song was believed to arouse the ancestral spirits and to bring rain so that women might be able to meet the basic needs of their families, such as food, shelter and health care. The existence of the ancestors was reflected by the smoke as expressed in the phrase *Kwa mosi o kuang* (Where there is smoke).

It is ironic that even though women are traditionally relegated to a minor position, they are the first people the tribe turns to in hard times, not only as protectors but also as providers. From the royal kraal, the girls carried the clay pots (*dinkgwana*) on their heads and walked in single file led by two uninitiated male youths (*magwane*) from the

royal family who were to be circumcised in the near future. The girls' departure caused the women to recount vividly the long distance the girls were expected to travel in order to reach the ancestors' fountain (*nkgo ya badimo*). On their way the women and girls sang songs that promote their culture and respect for the ancestors like in the song below. The song, *Leru lele*, was performed by girls between the ages of nine and thirteen, backed up by the women who accompanied them to the ancestors' fountain. Their songs reached beyond the earthly realm and connected them with the ancestral spirits. The performance took place in the morning. The audience was male youths who were selected from the royal family to accompany the girls and women.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Leru lele Le le kwa lele
Baamogedi	:	Segamakwena
Motlhabeletsi	:	Leru lele Le le kwa lele
Baamogedi	:	Segamakwena Le le kwa lele Le le kwa lele Segamakwana ka nkgwana ya bokone Segamakwane ka nkgwana ya bokone
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The cloud there That is there</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Crocodile-milker!</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The cloud there That is there</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Crocodile-milker! That is there That is there Crocodile-milker with clay pot of the north Crocodile-milker with clay pot of the north</i>

This song was recorded at Matlhaku on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998. In it the women make an earnest request for rain from the cloud which was referred to as the crocodile-milker

(*segamakwena*) because it is believed that during famine the cloud which is associated with ancestral spirits drained water from the rivers and dams and left crocodiles with nothing to eat or drink. The sentence *Segamakwena ka nkgwana ya Bokone* (Crocodile-milker with clay pot of the north) particularly refers to the direction from which the rain comes, since it is believed that the rain that comes from the north is gentle and has no lightning. My informant, Tshinangwe Morare, interviewed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998 at Matlhaku, said that the performers had complete confidence in the ancestors' power to produce rain. This song reflects how the women transmit and maintain their own myths and social standards, as is here indicated by the belief that the cloud is a crocodile-milker.

The other informant, Mmarubene Letsholo, interviewed on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1997, agreed that songs like this one are praise-songs that are used to address the spirits of the dead chiefs indirectly, and to force them to deliver the rain they are withholding.

Let us take note of the order of events that were followed at the ancestors' fountain. Firstly, the girls representing the royal family would go near the fountain and laud the ancestors by calling the names of the late chiefs as if they are reciting a poem. Secondly, all the participants would go near the fountain and perform two songs specifically composed for that event. Thirdly, they would make their request by means of songs, and finally they would fill the clay pots with water and go back to the village. The following are some of the songs they performed to create a common focus of attention and a common emotional mood. The girls are also expressing their pride at being allowed to take part in a ritual for the benefit of the tribe.

Nkgo ya borremogolo  
 Re kotame re lela  
 Ijoo Ijoo Ijoo  
 Roma letlametlo  
 Le hupe metsi monate  
 Go nosa rotlhe  
 Re nwe re kgalologe

*Fountain of our forefathers*  
*We are squatting while crying*  
*Oh oh oh*  
*Send a toad*  
*To such nice water*  
*To give us all to drink*  
*And be thirsty no more*

During the recording of the above song, which was performed at Tlokweng at Ramodisa Section on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1998, the researcher noted the commitment of the performers to passing on their request. The girls express strong emotions, as reflected in a sentence *Re kotame re lela* (we are squatting while crying). This is overstated, but reinforces the stereotypical idea that women are prone to emotional outbursts like crying. The repetition of phrases highlighted and strengthened the performers' request in addition to adding rhythm. For example:

A pula  
 A pula e ne

At the same time the phrase *Re kotame re lela* (we are squatting while crying) is an earnest request for rain as they are humbling themselves before the ancestors since people and animals cannot survive without water and food. The women knew that they have limited power – far less than a toad (*letlametlo*) that was able to go into the fountain. They believed that the ancestors have supernatural powers to provide them with rain. Since it lives in water the *letlametlo* (toad) signifies the availability of rain.

The songs taught the girls responsibility and self-sacrifice in requesting rain from the ancestors and made them part of the society. The ritual can underline the knowledge that the society would not survive without water, mainly because the Batswana, like many African societies, used to be essentially dependent on agriculture. The songs are partly a way of passing the knowledge from one generation to the next in order to sustain tradition and mobilise and empower the girls by raising their awareness that their participation in tribal or social ritual was important for the survival of the tribe. The songs might potentially raise the self-esteem of the girls in that if rain should fall,

the society would be able to plant sorghum, maize and vegetables for the survival of their families. If rain did not fall they would look to the chief for help.

The role of the male youths (*magwane*) selected from the royal family to accompany the girls to the ancestors' fountain (*nkgo ya badimo*) was mainly to fill their clay pots and calabashes with water. The informant, Mmakobedi Boikanyo, interviewed on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1997, said that the girls carried the pots on their heads without using grass rings (*dikgare*) and leaves (*dipogo*) in order to allow water to spill all the way home. The spilling of water was said to be a call for the rain to fall.

On their journey back home girls were not allowed to talk to other people, or to look behind them. Other informants saw this as a token of respect for the ancestors, who would consequently be disposed to send rain. On their return to the royal kraal the ceremony reached its musical climax when the women danced and sang various songs for the rain (*dikoma tsa pula*). It was believed that, on hearing the songs, the ancestors will rejoice and respond positively to their plea.

Women and girls at the royal kraal performed the following three songs, namely *A pula a e ne*, *Maru ke ale a tla* and *Moroka o monna tota*, during the day after their return from the ancestors' fountain. They had a common focus of attention and mutual awareness of it. Their common emotional mood aroused as they focused on the sacred object, namely the ancestors' spirit, enhanced their emotional energy and increased their confidence that the ancestors have heard their request for rain, and they were expecting a quick response from them. They sang aloud and their facial expressions indicated their happy mood.

Motlhabeletsi	:	A pula
Baamogedi	:	A pula a e ne
Motlhabeletsi	:	A e ne
Baamogedi	:	A e ne matsorotsoro
Motlhabeletsi	:	A pula
Baamogedi	:	A pula e ka na
Motlhabeletsi	:	E ka na
Baamogedi	:	E ka na matsorotsoro

Pula! Pula! Pula!

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Let the rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Let the rain fall</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Let the rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Let it rain heavily</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Let the rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>The rain can fall</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>It can rain</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It can rain heavily</i>
		<i>Rain! Rain! Rain!</i>

This song was recorded at Dinokana in Kgosing Section on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1998. The performers of the above song made an earnest request for rain. The song was culturally empowering since it encouraged the women and girls to thank the ancestors. In performance they used musical instruments such as drums (*meropa*) and *matlhao* (instruments made of cocoons: ankle rattles) to emphasise their request. The drumming and singing could alter an individual's state of consciousness and invoke a benevolent spirit. The last phrase explicitly indicated their belief that the ancestors would respond to their plea if they praised them sufficiently by singing *Pula! Pula! Pula!* (Rain! Rain! Rain!). The emphasis on the word *Pula* and the phrase *a e ne* (let it rain) reinforce their request for relief from the drought. Traditionally the Batswana, like other African tribes, do not only use the word *pula* for a request for rain but also to show admiration, honour and to express happiness. Endorsing this view, Dornan (1927:186) maintains that "The word Rain! Rain! Rain! constantly occurs in the Dithoko or praise songs of the chiefs, and when they want to pay a great compliment to anyone they say Rain! Rain! Rain!"

Like other traditional ceremonies, the rainmaking ceremony ended with a feast. Cattle from the chief's stock were slaughtered in the ceremony for meat and also for ritual purposes. According to my adult informants the bones were burnt in an open fire to reinforce with smoke the women's request for rain as they cry out in rage at failing to provide for their families. The burning of the bones produced smoke that was believed to be effective in communicating with the ancestral spirits.

Like in other African tribes, the chiefs of the Batswana were not the rainmakers. The chief traditional doctor of the village who would perform sacrifices for rain held this office. The traditional doctor who is known as the rainmaker (*moroka*) prepared rain medicines (*dithhare tsa pula*) in advance and put them in a very large clay pot (*setsaga*) in the centre of the chief's kraal. The water left in the calabashes when the girls reached the kraal was then poured into the rain pot (*nkgo ya pula*).

This rain pot contained a mixture of medicines, most of which were portions of various trees and other plants, including itching medicine (*mogaga*), which was believed to be provided by the ancestors to be used in the process of cleansing. Every person who had attended the ceremony washed his or her hands in the mixture and was served a sumptuous meal made of sorghum-rice (*mosuthane*) and meat. While the women and girls shouted *Pula! Pula!* the rainmaker (*moroka*) used a whisk (*seditse*) to sprinkle the mixture in the kraal with the intention of scraping away dirt (*go gagaola naga*). After sprinkling the medicine on the ground, a song like the one below was sung. The women at Tlokweng sang it during the recording, which took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998 (not as part of the ritual itself, but as a demonstration for the researcher).

Motlhabeletsi	:	Maru ke ale maru ke ale a tla
Baamogedi	:	A tla a tlhaga a thaga bokone
		A re itumeleng
		Re itumeleng re bine
		Re tshabeleng thuding
		Pula! Pula! Pula!
Motlhabeletsi	:	Pula re tlele masego
Baamogedi	:	E tlaare ka moso maitseboa
		Digwagwa di be di itumetse
		Di tlhaba moudu
		Bodibeng bontsho
		Kwa madibeng magolo
		Pula! Pula! Pula!

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>There are clouds that are coming</i>
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*Chorus* : *They are coming they are coming from the north*

*Let us rejoice*  
*We rejoice and dance*  
*We run to shelters*  
*Rain! Rain! Rain!*

*Leader* : *Rain bring us fortune*

*Chorus* : *By tomorrow afternoon*  
*Frogs will rejoice*  
*They will be jubilating*  
*From the dark well*  
*In big fountains*  
*Rain! Rain! Rain!*

The performers foresaw the possibility of rainfall since they have sufficiently honoured the ancestral spirits. In contents the performers were rejoicing, giving thanks because their request for rain had been answered. They were welcoming the rain after a long time. They believe that rain would bring joy not only to the people but also to the frogs because they start croaking after good rain has fallen. The informants said that in most cases, if the rainmaker succeeded in bringing rain, he would be rewarded with a number of cattle, sometimes as many as twenty, from the chief's own stock. The women would sing the following song after seeing the rainbow (*motshe wa godimo*) to raise awareness of their cultural empowerment and continuity in that they supported the rainmaker's power in the performance of his duties. The song was recorded at Matlhaku on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1998.

*Motlhabeletsi* : *Moroka wee*

*Baamogedi* : *Moroka o monna tota*  
*O biditse maru a pula*

*Motlhabeletsi* : *Bontsho bole ke bang bole*

*Baamogedi* : *Ke bontsho ba maru*

*Motlhabeletsi* : *Bontsho bole ke bang bole*

*Baamogedi* : *Ke bontsho ba maru*  
*Kana bo phala ba lerole*

		Lerole lehibidu
		Bontsho ba maru
		Pula! Pula! Pula!
Motlhabeletsi	:	Gadima lele ke lang lele
Baamogedi	:	Ke gadima la maru
Motlhabeletsi	:	Gadima lele ke lang lele
Baamogedi	:	Ke gadima la maru
		Kana le bitsa maru a pula
		Pula ya medupe
		Gadima la pula
		Pula! Pula! Pula!
		A e ne! A e ne!
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Rainmaker hey</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Rainmaker you are a great man</i>
		<i>You have called clouds for rain</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>What is that black thing</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It is the blackness of clouds</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>What is that black thing</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It is the blackness of clouds</i>
		<i>It is more admired than dust</i>
		<i>Dust that is red</i>
		<i>Black of clouds</i>
		<i>Rain! Rain! Rain!</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>What is that lightning for</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It is lightning of clouds</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>What is that lightning for</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It is lightning of clouds</i>
		<i>It calls clouds for rain</i>
		<i>Rain of gentle showers</i>
		<i>Lightning for rain</i>
		<i>Rain! Rain! Rain!</i>
		<i>Let it rain! Let it rain!</i>

In this song the performers highlighted their experience that caused a heightened intensity of emotion and increase their belief in the ancestral spirits. In this rain making ceremony the performers affirm their experiences, and values and meanings they attached to the rain making ceremony as valuable to the society. This was indicated by gestures such as pleasant faces, stamping of feet and clapping of hands. Repetition of the word *pula* strengthened the girls' request for rain, emphasising the message and adding rhythm to the song. For example: *Pula! Pula! Pula!*

These songs were empowering in that the girls were aware that during difficult times like drought, they must not just sit down and cry but they must do something to assist the community. According to some performers, the songs also taught the girls self-sacrifice and the responsibility to care for the nation. They also learned knowledge and skills of rainmaking and these would be passed from generation to generation to sustain the tradition and to maintain cultural values like solidarity and working together.

The songs had the potential for empowering in that if the rain could fall all the people in the village would benefit from the ending of the drought and they would be able to plant some food and have adequate grazing for their livestock. Hence, both people and animals would have enough to feed on. The young girls participating were being taught to conform to the social norms.

The informants, Kgarebane Montshiwa, interviewed on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1997, and Dithoti Mogapi, interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1994 at Tlokweg, similarly went on to tell the following: *Ka nako e nngwe moroka o retelelwa ke go fetlha pula, mme leuba le tswelele pele.* (In many instances the rainmaker fails to bring rain and drought continued). It was believed that the failure was an indication that the ancestral spirits might have rejected the sacrifice, hence they withheld the rain. In this situation the chief would request all the missionaries to his kraal to pray to God for rain.

In this regard people looked primarily to God Almighty for relief and not to the chief and ancestors. The early Christian missionaries condemned the traditional rainmaking ceremony in that it involved participation of ancestors. This was a reflection of the growing influence of the white man's civilization on African culture.

The audience or listeners included all the people in the society; the disabled, the deaf and the blind were also there to observe the ceremony. It must however be noted that widows, widowers and albinos were not allowed to attend the ceremony as it was believed that they might bring bad luck to the society.

It can be concluded that in Batswana culture, participation in rainmaking could be seen as empowering girls and women by resuscitating the pride and dignity of their community and hence raising their self-esteem as caregivers and providers for the tribe. The songs were mostly performed in a communal context as a means of encouraging involvement in collective behaviour, and also as an accompaniment to domestic activities that guided and gave direct tuition to girls. Although the women and girls seemed to reproduce the patriarchal practices by remaining under the control or direction and authority of the chief, a man, and the rainmaker, a man, they nevertheless explored their capabilities of providing for the society. The rain ceremony as an important rite had a dual purpose. Firstly, it united the society, and secondly, it was the customary channel for addressing and arousing the ancestral spirits to provide rain.

One may conclude that the rain songs played an important role in building moral solidarity among the Batswana societies. This may be related to Kaemmer's (1993) view that:

Society can only exist as people relate to each other with some commonly held understanding about communicating and behaving, culture can only exist in the minds of individuals and in the practices by which shared understandings are passed from one generation to the next.

Let us now focus on the other rite of passage in which the involvement of women was important for enhancing the young women's knowledge and skills, self-esteem, and paving their way to increased participation in the political and economic areas.

#### **4.6 THE INITIATION CEREMONY (*THUPISO*)**

Among the Batswana initiation was a way of life by which women marked the transition from childhood to adulthood. This type of ceremony aimed at securing the spiritual well-being of the individual and the society. This rite of passage regulated and

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gave expression to meaningful changes in females' lives. The focus of the initiation practice was to stress the importance of appropriate social and sexual behaviour in adult life. The most important function of the female initiation ceremony was to enhance the need for co-operation and a sense of responsibility in the women.

In the initiation ceremony the elements of Durkheim's (Collins, 1988) formal model of ritual can be clearly recognised: young females are physically assembled with a clear common focus of attention and mutual awareness of the initiation ritual. They have a common emotional mood, and their sacred objects such as the act of communicating with the ancestral spirits and dancing could enhance their emotional energy and confidence in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

During the initiation ceremony the Batswana women played an essential role with the help of the ancestors, believed to possess extraordinary powers to care for the community. The worship of ancestral spirits (*mewa ya badimo*) was the most conspicuous feature of traditional Batswana society because it was believed that nothing could succeed without their involvement. Initiation is a transitional stage that taught women to adjust and adapt to the tribal culture.

Traditionally among the Batswana, some mature boys and girls attend circumcision and initiation respectively as the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. Among the Batswana boys are circumcised by cutting off the fold of skin at the tip of their penis, as it is believed to increase their enjoyment during sexual intercourse and also to protect them from contracting diseases. On the other hand, girls' initiation involved the enlargement of the membrane in the vagina. This operation prepared young women to satisfy men during sexual intercourse.

The initiation ceremony discussed below was attended by girls between the ages of 13 and 19, who had begun to menstruate and developed breasts. According to the informants in all three villages, when a daughter of the chief had reached puberty, the queen (*mohumagadi*) would raise her concern to the chief in a secret meeting and negotiate the possibility of conducting an initiation ceremony. Like in other ceremonies and events where women participated, songs were used to mark joint efforts to achieve the objective. In this section the researcher listened to ten songs but recorded only eight of them, relevant to the study. The informant, Mmaseipati Matsafu, interviewed on the

27<sup>th</sup> June 1997 at Tlokweng, said the ceremony not only prepares the girls to have their own standard of ethics and live up to it, but also trained them to endure oppression in a patriarchal society.

It is worthwhile to indicate that traditionally boys were the first to attend the circumcision programme and that girls' initiation would take place the following year. In this way the age cohort (*leina la mophato*) would be based on the historic event of the year of the boys' circumcision, and that name would be passed on to the girls who were initiated the following year. The group names are for example *Matlhomakgosi* (those who throne the chief), *Madisakgosi* (those who safeguard the chief) etc. The naming process was an indication that men are the undisputed heads of families. Hence the age cohort named the newly circumcised men and the women were named after the latter group of circumcised men. There was no specific number of boys to be circumcised or of girls to be initiated; it depended on the number of boys or girls who were deemed to be mature enough.

When the queen (*mohumagadi*) was given permission, she would assemble the women who wished that their daughters or granddaughters should be initiated, and informed them that permission was granted for the girls to be initiated. The initiation ceremony was conducted during the winter months, that is, from May to July, with the intention of training the girls in severe weather to ensure that they would be able to endure hardship and that they would be able to tolerate pain with patience. Among the Batswana it was believed that endurance is an indication that they would be able to bear the tribulations of married life with patience and stoicism. *Mohumagadi* would inform the women to bring their daughters of a similar age to the chief's kraal (*kgotleng*) the following day. After she had confirmed that the girls have developed fully enough, she would give the go-ahead for the start of the initiation (*thebolo ya bojale*). That day in the afternoon the women would rejoice over the good news by uttering yodelling sounds (*go tlhaba moudu*) and by singing this song, which was recorded at Tlokweng at Rakgowa Section on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1997.

Uduu! Uduu! Uduu!

Mmanthatisi o timetse

Lenao la gagwe ke le!

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Ke le!

Ke le!

*Uduu! Uduu! Uduu!*

*Mmanthatisi is lost*

*Here is her footstep*

*Here it is!*

*Here it is!*

In this song the women affirmed and enforced prescribed sets of behavioural rules – that is, following in the footsteps of the ancestors, which can be seen as maintaining their traditional culture. This is one of the ways in which culture is transmitted by means of initiation. The song was presented on stage at the royal kraal where the audience would be able to observe it and notice their intention. The repetition that occurs is that of phrases. This parallelism stresses the message of focusing on the ancestors' footstep. For instance:

Ke le!

Ke le!

In context the phrase *Uduu* expresses the women's pleasure at imparting their knowledge to their daughters by sending them to the initiation school. The audience was men who gathered at the royal kraal who might disseminate the message that permission was granted for the girls to be initiated. The song was performed in full earnest and total acceptance by the audience since it was known that initiation is important for cultural empowerment. The message transmitted through the song was circulated from the performers to the audience who might respond positively by informing those who did not observe the performance. The women rejoiced although they knew that the initiation rites are aimed at preparing the girls to satisfy men during sexual intercourse, and also the fact that their daughters would learn the responsibilities of womanhood. In this song the hidden transcript is disguised by the idea that initiation only has a positive effect on tribal life.

The women performed this song by stamping their feet and raising their arms like

horns. According to the adult informant, Mophurapeo Thusi, interviewed on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1996, the name *Mmanthatisi* refers to the female ancestor believed to be the mother of the Batswana in general and the Baiǀokwa in particular, since her historical background was traced back to Tlokweng near *Tlapeng la badimo* (The rock of the ancestors) in the Kolontwane River. *Lenao la gagwe ke le* (here is her footsteps) in context means that it was believed that it was only with her consent that the girls would be initiated as she has the power to withhold fertility, which was the quasi-mystic power of women to bear children. In this way, as Scott (1990:159) states: “The condition of public expression is that it be sufficiently indirect or garbled that it can be read in two meanings”. In this case one believes that public expression can have two meanings; firstly, it can directly refer to the literal meaning of the words, and secondly, it can refer to something which is not directly referred to.

From the interviews it became clear that girls’ initiation, in contrast to their male counterparts’, promotes cultural empowerment that might much rather lead to responsible womanhood than to power in the patriarchal system. On the other hand the boys’ circumcision promote their seniority in the patriarchal culture. It is also noticeable that a large number of songs performed during the initiation rites are actually performed by the initiates but a few songs are only performed by older graduates during the time when the initiates were in the middle of the initiation process and were not allowed to sing or dance.

The study in the three villages indicated that the initiation rites were similar in all instances. Let us follow the procedure of the ceremony, taking into consideration different phases of the initiation, which were followed to confirm that the girls would be qualified and competent both physically and emotionally. According to the adult informants in the three villages, among the Batswana the initiation programme (*thupiso*) is divided into three distinct phases, which all aim to empower the girls for womanhood.

#### **4.6.1 Phase One: Preparation for the initiation**

In this analysis the researcher regards this phase as one of social adjustment during which the girls from different families socialize and learn to work together. According

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to the informants, interviewed in the three villages between March 1998 and July 1998, the first stage occurred from the first evening on the day after the queen (*mohumagadi*) had given consent for the start of the initiation. This phase is known as *go tsoga monyo* (to wake up on the dew) and takes about two weeks. In this phase the female youths (*maswaile*), who were about to undergo initiation, were called up to participate in communal work. Every evening during this period the girls practised initiation songs (*dikoma tsa thupiso*) at the chief's kraal (*kgotleng*), but usually dispersed before midnight.

During the first two weeks the initiates assembled at *kgotleng* (royal kraal) very early each morning (*ka makuku a naka tsa kgomo*), wearing skirts made of loose threads (*makgabe*), and made their way to the thrashing yard (*seboaneng*) where they were taught the norms for the initiation. They returned after sunrise in the company of the women and the initiation doctor. Their bodies were painted with white ash depicting their in-between state. The end of this phase is marked by a tour to the graveyard (*ba ya phupung*) to inform their late great-grandparents that they have come of age. The songs performed in this phase raised the awareness and self-esteem of the girls that they were then able to do domestic chores very early before dawn without being forced to wake up. This is one of the songs they performed at the thrashing yard (*seboaneng*):

Mmamodisanong wa ngwanyana  
 O phakeletse metsi o jeleng  
 Mmamodisanong wa ngwanyana  
 O phakeletse metsi o jeleng  
 O phakeletse metsi go rileng  
 O phakeletse metsi o jeleng  
 O phakeletse metsi go rileng  
 O phakeletse metsi o jeleng

*Mmamodisanong who is a girl*  
*Why do you fetch water in the morning*  
*Mmamodisanong who is a girl*  
*Why do you fetch water in the morning*  
*You fetch water what happened*

*Why you fetch water what have you eaten*

*You fetch water what happened*

*Why do you fetch water what have you eaten*

This song was recorded at Tlokweng on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 1997. In context the song raised concern about the lazy girl referred to as *Mmamodisanong* (the girl who takes care of vultures) who had started to fetch water very early in the morning. This signified that she was ready to make the transition to the most responsible stage in life where she would be able to perform independently. The performers developed their own codes, myths, heroes and social standards. These included performing the duty of fetching water in the morning as a way of expressing to the audience that they were of age by doing the duty of adult women. The parallelism is reflected in the phrases:

O phakeletse metsi o jeleng

O phakeletse metsi go rileng

This is a type of repetition, which emphasises the time frame and highlight the girls' intention of being noticed. The phrase *O phakeletse metsi o jeleng* (Why do you fetch water what have you eaten), in other words she has eaten something that made her strong, is an indirect reflection of maturity that leads to a request to be accorded more accountability than before. In other words it raised her awareness that she was ready to be a parent.

Another song performed in the first stage of the girls' initiation rite conditioned the girls to be more considerate to others as well as to animals and birds. This was indicated by the use of the word *mae* (eggs) because there is always a need to handle eggs with care to prevent them from breaking. Let us focus on the following song that was recorded at Tlokweng on 13 July 1997.

Ke gatile mae a nong

Ke gatile mac a nong

Mae a nong wee

Ke gatile mae a nong

Kgapetla ya ntlhaba koto

Ya ntlhaba kgapetla koto  
 Ke gatile mae a nong  
 Mae a nong wee

*I stared at vulture's eggs*  
*I stared at vulture's eggs*  
*Eggs of a vulture hey*  
*I stared at vulture's eggs*  
*Eggshell stabbed my foot*  
*It stabbed my foot eggshell*  
*I stared at vulture's eggs*  
*Eggs of a vulture hey*

The performers who were about to be initiated informed other girls that they had broken the vulture's eggs. This is an explicit indication that they were in a process of were throwing away their childish behaviour. The phrase *mae a nong wee* expresses the girl's shock and fear at challenging the position of adults. Vulture's eggs metaphorically refer to secret formulae particularly pertaining to sexual behaviour. As children, they would not be allowed to learn the secrets of life but now that they would be initiated they could from then on penetrate into the private part of life.

In context the song represents the girls' eagerness to learn secret formulae that would empower them to carry the responsibilities and confidentiality of adult life. The performer stressed their action by means of repetition of sentences that also add rhythm to the song. The sentences appear like this:

Ke gatile mae a nong  
 Ke gatile mae a nong

The other type of repetition observed in this song is linking that stresses keywords such as:

ke gatile **mae a nong**  
**Mae a nong** wee

The two songs above, namely *O phakeletse metsi* and *Ke gatile mae a nong*, were performed by girls who were about to undergo initiation rites. They demonstrated their maturity and readiness for bigger responsibilities by waking up very early in the morning to carry out some domestic chores and also by their readiness to learn the secrets of life. The audience were mainly adult initiated women who not only backed up the girls' request to be initiated but who also might reassure them that the rite of passage would be conducted to promote the girls' status in the society.

The end of the first phase was marked by farewell functions conducted by the families and relatives to celebrate the departure of the initiands. The informants said that for women the farewell was heartbreaking since it was possible that one of the girls might die during the ceremony as a result of the severe hardships the initiates have to endure.

#### **4.6.2 Phase Two: The initiation (*Thupiso*)**

It is important to indicate that as this phase focused on transmitting culture relating to the secret formulae of womanhood, it has more restrictions on sharing the information with outsiders. In this phase the songs were used mostly to assist the initiands to retain knowledge of their culture as well as to keep them focused on the initiation programme. It may be relevant to approach this phase by considering Durkheim's (1893) model on the macro level of the whole society as elaborated in Mary Douglas' (1966) theory of group cultures. Here the focus is on mechanical solidarity which, according to Durkheim (Collins 1988:227), is characterized by:

high ritual density, which results in a strong and particularized "collective conscience", consisting of concrete and reified symbols, intense punitive ritual against violators, a sharp sense of group boundaries with distrust of outsiders.

The process of this phase can be seen as having two dimensions, namely the power dimension for old graduates who gave orders, and the initiands who took orders. The old graduates who gave orders were self-assured and proud. They tend to dominate the performance and identify with their frontstage selves and hence with the initiation symbols which were being enacted. On the other hands the initiands, those who took orders, tend to be obedient, conforming and identify more with their private, backstage

selves. The initiands tend to participate in the ritual in a controlled fashion with the intention of complying.

The second phase of initiation was marked by the isolation of the girls for two to three months. According to the informants interviewed at Dinokana on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1997, the girls were accommodated in shelters (*mephato*) under the supervision of the old ladies (*balenkolo*). Each clan had its own shelter led by the daughter of the kraal-head (*kgosana*). It is interesting to note that every day when the initiands left the kraal the daughter of the kraal head led the group and when they returned to the shelter she became the last in the line (*kgora*). The informant, Matheathaga Bogatsu, interviewed on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1997 at Tlokweng, explained that the position of the daughter of the kraal-head in front of the group was to face the obstacles that might block their way, and when she became the last in the line it was to ensure that all the members of her group were safe. The girls were named after the totem of the kraal-head. This phase can be associated with what Turner (1982:26) terms the liminal phase, which have the following indicators:

Absence of clothing and names. Other signs include eating or not eating specific foods, disregard of personal appearance, the wearing of uniform clothing, sometimes irrespective of sex. In mid-transition the initiands are pushed as far toward uniformity, structural invisibility and anonymity as possible.

The informants revealed that during the girls' stay in-doors, they wore skirts made of *matlhaka a mabele* (sorghum stalks) and melon seeds (*dithotse*). They wore these skirts with their bodies painted white to symbolise the spirit world. The sorghum stalks signify fertility, because one corn seed that is planted multiplies itself. It was interesting to learn that for their entire stay in the shelters the girls had to sleep sitting up. Every night they hung their attire on the principal pole (*pinagare*) of the shelter and they ate from wooden bowls (*megopo*) with their hands as it is tradition and it is believed that food, which is served in the bowl is shared with the ancestors and is delicious. At the *mophatong* (shelters) there was a side-room which accommodated those who were menstruating. This separate room also accommodated expectant girls. Each family of the initiands donated sorghum, which is termed *serafo* since it is donated to feed the initiands and their supervisors.

At this time, the girls were in a state of transition. They were no longer seen as *maswaile* (uninitiated female youth) but they were termed initiands (*bale*). According to the adult informants interviewed at Tlokweng on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1996, the objective of the initiation rites was to prepare the young women to satisfy men sexually by stretching the hood (*go kgola*). This process was regarded as the core of initiation and was conducted by the old graduates and the female initiation doctor. Let it be emphasized that the songs performed by the women at this stage was to support the girls to be strong and to make noise that would prevent the cries of cowardly initiands from being heard by outsiders.

After the physical operation they were hidden in the shelter (*mephato*). It is said *ba jelwe ke tau* (they have been eaten by a lion) that means they are ritually dead. During this time they were not allowed to sing, to dance or to prepare food. This was the time when the initiands were in a state of transition; they have died as children but they have not yet fully reached adult identity. Their bodies were covered in white ash and their heads with red polish (*letsoku*) as an indication of fertility since they have attained a new status. Wells (1994:91) comments, "This period marks the symbolic return of the initiates to life, with a new adult identity".

The adult informants from the villages explained that the women who perform initiation rites advocate the importance of the pleasure men enjoy and should get, but they do not say anything about the pleasure the woman might have during sexual intercourse. This act of initiation is important as cultural empowerment and continuity because it is performed on women by other women, all in the name of preserving a culture and empowerment that allows them meaningful and independent life. The initiands' mothers sang the following song at the *mophatong* (shelters) to show their experience of pain in the action while on the other hand they encourage the initiands to endure the hardships of initiation.

Ijoo! Ijoo! Ijoo!  
 Ka ga motho o suleng bosigo  
 Ijoo! Ijoo! Ijoo!  
 Ke lelela morwadiake

*Oh! Oh! Oh!*  
*About the person who died during the night*  
*Oh! Oh! Oh!*  
*I am crying for my daughter*

Initiands' mothers at Dinokana in Puwaneng Section performed this on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1996. According to the informant Kegakilwe Mokoma, interviewed on that day, the women performed this song to express their sorrow over the physical mutilation of their daughters. This is an ironic performance in which the women express their experiences regarding the physical mutilation they once went through during their time of initiation. The sentence *Ka ga motho o suleng bosigo* (About the person who died during the night) metaphorically means that the initiands experienced the symbolic death of the child that was necessary so that the adult could be born. The audience who are initiated old ladies react by encouraging the girl to endure the pain since they knew that it would heal. The song represents female experience by which the women highlight their memory of the pain of undergoing initiation since they had been initiated during their youth. Repetition occurs in the form of interjections to invite the attention of the listeners and also to emphasise their grief regarding the pain suffered by the initiands, for example:

Ijoo! Ijoo! Ijoo!

The reader needs to realise that the researcher cannot reveal all the information concerning the initiation programme out of respect for her culture and its traditional values. Regarding the confidentiality of the initiation programme, Breutz (1987:63) maintains that: "The ritual and tuition of the initiation rites still are strictly secret for the Sotho-Tswana to any outsider or to the other sex".

It is reasonable to focus not only on the painful section of the initiation, but also on the empowering part of the ceremony. The initiation songs were performed throughout as a tool for facilitation. A positive side of initiation is that the young women were educated in sexual morality and fidelity to their husbands, and also in the relationship with a husband to enhance the quality of their womanhood. They were given instructions by means of songs on how to weave mats (*meseme*), make clay pots

(*dinkgwana tsa letsopa*) and how to brew sorghum beer. This can be used for economic empowerment whereby initiated women can teach these skills to other women and sell what they made for money.

Concerning their daily routine at the *mephatong* (shelters), they swam, collected wood, fetched water and they were also trained to be vigilant by continuous confrontation with former graduates disguised as males (*borannyanako*). The initiates used the back doors whenever they left the shelters. When they went out to fetch wood or water they were not allowed to talk to other people, or to look behind them. They used walking sticks for protection against wild animals. The former graduates (*borannyanako*) gave themselves male names and tended to parody male roles and behaviour by being rude and wearing male clothes.

The following song was performed by former graduates who followed the initiands from the forest where they carried out their daily routine. It was performed from a male perspective to indicate gender crossing, since the women who were disguised as men treated the initiands harshly with the intention of hardening them.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Malata a ile sekgweng A lata mokgong a rwalela Ngwale wee!
Baamogedi	:	Hoo ho! Boramaswaile Hoo ho!
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Slaves went to the forest To fetch some wood Hey girls!</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Hoo ho! Fathers of uninitiated girls Hoo ho!</i>

This song was recorded at Tlokweng in Lekubung Section on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1997. The young women were under the guard of old women who were called *borannyanako*

or *boramaswaile* (fathers of uninitiated girls) who ill-treated them and regarded them as slaves (*malata*). They express their grievance with the interjection *Hoo ho!* The term *Boramaswaile* (Fathers of uninitiated girls) literally refers to the women who disguised themselves as men to train the initiands. The role of gender crossing here is to prevent the initiands from recognising their trainers and prevent hatred in future.

According to the informants, a week before the girls' graduation they assembled at the chief's kraal and announced their new status publicly by means of songs (*go leka letlhaka*) (to test a stalk). They were given presents such as sorghum and beans in preparation for their graduation ceremony (*thojana*). The queen (*mohumagadi*) then informed the chief that the young women had completed the initiation process. The day before attending the graduation ceremony, the young women burnt their skirts (*mathaka*) and walking sticks and then the women prepared them for the graduation (*kalogo*). The burning of skirts reflected that they will no longer behave like children. This is an indication that they have attained the new status of womanhood and that they have been empowered to be responsible, and they might be expected to provide for their families in future.

Mosadi wee  
 Mosadi wee mosadi  
 Thupiso ke loso  
 Thupiso e boima  
 O nne pelo e thata  
 Ijoo se lele

*Hey woman*  
*Hey woman, hey women*  
*Initiation is death*  
*Initiation is difficult*  
*Have a strong heart*  
*Oh don't cry*

This song was performed at Thlokweg in Lakubung Section on the 28th of January 1997. The song expressed the difficulties the young women have experienced during

initiation. The young women have entered a crucial stage in their lives. The performers' facial expression revealed their sadness of knowing the pains, which the initiands have suffered. Their body movements such as crossed hands on their bare breasts and bowed head express their common feelings. The main core of initiation was described as a difficult phase as indicated in the phrase *thupiso ke loso*, which indicates that it was painful to pass from childhood to adulthood. This was illustrated by the use of the death metaphor *loso* to express that they have passed the stage of childhood and they were from then on regarded as women. Initiation can be regarded as a symbolic kind of death since the initiates went through the death of the childhood state similar to Christian baptism that symbolises that the old self dies and is replaced by a new one.

Let us now focus on the performance of the above three songs, namely *Ka ga motho o suleng*, *Malata a ile sekgweng* and *Thupiso ke loso*. These songs, which symbolically spoke of the hardships of achieving adult status with its responsibilities and challenges, were performed slowly and softly as if the performers were singing for a funeral with no instrumental accompaniment. The gestures of the initiates, crossing arms on their bare breasts, bowing their heads and moving slowly, reflected sadness.

The songs were enculturating in that they taught the initiates that they should be strong enough to stand up to the challenges of life. Although endurance and resilience could potentially be transferred to other arenas, like public life and the economic sphere, some of these songs did not empower women to have equal status with men but they revealed the injustice of the patriarchy because they were prepared to serve men's physical and emotional needs, and bear patriarchal oppression. They were expected to be able to set an example to their younger sisters and other girls in future.

The only audience present during the performances was the grandmothers who were initiated and have reached the postmenopausal stage, as they were believed to abstain from sexual intercourse. The audience's role was to provide support and encouragement to the initiands as they have had experience of the initiation programme.

#### 4.6.3 Phase Three: The final ceremony

Now that the initiates have obtained a group social identity by which they raised awareness of belonging to a group, they were looking forward to get mutual support from the society. The adult informants, interviewed at Tlokwen on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1998, revealed that at the initiation school the young women were subjected to endurance tests to learn to bear pain with patience. Their endurance was an indication that they would be able to bear their tribulations with patience and stoicism during married life and also to strengthen their emotions. The songs that are performed for this process express strength. They revealed their status by means of songs. It should be noted that at this time the girls have passed the core of initiation but they are still taught lessons about being good mothers and wives.

The characteristics of this stage, which Turner (1982:24) terms incorporation, include symbolic phenomena and actions, which represent the return of the subjects to their new, relatively stable, well-defined position in the total society. From the point of view of the old graduates the initiation rite was the most difficult and painful experience of their lives. The informants reflected that most women who were not initiated (*maswaile*) lack endurance in marriage and respect for patriarchy.

Let it be indicated that some Batswana women are uninitiated due to the influence of Christianity. Some Batswana men believe that initiated women are better in sexual performance and that the women give men more enjoyment than uninitiated women (*maswaile*). On the return of the initiates from the initiation school (*go aloga*) the final ceremony (*thojane*) was held. Their graduation regalia were *makgabe*, but their buttocks remained naked. Their bodies were painted in red ochre (*letsoku*) to symbolise fertility because the medication used during the initiation strengthened their bodies. The graduates (*dialogane*), with common emotional energy and confidence danced and sang various songs (*dikoma tsa thojane*) during the whole night of celebration.

During the ceremony, the chief was given an opportunity to betroth one graduate (*sealogane*). This was called *go tlhoma letlhokwa* (to betroth). The researcher hardly needs to say that nowadays among Batswana the chief is not always compelled to betroth one of the graduates, but his presence during the celebration is basically to

grace the occasion and to announce the group name publicly and officially. Even in the past it was rare for a Batswana chief to marry more than four wives. Thojane is regarded as a ceremony whereby the graduates expose their buttocks to the chief (*go isa marago kgosing*). Other circumcised men who were not married or who want to marry again were also given a chance to betroth other graduates to make them future wives. This is a cultural issue, which functions to inculcate respect for the patriarchy and to maintain the pride and dignity of the Batswana tradition. As the graduates were proud of their new status they perform the following song to reflect their pride at achieving womanhood.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Hee tshweu ...
Khorase	:	Ahee! ...
Motlhabeletsi	:	Hee tshweu ...
Khorase	:	Ya bokolela
		Tshweu wee!
		A ke ke reke ka wena dilo tsa batho

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Hey cow...</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Yeah!...</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Hey white cow...</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>It moos</i>
		<i>Cow hey!</i>
		<i>Let me buy people's possessions with you.</i>

The song was performed at Tlokweg in Kgosing Section on the 12th July 1998 by a group of young women who had graduated. It was performed at the royal kraal during the function, which was held to celebrate culture, where the graduates were expected to display their dancing talents. A very big fire burned in the middle of the kraal that did not only provide light but was also used to burn the strengthening medicine for the graduates and also for the whole community. Each graduate had a chair on which she sat during break time. They danced while standing up, with their right hands holding walking sticks and their left hands touching their hips. A stick is traditionally seen as a protecting weapon for women. This was done to prevent the audience from touching their bodies, as it was believed that they might be unclean.

They moved from left to right in rhythm with the drums and other musical instruments. The audience included men and women who in most instances joined in the dancing, and elderly women who ululated to express their excitement. In this song the women affirmed their experiences, values and meanings as valuable to society. This indicated their pride in attaining womanhood during initiation. Furthermore the song brought about a special enhancement of experience and a heightened intensity of communicative interaction whereby the audience was attracted to the performance and showed their curiosity.

The song was empowering in that the graduates were from then on regarded as young women who could marry since they had endured the hardships of initiation and also were taught the skills of womanhood. They were taught the skills of being good mothers as part of initiation that could be used to build the community. The song also had the potential of highlighting the graduands' achievements, since the audience, some of who were adult men, would no longer look down on their knowledge and skills, as they were now responsible adults. The basis for this was that they were inducted on how to behave as women without undermining the status of the patriarchy.

In the song above the graduates (*dialogane*) were referred to as a cow (*tshweu*) because she provides milk and could reproduce. According to my informants, traditionally in the Batswana community a cow is a very important animal, which is associated with wealth. The importance of a cow is endorsed in the proverb *Ka nna nayo ka tlhoka boroko, ka e tlhoka ka tlhoka boroko*. This means that if one owns a cow, one fears that it might be lost. One who does not have a cow is seen as being very poor. The phrase *ke reke ka wena* refers to the bride-wealth (*bogadi*). This means that the girls were now ready to get married. The song was orchestrated with the assistance of musical instruments such as drums (*meropa*) and reed instruments (*mangope*). The audience in this ceremony included both men and women who joined in by singing and dancing.

On the day after the graduation ceremony the graduates wore long skirts made of loose threads (*makgabe*). Their buttocks were covered with sheepskin (*motlokolo*) and they had beads (*dibaga*) around their necks. These clothes were meant to hide their bodies to prevent the men from being aroused sexually. They dispersed to the various homes and were re-incorporated into their families feeling proud of their achievements, and

looking down upon the girls who had not undergone initiation (*maswaile*). It is not surprising, though it is nevertheless disappointing to learn that among the Central Batswana many girls and boys no longer undergo traditional rituals as it is regarded as old-fashioned.

It is clear that the initiation programme has important social functions. On the one hand it generated feelings of self-confidence, and on the other it empowered the girls to attain womanhood. The girls' initiation ceremony could be seen as enhancing social solidarity among the Batswana. Its importance as a ritual can be presented in Collins' (1988:194) words that:

Successful rituals increase the power of group emotions, they are "batteries" which rev up the social circuits, so to speak, intensifying feelings by contagion throughout the group.

The information obtained from initiated girls was that initiation is empowering in that they learnt how to behave like responsible women.

According to the informants, the following song was used to taunt uninitiated girls about their uninitiated state.

Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo  
 Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo  
 Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo  
 Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo  
 Ga le are le nyalwa ka kwa kgosing  
 Tlheng mme le tswela tsa maswaile  
 Ga le a re le nyalwa ka kwa kgosing  
 Tlheng mme le tswela tsa maswaile

*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Why do you say you are marrying the chief*  
*While you wear clothes of uninitiated female youth*

*Why do you say you are marrying the chief  
While you wear clothes of uninitiated female youth*

This song was recorded at Tlokwenq on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1998. It was performed by a group of initiated women who were proud of being initiated. The song was sung at the royal kraal on the eve of the girls' graduation. The phrase *seweledi sewawalela Ijoo* is a musical expression of pride. In this song the women affirmed their belief that a woman must have undergone initiation in order to become queen. In this way initiation is presented as empowering in that the girls are proud of their status irrespective of the pain encountered in initiation. This is indicated in their way of undermining the uninitiated women as expressed by means of repetition of sentences such as:

Ga le a re le nyalwa ka kwa kgosing  
Tlheng mme le tswela tsa maswaile  
Ga le a re le nyalwa ka kwa kgosing  
Tlheng mme le tswela tsa maswaile

This type of repetition strengthens the key words *nyalwa* and *tswela* and also adds rhythm to the song. The audience was men, women and children. Among them there were young women who were not initiated because of their Christian beliefs. The adult informants indicated that the song aimed to belittle and taunt the girls who were not initiated, with the intention to frighten them to reject the proposal of men from the chief's kraal. It also functions to encourage them to undergo initiation so as to be in the position to be regarded as women. They are from then on capable of performing cultural activities. Two informants, Serurubele Nkwe and Mmalebethe Kgaswane, interviewed on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1998 at Tlokwenq, agreed that the girls who were not initiated lacked the knowledge and skills of womanhood. Hence they were shamed.

The song was empowering as it enhanced the status of the initiated young women who believed that from then on they were fit to participate in social activities. They had attained adult status and were no longer regarded as girls. The young women attained two types of empowerment, namely that which comes from being recognised as part of a community and culture, and they have learnt skills that allow them to make decisions at home.

From the data collected during the interviews it is clear that Christianity has had a strong impact on the Batswana culture. Because of the influence of the civilization brought by colonial people who introduced Christianity, initiation is viewed as outrageous. The churches prohibit Christians to take part in such ceremonies because as Christians they disregard ancestral spirits and view God as the only provider. Today there still is a division between people who were initiated and those who were not. The impact of the disintegration caused by Christianity is highlighted by Breutz (1987:63) when he says:

Consequently the traditionally minded men did not regard the uncircumcised Christians as 'men' and the Christians regarded those 'men' as uncivilised, which led to tension in many tribes.

To conclude this section, initiation can be seen as enculturing since girls are culturally empowered to become good mothers and responsible adults. Young women who were involved also maintained that they wished to see their daughters being initiated so that they would become responsible women. The fact that initiation is dying out is believed to be the result of white people's influence, which caused black people to undermine their traditional way of living. This is the time for black people to go back to their roots and revive their tradition.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter it was shown how the girls were taught to perform some domestic chores by means of songs. This softened their workload as they assisted and empowered each other to deal with their heavy responsibilities. Furthermore it has been indicated that the songs were particularly helpful in raising awareness and in enhancing the girls' knowledge and skills. The songs incorporated in the group activities helped to create feelings of social solidarity and made the girls valued members of the society.

In this chapter it was shown how the women and girls used songs in rituals to conform to the practices prevalent in their patriarchal society. Their submission was highlighted by the way in which they participated in the rites of passage such as rainmaking and initiation, and how they communicated with their ancestors with requests and thanksgiving. Their incorporation of songs into these rites of passage positioned the

songs at the centre around which religious practices revolve.

It has been discovered that participation in the initiation programme needed a lot of dedication and sacrifice on the part of the women. In the initiation programme the songs helped fashion a new identity for girls for a new phase of life. Through the face-to-face interaction that occurred during the performances of the songs older women were able to teach young women obedience, discipline and tolerance, and to raise their awareness about their culture.

The next chapter will investigate how the songs retain their relevance in Batswana society through rituals such as marriage, childbearing and widowhood. Furthermore the focus will be on songs for the political and economic empowerment of women.



## **CHAPTER 5**

# **WOMEN'S SONGS IN MARRIAGE, CHILDBEARING, WIDOWHOOD, AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the major focus is to analyze the Batswana women's songs in marriage, childbearing and widowhood, in order to establish their potential role in enculturation, continuity and change. The chapter will highlight the role of the women's songs in the performances of the rituals such as marriage, childbearing, widowhood, as well as in political and economic empowerment. The songs will be analyzed as a potential means to revitalise and resuscitate women's view of themselves. Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is to establish how the songs can play a key role in establishing, defining and preserving both self-identity and the well-being of others within the social group.

### **5.2 AIM OF THE CHAPTER**

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the women's songs as vehicles for the enculturation, continuity and change in marriage, childbearing and widowhood. The focus will be on how the women tell about themselves and express an authentic female tradition in marriage and in the political and economical spheres. The study of the

songs will lead to the identification of the relationship between performance and the potential cultural continuity and change.

### 5.3 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The chapter will focus on the use of the songs in performances of ceremonies and communal activities. The first section discusses traditional marriage customs, which include the proposal and betrothal, marriage negotiations, pre-wedding preparations and the wedding celebration itself. The second section analyzes songs used in childbearing and in widowhood. The third section deals with songs used for political and economic empowerment.

### 5.4 TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

A total number of 17 songs for marriages were performed but the researcher only selected 14 of them for recording. Marriage can be viewed as a ritual which typically involves permanent groups (Collins 1988), in this case the families of the marrying partners. In this ritual the two parties representing the bride and the bridegroom's family meet face to face. They are focused on the shared task of initiating an alliance. The sacred objects include the negotiations and the payment of lobola, the actions undertaken by the two parties, as they lay the foundation for the marriage to be a lasting relationship. These face-to-face meetings also contribute to building up mutual confidence and a shared feeling between the two families. In Setswana customary law, marriage is an alliance between the families of the bride and the bridegroom, an alliance which requires a strong involvement of the two marrying families as well as the ancestors. The importance of marriage is highlighted by Mogapi (1991:149), who writes:

Lenyalo mo Setswaneng ke kagisano, ke kopanyo ya malwapa a ditshika tsa banyalani.

*(Marriage in Setswana is integration. It unifies the relatives of the newlyweds.)*

Marriage among the Batswana today still is a vital continuation of traditional culture,

even though many of the marriage customs have been Christianised. Marriage is traditionally a matter of several customary steps and not only a matter of one wedding day. The steps enhance the husband's marital power but relegate the wife to the status of a minor, having only limited capacity to own property and to have a say in public gatherings.

Like other traditional ceremonies, marriage can be regarded as a rite of passage since it involves a process of transition to a different state. This is supported by Akhabue (2000:74) who wrote "Marriage can be referred to as *rite de passage* for the couple concerned, by means of which the couples are transferred from the group of the unmarried to that of the married".

Nick Stinnett *et al.* (1980:89) described the traditional marriage in the following manner: "The traditional marriage was a conflict-excluding marriage. The husband was there in a commanding position, the wife down below in a responding, submissive position".

Before we plunge into the heart of this chapter, it is essential to indicate the set of actions involved to ascertain that the girl is transferred from the status of being unmarried to that of being married. All these stages are performed to make the marrying couple aware that marriage is a serious undertaking. This view is confirmed by Seshabela (2003:16):

According to Batswana culture, marriage was compulsory. To be a *lefetwa* (spinster) was a taboo. Should a girl not marry, this might be construed as a sign of witchcraft in the family or that she was disrespectful.

The set of actions involved includes the proposal and betrothal, the pre-wedding preparation and the wedding celebration. The success of marriage depends on the ability of the couple to communicate, to co-ordinate their relationship and on the wife's commitment to build the husband's lineage. It is important to note that, although marriage procedures in most traditional communities are similar in sequence, there are some differences in the performance of the wedding celebration, as observed during the time of recording.

The research in the three villages indicates that, for some Batswana married women, happiness ended immediately after the wedding celebration, since some of the husbands changed their behaviour and became violent. The wives immediately became aware of the challenges that occur in marriage. Some women enter marriage believing it will bring freedom from the prejudice against them.

The sequence of steps involved in consummation of the marriage as observed among the Batswana at Tlokwen from the 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 1997, at Matlhaku from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1998, and at Dinokana on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> June 1998 is highlighted. These steps are performed both in common law marriages and legalized marriages to ensure everlasting alliance between the two families. It should be noted that legalized marriage happens when a man marries one woman in church or at a magistrate's office. It involves signing the marriage register and obtaining a marriage certificate, while common law marriage is a traditional form of marriage, which involves payment of the *bogadi* (bride-wealth) without any legal documentation. Sometimes marriages deteriorate very quickly to the point of separation. In general, wives use songs to highlight the challenges of marriage.

In order to achieve a better understanding of the women's songs, one should keep in mind the important role of music in creating a common emotional mood. Storr (Durrant & Himonides 1998:62) maintains:

Music seems to have the effect of intensifying or underlining the emotions which a particular event in the external world calls forth, as well as coordinating the emotions of a group of people. Because of this intensification, music is a capacity akin to that of the orator. It can make all the people feel the same thing at the same time, and transmute what might be a trivial occasion into something which appears highly significant.

Of all ceremonies, marriage is the one in which women are the most intensely involved, although traditionally their status remain that of minors. Husbands in Batswana culture are vested with authority over their families. This is also reflected by the fact that men's surnames become the name of the family. This status of men is confirmed by Seshabela (2003:14) when she says that "[w]omen are often powerless because of the authority and the hierarchy in patriarchal families. They have to scheme and manipulate and

through sympathy get what they want". Today marriage tends to lose its meaning because so many marriages end up in separation or divorce. From the interviews that the researcher conducted, it appears that 75% of the marriages in the three villages are unhappy.

Marriages, like other life experiences, differ according to the personalities of the individual man and woman involved. According to my interviewees, only a small proportion, that is 5%, represents happy marriages in which wives are allowed more freedom in their participation at home. 20% of the marriages are partly happy in the sense that the husbands who, according to Batswana culture, are the undisputed heads of the families, would approve decisions their wives made. The percentage which represents the challenges of marriages, and which is essential for my study, is 75%. The researcher has concentrated on this section since it is the area in which women participate effectively in groups to support each other.

Even though the woman is relegated to the position of a minor, she plays a major role in the family structure as she bears children to increase the family. Seshabela (2003:17) supports this view, writing:

Women have always been obliged to do domestic work and to rear children. If the family is childless, the failure is attributed to the woman and not to her husband. The community determines a woman's way of living and her way of thinking. Married women are pressurised to have more children to prove their worth in both the community and in marriage.

The family is a central institution of society and plays an essential role in maintaining social cohesion. With regard to the role of women in African communities, Ogede (1994:7) observes that among the Igbo in Nigeria "[t]he stereotypic role of women in the traditional society is that of mother and wife. Her primary function is that of procreation which is the primary reason for marriage". One may agree with this view since in some instances it happens among the Batswana that if a wife is unable to bear children she is divorced or replaced.

In Batswana custom when a wife dies in the early years of married life, a system of *seyantlo* (wife replacement) is practiced. Like other rituals, in this practice the common

focus of attention is to allow the husband to have a wife from the very same family. This practice still occurs in the three villages, but very seldom. The term *seyantlo* means that when a wife dies the husband marries his wife's younger sister, the reason being that a sister will be able to take care of the wife's children better than a complete stranger and she will also bear his children. This practice is done without additional submission of *bogadi* (bride-wealth). The advantage of *seyantlo* is that it strengthens the alliance between the two families. Its negative side is that for a young woman it might be viewed as an imposition and therefore causes dissatisfaction. The disadvantage of *seyantlo* is expressed in Setswana proverb that *Pelo e ja serati, sebatlelwa ga e se je* (the heart has its choice but not what it is provided with). In other words the boy prefers to select his own marriage partner who he loves dearly rather than the choice made by his family.

In the past, among the Batswana, it was common for chiefs and men from the elite to have more than one wife. Among the Batswana monogamy is the norm nowadays, although there are still a few men who marry more than one wife. Polygamous marriage is often a source of oppression for women, since women in such marriages experience anxiety, which results in insecurity for them and also for their children.

In the past the custom of men to marry more than one wife (*go nyala lefufa*) did irreparable damage to the intended alliance initiated during the marriage rite. According to the informants interviewed at Tlokwen on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1997, polygamous marriage was sometimes caused by the inability of the wife to have children. Let us not ignore the fact that some men want to have more than one woman under their control. Such men would marry another woman, regarded as *tlhatswadirope* (thigh washer) – that is a woman who will be used by a man to fulfil his sexual desire and would be expected to raise children. This causes a lot of dissatisfaction and jealousy among the wives and they express their unhappiness in song. In the three villages there are even today still songs performed regarding the dissatisfaction caused by polygamy.

#### **5.4.1 The potential for enculturation and continuity of songs relating to the proposal and betrothal**

In the past it was the duty of the boy's parents to find him a wife among the daughters

of his paternal aunt (*rakgadi*) or his maternal uncle (*malome*). It is important to note that, according to the norms and values of the Batswana, the boy had no choice but to conform to the custom of the society. According to the informants, this intermarriage system was believed to strengthen the alliance between the families.

The first step is that the boy's parents make a special visit to the girl's kraal to initiate an alliance. This is confirmed by Breutz (1987:59) who says "[t]he family is established by marriage, not only by the two marrying partners but by the involvement of the two families in which even the ancestors take part with certain ritual functions".

After the first visit the boy's parents appoint an intermediary (*mmaditsetla*) to arrange matters, and she is expected to conduct all subsequent communication between the two parties. Nowadays the boy takes full responsibility for the choice of his marriage partner. He proposes love to the girl of his choice, irrespective of creed, or whether she is his relative or not.

The modern idea of falling in love can be regarded as a private interpersonal ritual (Collins 1988). Although it is taken for granted, it is pervasive throughout everyday interaction. Falling in love fits the pattern of a high-intensity ritual between the two lovers by making them both into sacred objects for each other. Firstly, a man and a woman come together privately. Secondly, their common focus of attention is on their love and their mutual awareness of it. The focusing of attention usually transforms the potentiality of love into an actuality, which is marriage. Thirdly, the two lovers obviously share a common emotional mood of mutual love, which could be invested in sacred objects like each other's bodies or gifts. The ritual results in enhanced *emotional energy and confidence for the man and woman*.

It is not always simple for a girl to accept the proposal at once. It is normal that she will have to think it over before she commits herself. The boy will request her to respond quickly, as he is eager to know whether his request is accepted or not. This is reflected in the following song, in which the boy urges the girl to make her decision as he has to leave:

Ngwanyana buabua

Ke bosigo ke a tsamaya  
 Tsatsi le ile  
 Ke a tsamaya  
 Ke bosigo  
 Ke a tsamaya  
 Moratiwa araba  
 Ke bosigo ke ikele  
 Gaeng la ka  
 Ke a tsamaya  
 Ke bosigo  
 Ke a tsamaya

*My little girl speak*  
*It is late I am leaving*  
*The sun is setting*  
*I am leaving*  
*It is late*  
*I am leaving*  
*My beloved one respond*  
*It is late let me go*  
*To my home*  
*I am leaving*  
*It is late*  
*I am leaving*

This song was recorded at Tlokweng in Lekubung section on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1997. A boy from the Baphiring clan performed it to propose love to a girl from the gaaRaletsholo clan. Fortunately she accepted his proposal. They got married in November 1998. At that moment the girl still had the power to refuse the proposal. It highlights the boy's request for the girl's love. Although it may be seen to be irrelevant to the study as the boy performed it, its importance is to show how males resort to performing songs at times of high emotion in order to achieve their objectives. In this situation the boy interacted face-to-face with the girl to communicate his message. The phrase *Tsatsi le ile* (the sun is setting) expresses the urgency by which the boy expects

the girl's response. It might be seen as an indirect way to force the girl to respond positively. It may be thought that the boy's wish among other things is to gain control over the girl, and therefore her acceptance may eventually lead to her accepting his superiority.

This song reflects the man's struggle to win the woman's heart. This experience is very important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, since the Batswana way of life has changed from traditional to modern. Historically, a boy's parents would choose his wife at his early age among his uncle's daughters, but nowadays boys make their own choices, hence the proverb *pelo e ja serati sebatlelwa ga e se je*. (The heart has its choice but not what it is provided with.)

In the researcher's personal experience she finds it amazing to note that some men choose their own wives, but then fail to stick to their promises to be faithful to their wives. The following song is an indication that the girl has accepted the boy's proposal. It reflects cultural empowerment in that the girl is happy to be noticed and loved. The purpose is to express the spiritual communication that emerged from her feeling of love. The song is a response by the girl who is addressed in the previous song.

Setlhaketlhakeng  
 Sa pelo ya lerato Dali  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Dali  
 Ke ya le wena Dali  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena  
 Ijoo ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena Swithi  
 Ke ya le wena

*To the Island  
 of the heart of love Darling*

*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you*

This song was recorded at Tlokweg in Lekubung Section on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1997. The girl who has just experienced a proposal for the first time performed it. In this song the girl is delighted to accept the boy's proposal and she is prepared to engage herself in marriage. The researcher heard the song from the girl herself after she had accepted the proposal. Their face-to-face interaction established a bond between the girl as the performer and the boy as the audience. This exchange happens in private these days, in keeping with the man making his own choice, and it is not a public occasion. The proposal and acceptance are not always performed in song.

In this case, the locative *setlhaketlhakeng* (island) refers to a special quiet place where there is privacy and where they will be able to share their inner feelings without disturbance. It is the place where they imagine living together till death does them part. Her acceptance of the proposal is indicated by the phrase *ke ya le wena*. The words *dali* and *swithi* show the influence of English and modern times, since they are adaptations of "darling" and "sweetheart", which are indications of cultural change. Afterwards the boy would inform his parents that he wants to marry the girl.

This song affirms girls' experiences, values and meanings as valuable to the society since they build harmonious relationship that could lead to marriage. Despite the girl's acceptance of the proposal there are indications that a man sometimes propose to a number of girls without any of them knowing that they are sharing a boyfriend.

There is a repetition of sentences as the words in the first line are repeated in the next lines. This repetition adds rhythm and emphasizes the message, which is circulated

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from the sender to the receiver during the process of communication, for example:

*Ijoo ke ya le wena Dali*  
*Ke ya le wena*  
*Ijoo ke ya le wena swithi*  
*Ke ya le wena*

Since love is a prerequisite for marriage, the girl believes that by accepting the man's proposal she would acquire the status of a married woman, since in Batswana culture a girl is expected to be under the control of her parents as long as she is unmarried. As the girl performs the song she brings about a special enhancement of experience, which is highlighted by facial expressions such as smiling which expresses happiness. In this way their face-to-face interaction succeeds in establishing a bond between the girl as the performer and the man as an audience and gives them a common focus of attention.

#### 5.4.2 Marriage negotiations (*ditherisano tsa lenyalo*)

In traditional marriage customs songs can become a powerful force for social cohesion, which can bind the two parties and reinforce a common identity. The informant, Kabelo Sennelo interviewed on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1998, confirmed that an intermediary (*mmaditsela*) is expected to arrange matters between the two parties. She would conduct all subsequent communications between the groups. The boy's *mmaditsela* would be sent to the girl's kraal to break the ice for negotiations with the girl's *mmaditsela*. The intermediary is always a woman since it is believed that women are good in negotiations. This reflects female power. Her companions (*mabotsa*) would sing a song like the one below:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Re bone sego sa metsi...
Baamogedi	:	Seponono se dikoti Se dikoti marameng
Motlhabeletsi	:	Seponono se dikoti...
Baamogedi	:	Se dikoti marameng
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>We have seen the water calabash</i>

<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Pretty girl with dimples</i>
		<i>She has dimples in her cheeks</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Pretty girl with dimples</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>She has dimples in the cheeks</i>

This song was recorded at Tlokweng in Lekubung Section on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1998. *Mmaditsela* and her companion known as *mabotsa* performed it. The song expresses cultural empowerment whereby the women are proud to announce publicly that the girl is beautiful. In context the song reveals that the bride-to-be is pretty and ready to be married. The married women describe the girl's good looks, making her out to be more attractive than other girls. The image of *sego sa metsi* (water calabash) in Batswana custom refers to a special object for water or corn beer, but here it refers to the girl to be married. The phrase *Re bone sego sa metsi* is a metaphoric allusion to the girl's domestic role because she will be expected to provide service to her in-laws.

The performer's facial expressions such as smiling express happiness. This might influence the attitudes of the girl's party, as they might believe in their integrity and credibility that would induce the parents to allow their daughter to marry.

The song presents a historical angle of vision that can help women to work out a new future in marriage. It presents a literary code and tradition that present the woman as an important person in marriage, as indicated by the phrase *sego sa metsi* (water calabash), which metaphorically refers to a woman. The type of repetition that occurs is known as linking (*neeletsano*) which occurs when the last words in the first line corresponds with the first part of the second line. Linking (*neeletsano*) functions to emphasize the message of the girl's attractiveness, to add rhythm and create a unity in the message being transmitted. For example:

**Seponono se dikoti**  
**Se dikoti marameng**

According to my informants, the importance of a wife in marriage is reflected by submission of *bogadi* which does not only serve as a gift to the girl's family but also as a way for allowing a bride-to-be to go through the transitional stage from childhood to

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womanhood. Schapera (1977:139) says the following concerning *bogadi*:

But the main function of *bogadi* is to transfer the reproductive power of a woman from her own family into that of her husband. This fact is of considerable importance, for upon it rests the whole Tswana conception of legitimacy.

In Setswana culture *bogadi* is a thank you gift to the girl's family for allowing their daughter to be incorporated into the boy's family. Concerning the validity of the bride-wealth (*bogadi*) Dikotla (1997:5) says that "[t]his transaction is regarded as a gift for marriage and not a bride-price, and it secures better treatment for the wife than if she was a concubine (*nyatsi*)".

Traditionally, the *bogadi* was intended to bring the two families together and create a bond between them. About this Schapera (1977:125) writes:

...the main essentials of marriage contract among the Tswana are: (a) mutual agreement between the two families concerned, as reflected in the formalities of betrothal, and (b) the transfer of certain livestock, generally cattle, to the bride's family by the family of the bridegroom. These cattle are known as *bogadi*. Their transfer should normally be associated with the customary wedding festivities.

Let us consider the composition of the bride-wealth (*bogadi*), traditionally as well as in the contemporary period. According to Setswana custom the *bogadi* consisted of cattle but because of the influence of Western civilization that brought cultural change among the Batswana, many families today prefer the *bogadi* to consist entirely of money. The informants, Mmamphinya Letsholo interviewed on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1998 at Tlokwen, Mmamodiakgotla Mosome, interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1998 at Matlhaku, and Khumanego Kgoroba, interviewed on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1998 at Dinokana, agreed that the number of cattle paid for bride-wealth had to be in multiples of two. An odd number would be considered an insult (*di a tlhotsa*). In such a case the bride's parents would regard the *bogadi* as incomplete, because it may be seen as lacking respect for their culture if they accept it. The odd number of cattle is also believed to predict an unsuccessful marriage in which the woman will suffer. For this reason it was a taboo to accept an odd number of cattle.

The bride-wealth is an area where an element of antagonism between the boy's parents and the girl's parents might emerge. The bridegroom-to-be's parents might feel as if they are wasting their wealth by allowing their son to marry his sweetheart as they know that he will only concentrate on supporting his wife and children. On the other hand, the bride-to-be's parents might feel unhappy to give away their beloved daughter, as she will from then on serve her in-laws and disown her maiden name.

As has been said earlier, the wedding ceremony is women's terrain and the women eagerly participate by means of songs. They become watchdogs to secure a healthy relationship between the two parties by highlighting their intended alliance. In this view the songs become part of an intentional ritual (Collins 1988), that is, the women are explicitly aware that they are carrying out a ritual, and they are conscious that their sacred object, binding the two parties, is worthy of respect. Even after the negotiations concerning the bride price have been concluded and the only thing left is the handing over of the bride-wealth, the ritual involves songs to test the strength and emotions of the other party. Not only the contents but also the performance itself is a verbal power-struggle. In the following song, for example, the women from the bride-to-be's lineage feign their dissatisfaction regarding the number of cattle for *bogadi*. The song is an expression of cultural continuity as, for example, the performers know that according to Batswana culture, an odd number of cows would be an ill omen for the marriage.

Kgomo di tiile di tshelela  
 Ya bosupa e supile masisapelo  
 Kgomo di tiile di tshelela  
 Ya bosupa e supile mathothapelo  
 Nna mmamosetsana nka di busa  
 Nna mmamosetsana nka di busetsa morago  
 Nna mmamosetsana nka di gana  
 Nna mmamosetsana nka di busetsa morago

*Herd of six cattle arrived*  
*Seventh cow indicates sorrow*  
*Herd of six cattle arrived*  
*Seventh cow indicates sorrow*

*I bride's mother can send them*

*I bride's mother can send them back*

*I bride's mother can send them*

*I bride's mother can send them back*

This song was recorded at Tlokweng in Rabaji Section on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 1999 during the handing over of the bride-wealth *bogadi*. The *kgomo* (cow) is central to Batswana culture because of its economic and social value. Its use as bride-wealth is an expression of its high cultural value. It should be noted, however, that even if bride-wealth requested is in the form of money it is still termed *dikgomo* (cows) today. Cattle are used for cultivating and buying land and for giving thanks to the ancestors. They provide meat and milk. Hence using cows for *bogadi* raises the girl's self-esteem since she is the central figure in reproduction. The women from the bride-to-be's lineage use a hidden transcript to challenge the man's lineage in the sentence *Nna mmamosetsana nka di busetsa morago* (I bride's mother can send them back) – they pretend to be unhappy about the number of cows given. The audience was a group of men and women from the bridegroom's family as well as adult men belonging to the girl's lineage who were there to receive the bride-wealth.

The song is just a ritual way of saying the cattle are accepted. This case can be seen as the area where the women explore their artistic skills and intentions to circulate the message and to close the gap between the performer and the audience. In this way the audience will interpret the message as not sung in earnest and accept it as taunting.

Despite their hardships the women of the tribe tend to wait anxiously at the girl's home on the eve of the handing over of the bride-wealth in order to mark the special daybreak (*go tsosa ditsala*), literally meaning "to make the friends awake". This is a sign that they should let their friends who are sleeping know that a special day has arrived and should invite the others to join them in celebration. The women belonging to the girl's lineage sing a song like this one below:

Re letse re sa robala

Re emetse dikgomo

Tse di tswang Botswana

## Ga Mmangwato

*We couldn't sleep last night  
 We were waiting for the cattle  
 Which come from Botswana  
 From the Mmangwato area*

This song was recorded at Dinokana on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1997 after the special daybreak of handing over the *bogadi*. It is clear in this song that the women have been looking forward to receiving the bride-wealth from the boy's family. Without the delivery of the bride-wealth no progress could be made regarding the marriage transactions. This also indicates that marriage is a joyous occasion in that it empowers women by increasing their self-esteem, and by giving them the opportunity to experience a close relationship with a man and to share the wonder of new life.

The wedding ceremony normally occurs after the *bogadi* has been handed over. Immediately after handing over the cattle, the boy's party is served with sorghum porridge, meat and traditional beer. This is an expression of cultural continuity, because the Batswana believe that eating this traditional food during the ceremony recognizes the presence of the ancestral spirits and incorporates them into the celebration. The food is believed to be the way of engaging the ancestors in the celebration. The following is one of the songs sung by the women from the boy's lineage at the girl's kraal after the *bogadi* has been handed over. Its purpose is to rejoice that they have managed to initiate the process of incorporating the girl into their family.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Mogojwana o ko pele
Baamogedi	:	Hee a-hee !
Motlhabeletsi	:	Le se ka la nwa teng
Baamogedi	:	Hee a-hee !
Motlhabeletsi	:	O tlhapetse mokaloba
Baamogedi	:	Hee a-hee !
		Golo mono ga re go itse
		Re tswa ka tlhogo ya ngwana

*Leader* : *Calabash is in front*  
*Chorus* : *Oh yes !*  
*Leader* : *Do not drink there*  
*Chorus* : *Oh yes !*  
*Leader* : *It has washed a strong man*  
*Chorus* : *Oh yes !*  
*We don't know this place*  
*We go out with the head of a child*

The above song was performed at Dinokana on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1998. In this song the women make an earnest request and warn the boys that they should not propose love to the girl referred to as *mogojwana* because she has already been betrothed. The term *mogojwana* (calabash) metaphorically refers to the bride-to-be, as her integration into her husband's family will be enhanced if she serves the family well and with courtesy. In the sentence *O ilhapetse mokaloba* (It has washed a strong man) the term *mokaloba* literally means a well-built dignified man, which distinguishes himself above other men. The phrase *Golo mono* refers to the girl's kraal, where they are sent to deliver the bride-wealth. The sentence *Re tswa ka tlhogo ya ngwana* (We go out with the head of a child) in essence means that they want to incorporate the girl into their family. They only mention "the head" because there is no creature that can live without a head. The term *tlhogo* (head) is important because it conveys information by means of facial expressions. It is also the part that will show if a person is dead or alive.

This song presents a historical angle of vision that can help women to work out a new future of womanhood. It is a form of discourse that enables a critical perspective upon the past when the woman was a girl who was expected to do what she was ordered to by her parents and the emerging future by which she would be expected to perform according to the expectations of her husband. This includes sleeping with him and having sexual intercourse whenever he wants, and to be respectful and humble to her in-laws. A repetition of a phrase *hee a-hee* functions not only to add rhythm but also to emphasize the message of agreement between the two families.

The women from the boy's lineage would sing the song below when they return to the

boy's kraal. It was recorded at Tlokweng on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1998:

Motlhabeletsi	:	Kgomo tsa ntate
Baamogedi	:	Tse ntle tse tshwaana
Motlhabeletsi	:	Kgomo tsa ntate
Baamogedi	:	Tse ntle tse tshwaana
		Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle
		Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Cattle of my father</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Which are fat and white</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Cattle of my father</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Which are fat and white</i>
		<i>They married the pretty girl</i>
		<i>They married the pretty girl</i>

In this song the women are praising the boy for having chosen a pretty girl as his marriage partner. Reference to the white and fat cattle signifies prosperity in marriage; it is also a sign of an expected lasting relationship. This song affirms women's experiences, values and meanings regarding the number of cows to be paid for bride-wealth since it is believed that an odd number of cows would lead to an unsuccessful marriage. There is repetition of sentences:

Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle  
Tse nyetseng mosetsana yo montle

This type of repetition adds rhythm and stresses the message of that the bride-to-be is the most beautiful among girls.

### 5.4.3 The pre-wedding preparations

In Batswana culture songs are used to structure the marriage ceremony so that the participants are guided from one phase to the next. The handing over of *bogadi* marks the practical settlement of the negotiations. Both parties then start making preparations

for the wedding ceremony. The informants, Bosaaletse Matsafu and Ditonono Motshelanoka, interviewed on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1998 at Tlokweng in the Lengeneng Section, confirmed that the bride's mother, grandmothers and married aunts would instruct her about the expectations of her husband regarding sexual intercourse and how to relate to her in-laws. They also instruct her to make room for disappointment, since they themselves have experienced the oppressiveness of marriage. These instructions could lead to relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of experience. The following is one of the songs that prepare the bride to accept the challenges of marriage. It highlights cultural continuity and raises awareness of what the woman would be expected to endure in marriage.

O itshoke  
 O itshoke ngwana'rona  
 O itshoke  
 O itshoke ngwana'rona  
 Fa monna a go tshwenya  
 Se lele o re tu  
 Fa monna a go roga  
 O itshoke o re tu

*You must endure*  
*You must endure our child*  
*You must endure*  
*You must endure our child*  
*When your husband ill-treats you*  
*Don't cry keep quiet*  
*When mother-in-law insults you*  
*You must endure and keep quiet*

The bride's grandmothers and aunts performed the song during the session of giving the bride-to-be instructions on how to behave in married life. The performance occurred in the evening before the marriage, in the house where the family members gathered to bid farewell to the bride-to-be, who was expected to be incorporated into her bridegroom's family the following day. They performed the song sitting down and they sang softly as

the song was confidential to those who are unmarried. The phrase *O itshoke* (You must endure) is an instruction to the bride-to-be to have endurance, patience and to remain faithful even under trial. This may be thought to strengthen her to have hope and look forward to receiving rich blessings from the ancestors. The audience was adult men, and the song might make them conscious of the plight of women and change their attitude to women, perhaps putting their wives in a better position. The sentence *Fa monna a go tshwenya, se lele o re tu* (When your husband ill-treats you, don't cry keep quiet) is advice that the bride must not complain immediately as this might reflect her weakness. The song prepares the bride-to-be to withstand the tribulations of marriage in future. It teaches the bride to have resilience, endurance and forgiveness in order to live happily in marriage.

#### **5.4.4 The wedding celebration**

In Batswana society, songs are central to the wedding as a rite of passage that changes a women's status from unmarried to married. The research examined the differences in celebration of marriage in the three Batswana villages. The common element is the use of a white gown, which is believed to signify virginity and a new life. The celebration starts at the bride's kraal and ends at the groom's kraal where she will be incorporated into her in-law family. At Dinokana, for example, the bride wore her white gown at her home but she was not allowed to enter her in-laws' home wearing it. According to the informants, this is an indication that marriage is an everlasting commitment and that she will die being a member of that lineage. At Matlhaku and Tlokweng the bride wore her dress at her home and at her in-laws' home to show that her family bids her farewell while her in-laws welcomed her as a member of the family.

It is amazing to learn that the songs, which are performed during the celebration, signify conflict. Concerning the contents of African wedding songs Akhabue (2000:76) argues that:

Right through the marriage negotiations, we find this antagonism, and at the actual wedding expression is given to these feelings by mutual vituperation in the form of songs in which each party grossly insults the other, accusing them of unchastity, witchcraft and in fact, all the worst things they can think of.

Taking the contents of the songs into consideration, one can assume that the abusive songs are meant to taunt the other party and not to actually insult them. This is a way of building good relationships and also to test the other party's intentions. With regard to the contents of the songs, Boodhoo (Sienaert *et al.* 1994:136) maintains that "As the songs are an important medium of socialization, no offence is meant or taken by the bridegroom's party".

This phase is essential since it warns the newly wed woman that she will be expected to bear the tribulations of marriage with patience and stoicism. She will be expected to work hard and build harmonious relationship with her relatives-in-law. The following song, for example, admonishes the bridegroom's family to treat her well. It was recorded at Dinokana village in Puwaneng section on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1998. It was part of a real celebration.

Motlhabeletsi : Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona

Baamogedi : Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona

Ngwana yo ke wa sika la rona

Motlhabeletsi : Le se ka la mo ruta boloi

Baamogedi : Le se ka la mo ruta boloi

Le se ka la mo ruta boloi

Motlhabeletsi : Le se ka la mo tshela ka metsi

Baamogedi : Le se ka la mo tshela ka metsi

Le se ka la mo tshela ka metsi

Motlhabeletsi : Le se ka la mo tlhapaola

Baamogedi : Le se ka la mo tlhapaola

Le se ka la mo tlhapaola

*Leader* : *This child is our relative*

*Chorus* : *This child is our relative*

*This child is our relative*

*Leader* : *You must not teach her witchcraft*

*Chorus* : *You must not teach her witchcraft*

*You must not teach her witchcraft*

*Leader* : *You must not pour water on her*  
*Chorus* : *You must not pour water on her*  
*You must not pour water on her*  
*Leader* : *You must not swear at her*  
*Chorus* : *You must not swear at her*  
*You must not swear at her*

This song was performed by a group of the bride's female lineage that accompanied her to her bridegroom's home. It was performed at midday on their arrival at the bridegroom's home just after a welcoming poem, which was presented by the bridegroom's paternal aunt who gave them permission to enter the yard. The audience was men, women and children who were invited to the wedding celebration. Some of them joined in by dancing and others by clapping hands and jubilating. The song was empowering in that it gave the bride a sense of pride and dignity. The bride can proudly realise that even though she will be incorporated into her bridegroom's family, her family still loves and supports her. She was made aware that she comes from a proud family and that she must therefore ensure that whatever she does or says should do her family proud. The song also has the potential of softening the bride's fear of the unknown and of adjusting to married life, since it warned the members of her husband's lineage in advance to treat her with respect. Hence she can look forward to marriage, sure of her family's protection.

In this song the in-laws are warned to treat the daughter-in-law well in order to receive the greatest respect. They are also warned not to say obscene and abusive words to her. The repetition of warning appears in this way:

Le se ka la...  
 Le se ka la...

This repetition emphasises rhythm and also strengthens the message of warning the relatives-in-law. If they do mistreat her, misfortune will befall them. The bride is subjected to the first test of endurance when she is integrated into her new family.

At noon, all the people at the wedding are served a sumptuous meal. The bridegroom's

party also sing obscene and humorous songs to the bride's party, as mentioned earlier. Before the bride's family returns home, the elderly married people of both parties instruct (*laya*) the marrying partners on how to behave in married life. This ensures cultural continuity, because the married couple will be expected to behave according to Batswana custom. The researcher has noted differences in the way the instruction session is conducted. At Tlokweng and Matlhaku, for example, both the bride and groom are given the instructions in one room behind closed doors. At Dinokana the groom is instructed by the old married men at his clan kraal, while the old married women give the bride orders separately in a private room. This is done confidentially to prevent unmarried men and women from hearing the instructions.

It must be considered that the marital law (*molao wa lenyalo*) is another way of ensuring cultural continuity. According to the informants, she is instructed to be a caregiver and protector, and to accept her status as part of her life. She is informed that she will be accountable for whatever happens to her husband. Some of the laws include the following: *monna ga a bodiwe gore o letse kae?* (Don't ask your husband where he slept last night), *monna ke selepe o lala a adimilwe* (your husband is an axe; he is allowed to sleep with other women). In this context it means that as an axe cuts any kind of wood, her husband will act like an axe by loving other women. The husband, on the other hand, is instructed that *mosadi tshwene o jewa matsogo* (his wife is a baboon; she is expected to serve the family). The message conveyed is that men cannot be trusted.

Some of the laws are positive since they encourage the couple to love and respect one another, to take care of and be considerate to each other. They include *motse o lapeng*, literally meaning that there is no better place than home, and *mosadi mooka o nya le mariga*, which means that a woman will always make plans to provide and protect her family. Dlamini (Sienaert *et al.* 1994:94) summarises this stage in the woman's life as follows: "At this stage she has seen that contextual meaning of marriage is totally different from the illusions she had during the courtship stage".

Regarding oppression of women in marriage it can be said that the aim of marriage in many cases is neglected. It is amazing that the Bible, which is supposed to protect women, is often used as an instrument to increase the pressure on women. For example,

the following instruction conditions women to accept their inferior status:

Lona basadi ikokobeletseng banna ba e leng ba lona, jaaka le ikokobeletsa  
Morena, gonne monna ke tlhogo ya mosadi, jaaka Keresete ene e le tlhogo  
ya phuthego (Baefeso 5:22 & 23).

*(You wives, obey your husbands, just as you obey God, because a man is  
the head of the woman, just as Christ is the head of the congregation)  
(Ephesians 5:22 & 23).*

A closer look at these instructions clearly indicates that some of them exert pressure on women and if women remain silent no one will change the culture. The women are not prepared to give up the struggle but they use songs to express their dissatisfaction regarding the instructions as indicated in the following song:

Go nyalwa ga mosadi ke tshotlego  
Mosadi o tsaletswe tshotlego  
Monna ga letelwe kwa nyatsing  
Ga a botswe o letse kae  
Ga a timiwe dikobo  
Monna wa montsho ke selepe  
O lala a adimilwe ke dinyatsi  
Ka lenyalo ke bogile  
Koko wee mphimole keledi  
Mosadi yo maswe tlotlo la mogatse  
Gat we mosadi tshwene o jewa matsogo

*For a woman to marry means suffering  
A woman is born suffering  
Don't fetch you husband from his concubine  
Don't ask him where he slept  
Don't refuse to have sex with him  
Black man is an axe  
He can spend a night with his concubine  
I have suffered due to marriage*

*My grandmother hey wipe my tears*  
*An ugly woman is her husband's wealth*  
*It is said a woman is a baboon she must serve*

The song was recorded at Matlhaku on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1997 during a wedding celebration. It is sung for entertainment and as a conventional part of the ritual. The song expresses the dissatisfaction of the women concerning the marriage customs that directly disempower them. In this song the performers raise their awareness and alert other women that in married life they are expected to endure the pain of undeserved suffering caused by customs that promote wild and reckless behaviour among some men. The painful reflection of a woman's minor status is outlined in the proverbs *Mosadi yo maswe tlotlo la mogatse* (An ugly woman is her husband's wealth) which means a husband is proud of his ugly wife since she will not attract other men, and *Mosadi tshwene o jewa matsogo* (Woman is a baboon she must serve). In other words, a woman is expected to be the general servant of the household. These two proverbs reveal the expectations of that a patriarchal society has of women in social relationships that regard them as order-takers as indicated in Collins' (1988) power dimension. The women's experience of taking orders from the patriarchy makes them fatalistic, externally conforming but privately resisting the orders according to some hidden transcript. The phrase *Monna wa montsho ke selepe* (Black man is an axe) has a double meaning, the first one being that the man has political power to remove the barrier of ethnicity through marriage by marrying a woman from another culture, and secondly that he can break the marital law of being faithful to his wife by having a concubine. The women are advised to submit to their husbands and show them complete respect.

The song has a hidden meaning, since only those who know Setswana would understand the meaning of the proverbs. It is a way by which the women express the emotional suffering of being expected to accept the unjust behaviour of their husbands who become involved in extra-marital affairs. Although the women participate in the ritual as order-takers by means of songs, they do it in a more controlled fashion, which shows their intention of complying.

The audience, most of them adults, are aware of the message of the song and some of them are emotionally caught up in the performance. In the context of the emphasis on

women's rights today, some married adults might be challenged to change their attitudes, which negatively impact upon women's happiness and freedom.

The bride's sacrificial love is expressed in the following song, which was recorded at Tlokweg on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1998.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Ngwana yo
Baamogedi	:	O siile mmaagwe
Motlhabeletsi	:	Bakeng sa
Baamogedi	:	Sa lerato
Motlhabeletsi	:	Pelo e
Baamogedi	:	E ja serati
		O rile o a mo rata

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>This child</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Has left her mother</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Due to love</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>The love</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>The heart</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Makes its choice</i>
		<i>She said she loves him.</i>

The song reflects cultural continuity, because the wife maintains the traditional customs by leaving her mother and being incorporated into her husband's lineage. Traditionally it is a norm for married women to be integrated into the man's family after marriage.

After the wedding celebration the couple stay together and they are expected to raise children. If the woman is unable to bear children, her husband and in-laws will sometimes blame her. Because of the insult she is facing, she would request the ancestors to help her to conceive. In this way the song functions as an effective means of communicating with and ensuring the presence of the ancestors. A barren woman (*moopa*) will sing a song to complain about the blame put upon her, causing her to be treated as if she does not want to have children. In such cases the woman would carry a sandal (*rampheetshane*) on her back, as if it were her child. This song is regarded as a

prayer to the ancestors (*badimo*) to open her hips (*go bofolola dinoka*). The barren woman would sing this song:

Tshaba tshaba  
 Tshaba ngwetsi  
 Tshaba tshaba  
 Tshaba ngwetsi  
 Tshaba lefatshe lena  
 Fatshe la matlhomola  
 Ba re nna ke moopa  
 Ke tlhokile popelo  
 Tshaba tshaba ngwetsi  
 Tshaba lenyalo thata  
 Lenyalo le a sotla  
 Tshaba tshaba

*Be scared be scared*  
*Be scared daughter-in-law*  
*Be scared be scared*  
*Be scared daughter-in-law*  
*Be scared of this world*  
*World of tragedies*  
*They say I am barren*  
*I don't have a womb*  
*Be scared be scared daughter-in-law*  
*Be very scared of marriage*  
*Marriage is destructive*  
*Be scared be scared*

In performance the social circumstances determine the performer's voice, gestures, facial expressions and body movements. This song is conventionalised. The performer looks sad, full of anger and has a loud voice. In the phrase *tshaba ngwetsi* (Be scared daughter-in-law) the woman warns other women that they must stay away from marriage. She is mostly hurt by her in-laws who refer to her as *moopa* (barren woman)

since she cannot conceive. Through the song she reflects her emotions concerning the comment that she does not have a womb (*ke tlhokile popelo*). The repetition of phrases and syntactical units functions not only to express the rhythm but also to strengthen the women's resistance against being humiliated, for example:

Tshaba tshaba  
 tshaba ngwetsi  
 tshaba tshaba  
 tshaba ngwetsi

It is important to note that since marriage is part of life, it has a positive side and a negative one. There are problems in marriage, but whether people can learn to cope with them depends on the couple involved as well as the effect of that problem on the relationship. In this regard Stinnett *et al.* (1980:96) write:

All marriages have troubles, all marriages have tasks of adjustment, all marriages have pain and conflict, and trouble and anger. What makes the difference is that couples who have a coping system can manage to fashion that into a good relationship, and the couples who do not have a coping system cannot do it.

In married life, it often occurs that the wife encounters the problem that her husband has extra-marital relations with another woman, who may be referred to as his concubine (*nyatsi*). The informants Mmakobedi Tshukudu, interviewed on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1999 at Matlhaku, and Mmabetha Moilwa interviewed on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999, who experienced this problem, indicated that they would painfully watch the day fade into the night. All night long their comfort would be in their tears as slowly the long night hours dragged themselves into a new day. Whenever the husband did not sleep at home, he would provoke his wife into saying something so that he could beat her and sometimes threaten to kill her. Then he does not return to sleep at home, showing the withdrawal of his love from his wife. When his mother and brothers talk to him, they only add petrol to the fire. He assumes that as the head of the family, no person has the right to tell him that he is wrong. When the problem becomes unbearable the wife expresses her frustration by means of a song like the following, which was recorded at Dinokana on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999. It was performed by a young woman who was married

about a year before who could not cope with her husband's behaviour of drunkenness and of having extra-marital affairs. This is a modern song that reflects a culture that is changing under the influence of the English language as indicated by the word "dali" (darling).

Heela lenyalo  
 Lenyalo le boima  
 Heela lenyalo wee  
 Lenyalo le boima  
 Heela ke nyetswe  
 Ke nyetswe ke sa itse  
 Heela ke nyetse wee  
 Ke nyetswe ke sa itse  
 Ke gopotse Dali wa me  
 Ke gopotse Dali wa me kwa gaetsho  
 Ke gopotse Dali wee  
 Ke gopotse Dali wa me kwa gaetsho

*Hey marriage*  
*Marriage is difficult*  
*Hey marriage*  
*Marriage is difficult*  
*Hey I have been married*  
*I have been married without prior knowledge*  
*Hey I have been married oh!*  
*I have been married without prior knowledge*  
*I am longing for my darling*  
*I am longing for my Darling at home*  
*I am longing for my Darling*  
*I am longing for my Darling at home*

In this song the wife expresses her feelings of longing for her former boyfriend. The phrase *Heela ke nyetswe ke sa itse* indicates that the wife would have not married if she had known the difficulties of marriage beforehand. She knows that regret is an

appalling waste of energy; she cannot build on. The performer's husband, on hearing this song, might change his behaviour. This can be seen as in Scott's (1990) view as "the open, declared form of resistance which attracts most attention".

The informant, Mmankile Sennelo, interviewed on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1999 at Tlokweng, highlighted that when the wife experiences problems with her husband, she sometimes tries to put her case to her in-laws, but they often fail to give her any sympathetic hearing and in many cases ostracise her. As a result she may experience a lot of frustration and might be jealous of sharing her husband with his concubine. Although she cannot change the situation she endures the suffering with stoicism. She wishes to escape from an unbearable situation, but can't. One of the few remedies she has is to communicate her frustrations through songs to the world around her. She performs a song like the one below:

Nka bo ke itsile  
 Nka bo ke sa nyalwa  
 Lenyalo ke moleko  
 Moleko wa satane  
 Monna ke mathata  
 Mathata a satane

*Had I known  
 I would not have married  
 Marriage is a trial  
 Trial of Satan  
 A man is a problem  
 A problem of Satan*

The above song was recorded at Tlokweng on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1997. A woman who was frustrated because her husband was having an extra-marital affair and did not sleep at home performed it. The song reflects the wife's changed perception of marriage. The message conveyed is that her husband is unfaithful and abusive hence she regrets having committed herself. It must be realised that it is an age-old convention that one cannot talk about problems particularly in marriage to outsiders, but one socially

acceptable way of complaining to the public is through songs. The phrase *Nkabo ke sa nyalwa* reflects the performer's regret at accepting her husband's love. She conveys the message that marriage is a very bad experience for her and she therefore equates it with Satan. The song can be seen as a vehicle for challenging her husband to change his behaviour. The song presents the performer's resistance to patriarchal oppression as expressed by the phrase *monna ke mathata* (a man is a problem).

The above five songs, namely *Go nyalwa ga mosadi ke tshotlego*, *Monna wa moleko towe*, *Tshaba ngwetsi*, *Lenyalo le boima*, and *Nka bo ke itsile*, reflect the women's changed perception of marriage. In these songs we can see the two-dimensional theory of power relations (Collins 1988). Vertical power, as indicated in the song's content, operates in the marriage relationship where husbands feel secure and self-confident about dominating and oppressing their wives. Horizontal power is operating in that the wives performing and listening to the song build up their ritual solidarity, as women. In the performance women express the anger, frustration and oppression that they experience in the vertical power relationship with husbands. At this stage the performers, who were married women, have experienced the many sorrows, infringement of freedom and happiness, caused by oppressive and abusive relationships. It is typically women who experience the abusive part in marriage. Ferguson (2005:96) argues:

Abusive relationships usually involve an underlying contract that feeds into the needs of both the oppressor and the victim, and makes it extremely difficult to break the vicious cycle. Tragically, many tormented women find it near impossible to break away and seek help.

In their most intimate lament, the women recount how their mothers and grandmothers informed them that no matter what their husbands do and no matter how it hurts, they must quietly endure it, and adapt to the responsibilities which double in marriage. Although there are happy marriages, this study concentrates on unhappy marriages to strengthen the reason why the women need to change the culture in order to be able to live successful lives.

The audience was other women who were there to comfort the performers and share their burden and also men who might decide on ways of improving their lifestyle to

maintain good relationships with their wives. Perhaps it should be indicated that the singing of songs at this stage is very important, because it creates female bonding and solidarity and almost a sense of bearing a collective burden. The performers expressed their solidarity by stretching their arms with opened hands as a signal of inviting other women to join them.

The songs are empowering in that many wives were suffering and they could share the problems of oppression in accurate detail and with considerable empathy. One may believe that the empowerment of women would lead to the beginning of a change in inconsiderate male behaviour. The songs have healing properties in that by sharing their problems, the wives could explore with courage and clarity the extent to which husbands were stumbling blocks to the freedom of women. By so doing they might get a fresh insight into women's struggle against male domination, change the patriarchy and improve their ability to map out strategies that might enable them to survive in the patriarchal society that was structured to dominate and oppress them.

Although the songs reflect unhappy marriages, there are happy marriages as well. In happy marriage women settle down comfortably and are always positive about their experiences of marriage. They always share their challenges with their husbands. In many ways they enjoy married life by having a harmonious relationship with their relatives-in-law. Although some women experience happiness in marriages, they also need to be emancipated from being discriminated against by the society and empowered to cope with the many responsibilities which assistance from other members of the family might help lighten. Today with the invention of household equipment such as electric stoves, washing machines etc. their domestic tasks have been reduced considerably.

The introduction of democracy in South Africa is supposed to have placed all men and women on an equal footing. In the case of the Batswana women in this study, it is evident that there is a long way to go to achieve the aims of democracy.

To conclude this section, it can be said that marriage in Batswana society is one area where women are highly skilled in using songs to express their frustrations, which might indicate that the culture is changing. Despite the fact that there are some happy

marriages, most women are exploited and they do not enjoy marriage. They use songs to highlight their dissatisfaction and their request to be emancipated from abusive relationships. In this regard Kruger (2005:68) writes: "Music making involves positions of power for individuals who lack such power in their non-musical lives. Power provides people with feelings of existential security and value."

In marriage women are expected to have children to increase their husbands' lineage. Therefore it is important to focus on childbearing in relation to cultural continuity and change. In this way the songs are vehicles of contesting women's position in society.

### **5.5 CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CHILDBEARING**

Among the Batswana, childbearing can be seen as an intentional ritual that has reproductive power. It generates emotional energy which carries with it feelings of morality and self-value between the husband and his wife. In this ritual the man and his wife are explicitly aware that they are carrying out a ritual. Their common focus of attention is to have their own children and build up their family. Their common emotional mood is reflected by the performance of sexual intercourse for itself but also as a way to conceive a child. In sexual intercourse they are each other's sacred objects, which can result in enhanced emotional energy and solidarity and a positive feeling of hope to have children.

In this section the researcher heard about five songs and only three of them were recorded since they are most relevant to highlight the need for continuity and change. One of the primary objectives of marriage is to bear children to extend the husband's lineage. Schapera (1977:155) maintains that:

Marriage according to the Tswana is designed primarily for bearing children, and if a woman fails in this important duty her lot is hard. She receives little sympathy as a rule; her husband neglects or ill-treats her. She is scorned by other men and ridiculed by her own sex.

In marriage a wife has a universal commitment to bear children in order to extend her husband's lineage. In this regard, Obbo (1981:34), talking of African women generally, maintains that:

Upon marriage, the wife lived and became identified closely with her husband's lineage group and her links with the group into which she was born correspondingly weakened. A woman owned virtually no property, having only the right of usufruct over land for purpose of providing food for the family.

This view is also relevant to the Batswana, because the wife's surname is generally changed after marriage to that of her husband and she is always expected to give first preference to her relatives-in-law.

Children born within a marriage are legitimate. Their parents must share parental power over them, which embrace custody and guardianship. Despite of these expectations, in most marriages only the mother is burdened with caring for the children's daily needs as well as the responsibility of making decisions regarding their needs.

My informants in the three villages have revealed that the status of women in the family is the same as in patriarchal setting. Broderick (1979:109), speaking of the U.S.A., writes:

*The patriarchal organization of families places women in a one-down position even in the realm that is supposed to be their main sphere of activity. The traditional housewife-mother role relegates the woman to a life of menial, repetitive, and non-challenging work, a servant to her husband and children without any independent identity.*

Traditionally the children inherit the husband's surname and live according to his culture. The wife is expected to be a caregiver, nurturer, and also a source of unconditional love and support. She is expected to be at home all the time. It should be noted, however, that these days some women are working outside their homes because of the impact of industrialisation and migrant labour which has been a major influence in changing the Batswana culture. During her absence there is a vacuum, which is felt by all the family members. The following song expresses a woman's request for protection:

E a re a etile a boe  
 A tshabise ngwana  
 Go tshwarwa ke kgaba  
 A tshabise ngwana  
 Go tshwarwa ke kgaba  
 A tshabise ngwana  
 Go tshwarwa ke kgaba  
 Kgaba e ile e tshware ba basesane  
 Ba basesane  
 Ba se nang bomaabo

Le fa  
 Mathata a me a ka golagola  
 A golagola  
 Lapeng lena la ka  
 A golagola  
 Lapeng lena la ka  
 A golagola  
 Lapeng lena la ka  
 Nna jaaka mmabana ke tla itshoka  
 Ke tla itshokela kgaba  
 Kgaba ya ga mmatsale

*A woman*  
*If she visited somewhere she returns*  
*To prevent her child*  
*From having bad luck*  
*To prevent her child*  
*From having bad luck*  
*To prevent her child*  
*From being bad luck*  
*Bad luck should attack those who are thin*  
*Those who are thin*  
*Do not have mothers*

*Even if*  
*My problems can be very great*  
*Be very great*  
*Here at my home*  
*Be very great*  
*Here at my home*  
*Be very great*  
*Here at my home*  
*Me as the mother I'll endure*  
*I'll endure the bad luck*  
*Bad luck imposed by my mother-in-law*

A woman who was aware of her commitment to marriage performed this song. It was recorded in Tlokweng in Moshaweng Section on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1998. She was aware of her status as a woman and she wanted to maintain the culture by obeying the patriarchal rules of marriage. If she fails she could lose her child or it might bring bad luck as indicated in the sentence *Go tshwarwa ke kgaba*, which describes the act of being unlucky that is associated with being ridiculed. The audience were other women who were participating in collective work including a young girl who assisted by carrying the child on her back while the mother was busy working in the field.

In this song the women affirm and enforce prescribed sets of behavioural rules in order to protect her child from misfortune. The song therefore gives insight into the transmission of culture to young mothers, especially of the rules to protect their children. Repetition of words is presented in the form of linking whereby the word *kgaba* in the first line starts the second line. It functions to add rhythm and to emphasize the message that a mother will protect her child at all cost. For example:

*go tshwarwe ke kgaba*  
*Kgaba e tle e tshware ba basesane.*

The song is empowering in that the woman was indirectly resisting the oppression imposed by her husband and her in-laws. She was aware of being treated as inferior and

knew that she was not the first one to face such a problem. The song has enculturating potential, since it is an appeal for solidarity among wives in the responsibilities of childcare and for shared collective action from both the wife and husband's lineage.

As the burden of raising children increases, life might become very hard for some women. They might experience frustration, dissatisfaction and oppression. This situation is exacerbated by cultural and religious expectations, which force women to stay in relationships and raise the children. Financial dependence on her husband also emerges as another obstacle that forces women to believe that their husbands will change and become more responsible. In this way the woman becomes committed to protecting and serving her family. This condition gives rise to the composition of songs lamenting the challenge of being overloaded with responsibilities.

Batswana women, like other African women, experience that their husbands lack commitment to provide for their children. This is reflected in the following song:

Wena monna moleko towe  
 O ntshiile le bana ke sa bereke jaana  
 O re ke tla ba fepa kang  
 Ai ka tla ka latlhega  
 Ai ka tla ka latlhega

*You troublesome man  
 You left me alone with children knowing I am unemployed  
 You think how will I maintain them  
 Oh I am ruined  
 Oh I am ruined  
 Oh I am ruined  
 Oh I am ruined  
 Oh I am ruined*

In the above song a woman expresses her feelings and frustrations at being left to care for her children without any support from her husband. She further asks him how she is going to find money to support them in the phrase *O re ke tla ba fepa kang*. In this case the woman exploits her position as a performer to criticize her husband and challenges easy assumptions about the role of women. There is repetition of phrases in consecutive lines. In addition to adding rhythm, it also stresses the message, emphasizes the key words of regret, for example:

Ai ka tla ka latlhega

Ai ka tla ka latlhega

Ai ka tla ka latlhega

The repetition of the phrase *Ai ka tla ka latlhega* emphasises her complaint of being overburdened and having to support her children alone.

About 5% of women bear a child before marriage and if she marries another man the stepfather-to-be promises her that he would accept the child as his own *o e gapa le namane* (taking the cow together with its calf). Sometimes the real father does not recognise the child, and the mother of an illegitimate child (*ngwana wa dikgora*), that is, the child born from the bush, struggles alone to provide for the child, and her husband and his lineage often harass her for having an illegitimate child. The mother might sing a song like the following to reflect that she is aware that they don't love her child. The song was recorded at Tlokweng on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1997:

Tshidi wee

Tshidi ngwanake ge le sa mo rate

Ge le sa mo rate

Le mo khutlise

Ke khutsanyana

Ya mme le ntate

*Tshidi hey*

*Tshidi my child if you don't like her*

*If you don't like her*

*Sent her back  
She is the orphan  
Of my mother and my father*

This powerful and persuasive song was performed by the mother of a ten-year-old daughter, who was hurt because of the harsh treatment imposed by her in-laws who usually ordered her daughter to sweep the yard at 05:00. On that day the girl was crying since she wanted to sleep. When she returned from school in the afternoon she complained to her mother. It was performed in the afternoon on the veranda. The audience were men and women who were members of her husband's lineage. The song has emancipating potential in that other members of the family might entreat her husband's family to stop using humiliating words, and the child would therefore live a better life. In this song, the word *Tshidi* is a proper name that is derived from the name *motshedisi* that refers to one who offers condolences.

In this song the mother of the illegitimate child requests that if her in-laws do not like her child they must send her back to the mother's parents. She sees her child as an orphan (*khutsana*) because the father and the in-laws neglect her. According to my adult informants, interviewed at Matlhaku on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1999, it is customary to regard such a song as an informal plea by the wife to return her child to her family, but in reality she is requesting better treatment for the child. This is a hidden transcript, which is used by the woman to challenge the dominant people by expressing her anxiety about her child, and therefore a good example of resistance to bad treatment in an indirect way. As the message of resistance is circulated from the performer to the audience, it closes the gap and informs her in-laws what the problem is so that they might release her daughter from sweeping the yard in the morning.

In the following section the focus will be on the songs which are performed during widowhood since widows are faced with challenges in the mourning period.

## **5.6 THE FUNCTION OF SONGS IN WIDOWHOOD (*BOTLHOLAGADI*)**

The songs that are discussed in this section are aimed at cultural change that would place widows in a secure environment free from discrimination. Widowhood can be

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seen as a religious ritual, which consists of social practices that are prescribed for safeguarding other members of the society and for promoting their moral beliefs. The participants in this ritual are mostly old men and women who prescribe to the widow or widower how to behave during the period of widowhood. The performance of this ritual can be associated with the frontstage-backstage model (Collins 1988) where temporary social symbols are charged with moral force. In the frontstage the widow wears mourning clothes and behaves according to the societal rules to make a certain impression. The most crucial ritual of widowhood is performed backstage where the widow is cleansed with traditional medicine to purify her body.

This is an area where the power dimension manifests itself strongly. The old men and old women become order-givers who are self-assured and proud of their performance. The widow as order-taker participates in the ritual in a more controlled fashion and shows the intention of complying. Although the widow is externally conforming, privately she could feel alienated and express that by means of songs.

In this section three songs that were performed were selected for the study. In Setswana she is termed *motholagadi* derived from a word *motholo* (miracle), that is, something unusual, meaning that she had had bad luck and she must undergo some ritual to cleanse her. Widowhood is described by Manyedi (2001:32) as “the loss of a spouse for both men and women”. In this study, however, the focus is solely on widows (*batlholagadi*).

No matter how happy a woman might be married, there will inevitably be times when a woman is forced to adjust her moral values and succumb to the pressures of a patriarchal society. A widow (*motholagadi*) and a widower (*moswagadi*) are not treated alike. A widow gets the harshest and most discriminatory treatment from her community. The informant, Motsamai Gaongalelwe, interviewed on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1999, indicated that there is a belief that once a husband is dead the source of his death is his wife and his concubines, while on the other hand a wife’s death is believed to result from sleeping around. In Batswana custom some women and men believe that by touching or sharing with widows they will have bad luck. Perhaps it can be said that some women who went through widowhood, only observed the custom without believing all the negative things attached to it.

A widow faces all forms of discrimination, not only from her husband's family but also from the community at large. A widow is expected to conform to the social prescriptions for widowhood. The informants, most of whom are widows, sadly recalled and expressed the ill treatment imposed on them by their husband's family upon their husbands' death. According to Sisimogang Molete, interviewed on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1997, and Mmakobedi Mokgatlhe, interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1997, it is better to be dead than to be a widow, because it is painful and most stressful to be discriminated against due to the misfortune of losing a husband.

Let us consider the social prescriptions for widowhood among the Batswana. Once a husband is declared dead the widow is prohibited from talking openly to other people. While the funeral arrangements are in progress the widow is kept in the main bedroom and has to lie on a mattress while she is given a mixture of traditional medicine, which is believed to cleanse her blood. During this time she only listens to hymns, which are performed by the comforters.

The most hurtful event is that during this time a widow is expected to cry, hide her face behind a cloth and not to show a happy face. This is a hardship, which is based on cultural oppression imposed on the poor woman. From this moment on she stays with old women as watchdogs and she is expected to obey all the instructions concerning widowhood (*thoulo*). These rules include drinking medicine prepared by the traditional doctor, using separate utensils and not touching other people. It is believed she is out of luck (*o na le sefifi*).

My adult informants said that widowhood is a difficult time when the widow (*motholagadi*) is restricted to wear black homemade dresses and headgear sewn specifically for widowhood. It should be noted that today the colour of clothes depends on the family's religion. Some Christian churches condemn this practice while others adjust partly to the customs of the society. The most amazing thing about this attire is that it is washed only at night and when it is torn it must not be sewn up but tied in a knot. My adult informants from the three villages who had lost their husbands said that this attire is used to signify to the people in general and the men in particular that her husband has passed away. Men are prohibited from having sex with her, as it is believed they will contract venereal diseases (*makgome*). Mogapi (1991:172) maintains

that:

Fa mosadi yo o mo boswagading a ka kopana le monna, monna yo o tsenwa ke bolwetse.

*(If a woman in mourning has sexual intercourse with a man, he contracts a disease.)*

Let it be indicated that in some instances men get involved with other women three months after the death of their wives, but women have to be in mourning for a period of a full year during which it will be a taboo for them to have sexual intercourse. This segregation continues for a year until a ritual can be conducted during winter to cleanse her body (*go forola sefifi*).

It is important to note that during the mourning period (*nako ya go roula*) a widow is not allowed to sit on a chair, and neither to exchange objects from hand to hand nor to share utensils with other family members. All these are done to prevent others from catching her misfortune and to frighten her in order to prevent her from having affairs and marrying again. This is the period when the widow experiences depression due to the complicated mourning process. Manyedi (2001:41) explains that "...this grief reaction may be observed in an individual with symptoms of anxiety, depression or anger, guilt feelings, poor self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness".

It is devastating to highlight the fact that at this stage the primary source of the widow's oppression is women, particularly those from the late husband's lineage, who furthermore claims all his belongings for themselves. Although it is not always easy to react, the widow will struggle to make her dissatisfaction heard. This custom is still practiced by some Batswana today. Her struggle is indicated in a song like this:

Ga-twe nna ke mmolai  
Ke bolaile mogatsake  
Monna wa pelo ya ka  
Swithi ke tla mmona kae  
Mogatsake o ntshiile  
Pogiso ya bagaeno

Monna wa pelo ya ka  
 Swithi ke tla mmona kae  
 Siwelele siwelele siwelele siwelele  
 Monna wa pelo ya ka  
 Swithi ke tla mmona kae

*They allege that I am a murderer*  
*I murdered my husband*  
*My beloved husband*  
*My sweetheart where will I see you*  
*My husband you left me*  
*Under harsh treatment of your family*  
*My beloved husband*  
*My sweetheart where will I see you*  
*Siwelele siwelele siwelele siwelele*  
*My beloved husband*  
*My sweetheart where will I see you*

A widow at Matlhaku in Kgosing Section performed the song on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1998, at her in-laws' home. The widow was depressed because of being blamed by her relatives-in-law who claimed that she killed their son. In this song the widow is struggling to let her late husband's lineage know that she loved him dearly and she misses him. In this sentence *Ga twe nna ke mmolai* she expresses her deep sorrow concerning the suspicion that she killed her husband. The performer's face looked sad with wide opened eyes expressing her sad feelings. With her body she expresses her feelings by her touching her chin to reflect amazement. She is asking for the whereabouts of her late husband as indicated in the phrase *Swithi ke tla mmona kae* (My Sweetheart where will I see you). She sadly expresses the feeling of loneliness as she maintains her innocence while suffering the unbearable loss of her husband.

The widow presents practical resistance against the patriarchy by performing in public to reveal a backstage perspective. The performance is a direct attack on those who see her as a murderer. Her facial expression reflects her unhappy feelings. She does not disguise her emotions. Her resistance could force the audience to change their mind-set

and realise that she did not kill her husband.

In the following song a widow expresses the painful experience of widowhood – so painful that it could only be communicated to Jesus.

Legodimo ga le na poso  
 Nka bo ke kwalela Jesu  
 Legodimo ga le na poso  
 Nka bo ke kwalela Jesu  
 Nna nka bo ke kwalela  
 Nka bo ke kwalela Morena  
 Nna nka bo ke kwalela  
 Nka bo ke kwalela Morena

*Heaven has no post office  
 I should be writing to Jesus  
 Heaven has no post office  
 I should be writing to Jesus  
 I myself should be writing  
 I should be writing to my Lord  
 I myself should be writing  
 I should be writing to my Lord*

The song was performed at Tlokwen in Ledubeng Section on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1999. The performer was a widow whose husband died three months before. She was ordered by adult women from her husband's lineage to stay at home until they gave her permission to visit her family. Some women who experienced widowhood and who are Christians performed with her. In the song they look forward to being emancipated from cultural oppression by the Lord Jesus. The repetition of the interjection *nka bo* emphasizes the message of seeking to be protected by Jesus. Hence the proverb: *Nka bo ke kgomo ya morago* (I should have always had the last regret). This is a backstage view presented by the women to confront social oppression.

The song functions as a vessel for practical resistance and indirect confrontation with

the dominant group, since the woman highlights that she might only be rescued by Jesus from the difficulties encountered in widowhood. The resistance is expressed through parallelism, which is an important structural device in the song. Parallelism by linking (*neeletsano*) occurs when the last element in one line starts the next line. Its role can be regarded as adding dynamic stress, emphasizing a rhythm that intends to force the listeners' attention to the performance for example:

nka bo ke kwalela Jeso  
 nna nka bo ke kwalela  
 nka bo ke kwalela morena.

In her oppressed and vulnerable state a widow may resort to earnestly requesting her mother to remove her mourning attire. In the following song a widow appeals to her mother for help.

Mme mme nkapole  
 Kobo e ya rou  
 E re fa ke feta  
 Makau a mponc  
 Siwe siwe lele mama  
 Siwelele mama  
 E re fa ke feta  
 Makau a mponc  
 Mme mme nthekele  
 Mosese wa silika  
 E re fa ke feta  
 Makau a nthate  
 Siwe siwe lele mama  
 Siwelele mama  
 E re fa ke feta  
 Makau a nthate

*My dear mother take off for me  
 The widowship blanket*

*So that thereafter when I go in public*  
*Gentlemen would recognize me*  
*Siwe siwe lele mama*  
*Siwelele mama*  
*So that thereafter when I go in public*  
*Gentlemen would recognize me*  
*My dear mother buy for me*  
*A dress made of silk material*  
*So that when I go through*  
*Gentlemen would appreciate me*  
*Siwe siwe lele mama*  
*Siwelele mama*  
*So that when I go through*  
*Gentlemen would appreciate me*

(Siwelele is a sound in a song that makes it more interesting and absorbs the listener's attention.)

A widow who had mourned her husband's death for a year performed this song. It was performed at Tlokweg in Lengeneng Section on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1999. It was performed at the widow's home. The audience was women including her mother who were there to monitor whether she was obeying the rules for mourning. Having suffered the discrimination caused by the mourning attire the widow is requesting her mother to sooth her heavy heart and take her mourning attire off for her. Some people might think that it is exaggerated but the widow feels that she has served out her time of widowhood and therefore wishes to start a new life as indicated in the phrase *E re fu ke feta makau a nthate* (so that when I go through gentlemen would appreciate me).

The song presents practical resistance by a widow against her state of social separation as a widow. She uses the words *Makau a nthate* (gentlemen would appreciate me) to resist the harsh rule and to affirm that, despite being a widow, she knows that there might be some men who would appreciate her.

The above three songs, namely *Ga twe nna ke mmolai*, *Legodimo ga le na poso*, and

*Mme nkapole kobo ya rou*, were performed by four widows who had lost their husbands between January 1997 and June 1997. They were wearing mourning attire made of black cloth. Arrangements were made to conduct the interviews at their homes since they were not allowed to visit other people's homes. The songs were performed in the afternoon in their backyards. They were not allowed to sing aloud out of love and respect for their late husbands. The audience was elderly women who monitored the process to ensure that the women did not break the rules of widowhood. The words of the songs are important in that they reflect how being discriminated against and having had to accept the conditions hurt the women. It was believed that by conforming to the rules they would show respect to their departed husbands and their culture.

The songs are potentially emancipating since the widows are bemoaning their state of widowhood. One even felt that if they had had the means of communicating with Jesus they would request him to release them. The songs briefly indicated that they wished to be emancipated from the rules of widowhood. The songs of widowhood might empower the widows in a patriarchal society through solidarity. The emergence of a support group for widows among the Batswana would help them to act collectively in order to change the rules and regulations of widowhood.

It is clear from this sub-section that the women do not compose the songs *ex nihilo*. Because they have experienced suffering, they are able to express their burning passion. The songs help the women to establish and strengthen their identities while they struggle to change the culture. Today there appears to be an increased tolerance of individual differences in areas traditionally governed by gender considerations. It can be said the songs provide women with a type of release from the hardships of the mourning period and a way of coming to terms with their feelings and experiences. These customs are still practiced today but to a lesser extent than before.

The focus will now be on how Batswana women use their songs as vehicles for the potential cultural continuity and change in political life.

## **5.7 SONGS FOR CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN POLITICS**

In this section the focus will be on political songs performed by the women to challenge

the patriarchal authority to value their participation in the society. The songs as have the following ritual elements. Firstly, there was a physical assembly of women. Secondly, they had a common focus of attention on making a contribution in the political sphere and a mutual awareness of it. Thirdly, they had a common emotional mood of protesting against the culture that was discriminating against them. Fourthly, the sacred objects were the actions of resistance they used in performance of the songs to request recognition. This in turn enhanced their emotional energies and increased their confidence that their request would be answered.

Six political songs were heard but only three of them were selected for recording. This section reflects on the efforts of women to remove all obstacles to their active participation in public life by means of their songs. These efforts can be seen to have produced a consensus that women's roles and their equality are pivotal to the development of human societies. Batswana women's songs might be seen as vehicles for the women's struggle to identify themselves both as citizens of a new democratic South Africa as well as women who are fully participating and contributing human beings in the public and private sphere and not of a lesser status than their male counterparts.

Among the Batswana, songs are developed over a long period of time and are passed from generation to generation. Although women have remained subordinate to men, this does not mean that their position in society has not changed. The patriarchal notions about women's position meant that they were prevented from gaining access to opportunities that could promote their equality in society. Women have been denied ownership rights such as the right to buy and own a house without the consent or approval of a man. They have had little say in public affairs although they comprised a majority. This marginalisation caused a lot of frustration in women. One way of communicating this dissatisfaction is through their songs.

The women use songs to make their voices heard at public gatherings and to challenge their lack of influence on decision-making. The informants in Tlokweng said that in situations where the women feel oppressed, they assemble at the chief's kraal and sing songs, which convey messages of the struggle against patriarchal oppression. They performed this song, which was recorded in Tlokweng in Kgosing section on the 10<sup>th</sup>

May 1999, to express female power:

Motsatsi re fe marumo  
 Marumo re tľhabane ntwā  
 Motsatsi re fe marumo  
 Marumo re tľhabane ntwā  
 Aiye-le-le !  
 Rona re masole re lwa ka tľhaka  
 Mono mo Tlokweng  
 Aiye-le-le!  
 Rona re masole re lwa ka tľhaka  
 Mono mo Tlokweng

*Motsatsi give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Motsatsi give us spears  
 Spears to fight the war  
 Aiye-le-le!  
 We are soldiers, we fight with assegai[s]  
 Here in Tlokweng  
 Aiye-le-le!  
 We are soldiers, we fight with assegai[s]  
 Here in Tlokweng*

In this song the women are appealing to chief Motsatsi to give them the power to fight for freedom. The informants in Tlokweng said that this performance occurred when the women were denied the opportunity to speak during the tribal court. This can be associated with the notion that “united they stand and divided they fall”. They were sick and tired of the discrimination imposed by custom, and they resolved to fight against the men in a move to bring about change in the cultural approach. They appealed to chief Motsatsi to address the oppressive act by giving them power to challenge men in order to correct what is unjust for them. One may believe that women’s participation in decision-making might make society more responsive to the needs of all people.

Batswana women are confident that they have the ability to challenge the patriarchy and to bring new insights and contributions to all issues that would close the gender gap and improve the socio-political development of society. Women who have struggled to gain equality challenge the old mentality of upholding the dignity of men as leaders.

Let us not undermine the fact that women continue to be subservient and obedient even during the hard times of their struggle. In the following song, for example, they hope to get a sympathetic response from the chief as he has the power to change the situation:

Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka  
 Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka  
 Re lebile go morena  
 Kgosi ya rona motlotlegi  
 Re lebile go morena  
 Kgosi ya rona motlotlegi  
 Re fe dithebe le marumo  
 Re tľhabaneng rona masole  
 Re lwa ka tšhaka

*Batswana women we fight with assegais*  
*Batswana women we fight with assegais*  
*We are looking forward to our chief*  
*Our chief his Excellency*  
*We are looking forward to our chief*  
*Our chief his Excellency*  
*Give us shields and spears*  
*We the soldiers must fight*  
*We fight with assegais*

The women from GaaMokgatla Section at Dinokana performed the song on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1997, after they were denied participation in a meeting during which the discussion was about development in the village. The women expressed a token of honouring their chief by using the honorary terms such as *morena* and *motlotlegi*. This is a token in the sense that he is viewed as the father of the tribe. In this way they were

paving the way to make their voices heard while on the other hand they were fighting for freedom, because they were tired of being excluded from public meetings. They wanted to be on the same level with men. Their struggle is indicated in the sentences *Re fe dithebe le marumo re ilhabane rona masole* (Give us shields and spears we the soldiers must fight). The informants said that the women were in reality requesting equality. In essence these sentences have a hidden transcript, because the women are not really requesting shields and spears, but enhancement of their knowledge and skills that will allow them to participate in decision-making at public gatherings. Giving them a proper space and including their perspectives might transform society.

Yet, as one considers current developments within South Africa and the intense theoretical agreement about the inclusion of women, one may realize that Bhabha's (1994) definition of "post" in "postmodernism" and "postcolonialism" as the beginning of the presencing of dissonant and dissident voices hitherto written out of history, such as the colonized and women, is relevant to the transformation process in our country. This seems to be exactly what is happening among the Batswana women: that they find themselves at the beginning of a new democracy, for the first time citizens recognized before the law, and it is natural for them to undertake this struggle for identification, to challenge their marginal status in both domestic and public (including professional) spheres.

Woman's participation in decision-making is expected to increase according to the Southern Africa Development Community's (SADC) declaration on gender and development in 1997. It should be noted that today Batswana women are actively involved in politics, unlike in the past when the men were dominant. They interact with women from other societies and women's leagues, such as the National Coalition and ANC Women's league, which are fighting against sexism. The song below (not a Setswana song) shows that the Batswana women are interacting with women of other cultures. This is possible, since some Batswana women are employed in towns where they are exposed to other cultures. The song expresses the women's attempt to escape the oppression imposed upon them by the society:

Thabo Mbeki

Thabo Mbeki khuluma no Mandela

Ayokhulula abafazi  
 Thabo Mbeki  
 Thabo Mbeki khuluma no Mandela  
 Ayokhulula abafazi  
 Abafazi baphile ngoxolo  
 Abafazi baphile ngoxolo

*Thabo Mbeki*  
*Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela*  
*To go and release women*  
*Thabo Mbeki*  
*Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela*  
*To go and release women*  
*Women must live in peace*  
*Women must live in peace*

The song was performed in Pretoria at the Union Building on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1999. Women from different cultural groups including Batswana, who marched against women abuse, performed it. In context, the Batswana women and other women from different ethnic groups were appealing to the then deputy President Thabo Mbeki to talk to President Mandela to release them from oppression. This is indicated in the phrase *Ayokhulula abafazi* (To go and release women). They were eager to be accorded the opportunity to participate in changing the world in which they live by bringing new priorities and perspectives to the political process and the organization of society. The women believed that the intervention of President Mandela could give them a chance to change all customs that degrade them. Henceforth they would live in peace (*Abafazi baphile ngoxolo*). This cultural change is also indicated by the presence of South African women's representatives at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. In solidarity with other African women they took part in adopting a declaration to ensure that action plans were created to address the obstacles impeding women's education, power-sharing, human rights and eradicating of poverty etc.

The above two songs, namely *Motsatsi re fe marumo* and *Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka*, reflect women's efforts to free themselves from patriarchal oppression by

attempting to change traditional culture. The songs were performed by a group of women who forced their way into the royal kraal in the morning, during the session (attended only by men) that made decisions regarding the constitution of the village. The women felt that they were being sidelined and discriminated against, and they therefore requested protection from the chief. The audience was the men who were invited by the headmen to attend the meeting and who gathered at the royal kraal. It may be assumed that the message would be understood and that some of the male audience would learn to empathise with the women.

If we feel any hesitation in our commitment to the struggle for equality and recognition, it might help to know that South Africa is a forerunner in our continent in closing the gender gap and in giving recognition to the development and contributions of women, enhancing their participation in all leadership levels in our nation. One has only to look at the number of women in President Mbeki's cabinet. It appears that this is the window to opportunity for women to be recognized, to make their voices and presence felt, to become visible.

If one looks back to what Apartheid has done to the normal setting of tribal life, one can say it has changed the way of life of the Batswana in that many women among the Batswana were left at home while men went off for migrant labour. If, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, there is a temporal splitting of the nation, then the process of signification in Batswana society allows the voices of women about their struggle to change the culture to be heard.

Allow one to conclude this sub-section by citing a Chinese proverb, which says: The birds of worry and care fly above our heads, this we cannot change. But that they build nests in our hair, this we can prevent. One may appeal to women to explore all the avenues to ensure cultural change. *Basadi tiang maatla*. In other words, women must work hard and commit themselves to contribute to changing the culture. This can happen only if women are economically empowered to be able to stand up for themselves, as will be discussed in the next section.

## 5.8 WOMEN'S SONGS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

For this section about eight songs were heard and only three of them were recorded based on their relevance to the study. In the previous section we said that women are encouraged to work hard and this can only be achieved if they are economically empowered. The primary aim of this section is to consider whether women use songs to develop and empower themselves in the economy, focusing on skills development and poverty alleviation. Traditionally, women's household work was not valued as contributing to the economy. Women were expected to provide food, water and fuel for their families. In addition to their household responsibilities, the financial burden of supporting a big family often fell on the shoulders of women. Traditionally the women used to exchange crops for cash but now some women sell vegetables and fruit either from the market or from their fields for the survival of the family.

Batswana women, like other African societies, apply a communal work system to assist each other in the execution of certain duties. This creates a strong bond of sisterhood by which they provide support and care for each other. This is supported by Susser (1994:242), who writes "Sisterhood equips individual women with the strength to overcome the sense of isolation and, hence, provides morale and *esprit de corps*".

Women believe that they can make a better life together and they value collective performance above personal action. They therefore create work groups to help each other care for their husbands and children and create comfortable homes that nourish everyone. The work group is traditionally known as *letsema* or *molaletsa* from the verb stem *laletsa*, to invite. As women worked together they formed life-long friendships and ties of mutual hospitality.

Working together the women also sing together. Concerning the use of work songs, Nketia (1982:23) maintains that:

Some societies make provision for a variety of domestic songs, or encourage the use of songs as an accompaniment to domestic activities. Grinding songs, pounding songs and songs sung when the floor of a newly built house is being made... some of these, however, also take place in group activities.

Communal work can be related to Collins' (1988) everyday interaction ritual, which forms solidarity among the social group. The social group that participates in a *letsema* ritual has a common focus of attention of assisting each other in the execution of domestic chores. Their common emotional mood creates a shared symbolic reality that enhances their solidarity. Their sacred objects are the actions they perform together which enhance their emotional energies and self-confidence. Communal participation gives women the opportunity to explore shared experiences.

According to my observation in the three villages, this is also true for the Batswana. The women socialise in communal work groups (*letsema*), share ideas and help each other to make a living. In an attempt to support their families the women have taught each other to make soap from pork fat, to make hand-sewn garments from mealie meal bags, to preserve beef and pork and to dry fresh mealies. As their production was basically agricultural they helped each other in planting seed, hoeing and harvesting. They performed the work in a good spirit and relaxed atmosphere and this mood encouraged a *letsema* to sing together rhythmically. My informants explain that the communal work system was very common in the past but today it is seldom used among the Batswana. Some informants said they used communal work songs to assist each other while sharing their responsibilities and to cope with exhausting labour. This idea is supported by Lifton (1983) when she says:

Work songs serve to relieve the tedium of the work at hand, and also provided a rhythm by which a group task could be completed more quickly and efficiently. Structured much like sea shantys, which serve the same purpose, work songs usually had a lead singer, who set the pace, and her lines were answered by the rest of the group, in what has been called a call-and-response pattern.

The importance of work songs in performing communal work is stressed by Lesele (1998:43), who describes work songs in this manner:

Dipina tse ke tse di tsamaelanang le morethetho. Mo pineng mosola wa go rethetha ke gore batho ba tsamaele gongwe ka tiro ya bona mme ba tle ba kgone go tiya mooko le go tlosa letsapa.

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*(These songs go hand in hand with the rhythm. In the song the rhythm functions to coordinate the task so that the performers become flexible and do not get tired easily.)*

The informants, Kedirileng Moumakwe, interviewed on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1998 at Matlhaku, and Mmakobedi Matsafu, interviewed on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1998 at Tlokweng, both indicated that a woman who needs help to do a particular job, would invite other women in her neighbourhood to come and assist her voluntarily. The following is a song in which a woman requests help from others:

Mmanku mpelelele ngwana yo  
 Ke a leme  
 O a mpona ke a lema  
 Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Ga se pula monongwaga  
 Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Ke tlhoka le motho yo o ka ntemisang  
 Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Banna ba ile dikomponeng  
 Ke lema ke le nosi  
 Mmanku mpelelele ngwana yo  
 Ke a lema  
 O a mpona ke a lema  
 Ke lema ke le nosi

*Mmanku carry this child on the back for me  
 I am ploughing  
 You see I am ploughing  
 I am ploughing alone  
 There is a lot of rain this year  
 I am ploughing alone  
 There is nobody who helps me in ploughing  
 I am ploughing alone  
 Men went to the mines*

*I am ploughing alone*  
*Mmanku carry this child on the back for me*  
*I am ploughing*  
*You see me I am ploughing*  
*I am ploughing alone*

This song was recorded at Tlokwenq on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1999. It was performed by a group of women who were busy ploughing the fields in the morning at Metsikgetlane Section. The song was performed to cope with the tedious job of ploughing while it enhanced the rhythm of the action. The audience was men and older women who were preparing food for the working women. Also present were three girls who assisted their mothers by carrying their babies on the back.

In this song the woman felt the pressure of ploughing alone while at the same time caring for her baby. The word *Mmanku* refers to a girl whose back was physically fit to carry a child. The person addressed used a sheepskin (*thari*) to carry the child on the back, hence the name *Mmanku*, meaning 'mother of sheep'. She was always available and willing to relieve the mother of her baby, to enable her to continue ploughing. In the phrase *Ke lema ke le nosi* the mother aroused the girl's interest by explaining to *Mmanku* why her help was urgently needed. The woman also hoped to get empathy from the members of the audience who might help her with her ploughing. The sentence *Ga se pula monongwaga* predicted a good harvest. The woman further explained the reason for her earnest request in the sentence *Banna ba ile dikomponeng* (the men went to the mines). This song is characterized by a light-hearted playing with words, which are arranged in a rhythmic pattern.

The song might enhance women's performance by helping them to cope with the hard work of providing food for their families. It was effective in that the women were able to do a lot of work in a short time while socialising with other women. The song might change the traditional division of labour by persuading some of the male listeners. They could hear the song from a short distance, while they were herding cattle. It could persuade them to come and help the women, or it could entreat other men to assist the women in performing heavy tasks.

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Economic development can be seen as an important source of cultural change. Colonialism has changed the subsistence economy of the Batswana. They started to use things which the tribe did not make. These changes took Batswana women a step away from subsistence society and a step closer to the industrialization process. According to Inglehart and Baker (2000:21):

The central claim of modernization theory is that economic development is linked with coherent and, to some extent, predictable changes in culture and social and political life... Industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes.

In the Batswana society there is high inequality and high social density which is elaborated by high diversity among the social group. This is because some of the members in the Batswana society feel comfortable to be in the traditional situation while others want to change the culture in accordance to the developments that occur in the world.

Contemporary economic pressures forced women to struggle to look for employment. They also used songs to cope with the challenges of the workplace. With the growth of the industrial economy, women have been drawn into the sphere of production in increasing numbers where most of them are used as a source of cheap labour. Many women are empowering themselves by challenging the position of producers or entrepreneurs. There are great inequalities between men and women in employment opportunities and rights. In spite of working outside the home the women still remain responsible for the domestic work. For this reason they bear a double work burden which affects their work performance. In the following song the women convey the message that they are frustrated and overworked:

Tsa wela dinaledi  
 Tsa wela dinaledi  
 Tsa wela dinaledi dinaledi  
 Tsa wela dinaledi  
 Bofa morwalo bofa  
 O ye kwa makgoeng

Bofa morwalo bofa morwalo bofa  
 Ke matsadi a go bereka  
 Bomme ba a bereka  
 Ba phakella merekong  
 Bomme ba bereka ba bereka  
 Banna bomatlhalela

*The stars are setting*  
*The stars are setting*  
*They are setting the stars*  
*The stars are setting*  
*Fasten your goods*  
*And go to the white people's place*  
*Fasten you goods fasten them*  
*That is result of working*  
*Women are employed*  
*They go to their workplace early*  
*Women are working they are employed*  
*Men are work-shy*

The above song was recorded at Matlhaku on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1999. Women who were waiting for their transport to Rustenburg in the morning performed it. The women expressed feelings of commitment to provide for their families. In this song the performers were confident about waking up in the morning to start working on time. They were furthermore strengthened by the fact that their husbands were work-shy and were not prepared to do domestic chores. The performers' facial expression such as furrowed brows and eye twitching revealed their eagerness to go to work. The song demonstrates cultural change, because the women are going out to work outside the house. Some of the men among the audience might be persuaded to assist their wives or mothers in performing domestic chores while they are working.

Women who occupy managerial positions face the same double challenge. This might look like an exaggeration, but according to the informants, their male colleagues often harass working women. On the other hand, some of their female subordinates strive to

pull them down. They are belittled and their status is undermined. According to Mtuze (1990:68): "As women seek fortunes in towns and cities they become more dependable bread-winners than men who have a tendency to forsake their families when the temptations of the cities gain the upper hand".

In an attempt to redress the discrimination against the women of the past, the South African government implemented affirmative action in order to give women equal access to job opportunities and promotion. In order to improve the economic development of society, the status of women and girls should be raised. Acquiring valuable knowledge and skills will position women to be recognised and respected as equal citizens who can make important contributions to the development of society. Obbo (1991:7) summarises women's empowerment in this manner:

Men call illiterate women fools and uncivilized. Then when the women become educated and able to avoid running after men for money, the men complain that the women are not caring for them... When women for their mistakes criticize men, they say they are beginning to rule over them. A woman is not a man's slave. Give love to your woman and she will give you the same. We are all equal as long as we walk on two legs.

In many instances husbands harass wives when it happens that they arrive late from work. In this regard women often experience frustration and feel oppressed, and hence might use songs like the following to resist patriarchal oppression:

Ke tennwe ke ntho ena  
Ya letlhanya  
Monna yo o mpotsapotsa  
Ke tswa kae  
A ko ntlogele ke a itsamaela  
Ke tswa gole  
Gole ke tswa gole  
A ko ntlogele ke a itsamaela

*I am disturbed by this thing  
Of abnormal foolishness*

*This man who continuously ask me  
 Where do I come from  
 Leave me alone it's my choice to move around  
 I come from far away  
 Leave me alone it's my choice to move around*

This song was recorded at Dinokana on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999. A woman who was employed in Zeerust performed it. She left for work every day at 05:00 and arrived home at 17:00. The pitch of the performer's voice was high to indicate her aggression. At the time of recording she revealed that she was delighted that maybe by conveying the message of being oppressed she would be emancipated from the power of an abusive husband. She revealed that her husband used to harass her when she returned home late as a result of transport problems. In this song the woman tried to combat the challenge of being ill-treated by responding to her husband's reproaches. In this way she challenged the stereotypes of patriarchal custom, which posits that the man is the undisputed head of the family, while on the other hand he fails to provide in the family's economic needs.

The song presented practical resistance by a woman against her abusive husband. This song is a hidden transcript in that the performer indirectly informs her husband to stop monitoring her movements as indicated in the sentence *monna yo o mpotsapotsa gore ke tswa kae* (this man who continuously asks me where do I come from) which is presented in full view of the audience where it was performed in an open space. The woman uses her body movements when she interacted face-to-face with her audience in her struggle to break her silence and challenge patriarchal oppression by refusing openly to tell her husband where she comes from. It may be noted here that in marriage husband and wife should, theoretically, remain faithful to each other.

The audience was men and women who were staying near the performer's home. Some women felt sorry for the woman but they could not do anything to help her. The song is potentially emancipating, because the men who were part of the audience might refrain in future from treating women as minors.

On endorsing her explanation of women's oppression, Cutrufelli (in Bush 1984:92) says "[t]he essentially patriarchal basis of African societies can result in social

oppression of women, despite their relative economic independence". Taking into consideration the many challenges facing women at home to provide food, clothes etc. to their families, it becomes clear that they need to acquire knowledge and skills that will make them economically independent.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated that Batswana women's songs of marriage, childbearing, widowhood, economy and politics are indeed vehicles for enculturation, cultural continuity and cultural change. The songs are used in different rituals to create intense states of mutual awareness. The songs play an important role in marking the different stages of marriage. Through songs the women are able to voice their challenges about childbearing and widowhood and try to raise their concern in order to change the culture. In this way they wish to preserve their self-identity and the well-being of others within the social group. Since they perform most of the domestic chores, they help each other in the execution of certain tasks, which in turn promotes team spirit and solidarity. They struggle to challenge the dominant culture and promote change by means of songs. They use songs as an agent to revitalise and resuscitate women's view of themselves and to break the ties of sexism. Women need to be empowered through training and development so as to be able to compete in the current emerging competitive environment. Batswana women need to realize that despite socio-political and economic burdens, there is hope to be empowered.

The songs are effectively used both to build up self-esteem and to create a sense of solidarity, but at the same time to support male domination. In this way, women are complicit in their own oppression. These tensions are likely to grow stronger as more and more women become conscious of their subordinate position and start agitating for greater equality, both in theory and in real, practical terms. In all cases the actual performance of the songs is an essential part of their message. This will be analyzed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **ENCULTURATION, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE POTENTIAL OF THE BATSWANA WOMEN'S SONGS: PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES AND POETIC TECHNIQUES**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The songs are performed in a particular setting where the meaning is circulated from the sender to the receiver, who will then be expected to give feedback. The Batswana women's songs are interpreted through the performance. This gives the audience hints on how they should understand the message. It is worthwhile to note that performance includes dancing in harmony with the melody of the songs. Dancing can be seen as an all-encompassing metaphor for the mysterious link between person and song and also between spirit and body. The performance mostly is an integral part of the ritual interaction and its common focus of attention and heightened emotions that lead to an increase in confidence.

### **6.2 AIM OF THE CHAPTER**

The aim of this chapter is to analyze performance strategies and poetic techniques as vehicles for enculturation and cultural change. The performance of the songs will be analyzed to determine whether the songs have the potential to be an agency to revitalise

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and resuscitate the women's view of themselves in relation to practices prevalent in their patriarchal society; in other words, to make an authentic women's voice heard.

### **6.3 CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

This chapter focuses on performance strategies applied by the women that demonstrate enculturation, cultural continuity and cultural change. The first section describes the performance of the songs. The second section analyzes the call and response structure of the performances. The third section deals with figurative language such as imagery, which embraces metaphor, simile, personification, irony, satire, hyperbole and euphemism. The fourth section focuses on poetic techniques based on different forms of repetition. Batswana women make use of these performance strategies, figurative language and poetic techniques as they perform songs during rituals. The verbal content of the songs that will be analyzed was discussed in the previous chapters.

### **6.4 PERFORMANCE**

The performance of the songs can be viewed as creating a sacred object by means of the actions, the way of singing and the poetic techniques in the songs. The sacred objects are highlighted by the way the group behaves towards them - this behaviour constitutes the ritual. Performance in ritual situations is something worthy of respect since it clarifies the message that is transmitted in the ritual. For the songs to serve the intended purpose in ritual situations they must be performed publicly, visible to an audience. This view is strengthened by Hofstede (1991:8) who states that:

Symbols, heroes, and rituals have been subsumed under the term practices. As such they are visible to an outside observer. Their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.

In performance there is an involvement of an organized group of people, who have a common focus of attention on the song they are performing and a mutual awareness of their focus. During performance the group develops a common emotional mood which recycles and intensifies as the ritual progresses. These in turn lead to enhanced emotional energy and confidence for individuals who participate in the ritual. During

performance the performers interact with the audience in a way that leads to social solidarity.

Performing songs goes back a very long way in Batswana culture. Tracing it back to its origin might be impossible. Nevertheless the composition of the songs might be attributed to mothers who communicated with their babies immediately after birth by means of lullabies. Women have for generations expressed their collective or group identity by singing. In this collection there are some traditional songs which are still remembered, and some new songs composed in the new circumstances of women and of society as a whole.

Before presenting an analysis of the Batswana women's songs, it is important to focus on performance as an important aspect of the songs. The performance of the songs may be seen as interactions between performers and audience, which reflect the various meanings assigned to the performance event and process. Behague (in Bauman 1992:177) argues that:

Performance must be viewed as the occasion and event that fosters through social interaction and participation the collective consciousness and affirmation of group identity or ethnicity, as well as the significant differences in musical styles and contents of songs that may exist within the stratified structure of the social group.

Perhaps the first step of music making is the art of composing. This act suggests that the woman as composer had some audience in mind. However, most composers aim to communicate with a wider audience. Regarding the creation of music Blacking and Kealiinohomoku (1979:4) state that:

Man makes music as a patterned event in a system of social interaction, as part of a process of conscious decision-making, but there is also a sense in which music makes man, releasing creative energy, expanding consciousness and influencing subsequent decision-making and cultural invention.

Based on the above statement it can be said that the music and/or the performance might spontaneously give rise to consciousness-raising of both girls and women

performers and their audiences and thus effect desired outcomes like enculturating the children and enhancing the women's skills and knowledge. It is necessary to highlight that the performance of the songs does not involve only music but also words, gestures, rhythm, costume and dance.

A song consists of two types of sound, one verbal, that is the lyrics or words, and the other non-verbal, referring to the music, and so a song has the potential to communicate with the audience in at least two ways. Dagan (1997:100) says that the verbal side of the song is catered for by the lyrics, the verse or the words of the song. Perceiving songs as a form of oral literature, Dagan (1997:100) postulates that it is the use of these sounds with command and elegance that qualifies songs and music to be inherent parts of oral literature.

Coplan (Selimovic 2002:20) argues that music creates a bond of interest and association and is a means of expressing social aspiration. It is a potent force in the shaping of identity. Based on this argument it may be said that music leads to forms of activities that help to produce social solidarity among the members of the group.

In Titon's (1992:3) modelling of the elements of musical performance it is clear that such a performance includes the belief system, its aesthetics and the contexts in which it functions to make it an essential means of communication.

Perlman (1998:45) considers musical elements and practices to be remarkably versatile carriers of social meaning. By making distinctions of pitch, duration, dynamics, timbre, form, or performance practice, culture can express differences of gender, ethnicity, class, generation, social status, or religion. These social distinctions are often encoded in easily perceptible musical features such as instrumentation, vocal quality, or ornamentation.

Regarding the link between context and performance, Groenewald (1997:106) argues that performances are not products of the dominating context, but that in performance, performer and participants interact to create a different context in various ways. In other words, sound and actions interact to formulate messages that might in turn lead to a response from the audience. The audience's response to the Batswana women's songs

in this study can therefore potentially indicate the success of orature in shaping perceptions that could lead to solidarity between the performers and the audience.

Music, Dagan (1997:100) continues, besides creating the traditional atmosphere required for the performance to be successful, enhances mode, rhythm, and balance, informs, coordinates and tells the beginning and end of stories. In her attempt to model the characteristics of traditional atmosphere, successful performance is seen as an instance of effective communication that also functions to inform cognitively.

After composing a song there is the way in which it is presented, that is the style. The style of performing a song clarifies the composer's intention to share her inner feelings through music, words, costumes and body movements. Such a significant experience might be able to raise the self-awareness of women and girls and give them a sense of self-esteem. It might also help them to explore and express an authentic female tradition.

During performance the songs may not only serve the designated audience at an event. As the song reaches people's ears, others among the audience may at times come out to join the performers in the dance, and some may express their enjoyment by tapping their feet in time with the beat. Some members of the audience might sometimes sway gently along with the tune and children may also dance about on the sidelines. In other words, even if the women as composers had a specific audience in mind the performance also attracts a general audience.

The other parts of a song cannot be ignored, of course. Words are the most important part of a song. For example, if the song is presented on the radio, and we do not see anything of the performance at all, the words help us to understand the message of the song. The voices of performers change as the feeling changes. For example, they will sing quickly and jerkily if they are excited or angry, and they will sing slowly if they are tired or sad. In this way the sound of the voices can tell you whether the people singing are angry, sad or happy.

In addition to words and voices as essential parts of a song, performers also use their bodies to convey their feelings with gestures and expressions. For example, performers

who are proud and vain will dance in way that is very different from those who are expressing a humble or timid character. It is important to note that skilful performers can say one thing with their words but show with their expressions that they really think or mean something entirely different. This creates a gap between meaning and performance where resistance in the form of hidden transcripts can emerge.

Since every person is unique, interpreting or performing and listening to any performance is subjective. In other words, one performer's technique differs from that of another's and also one audience's interpretation may vary from another's. The listener is also an active participant who shares in both the responsibilities and the rewards if a great performance is achieved.

The point is that music and dance are important devices for passing on messages to the audience or listeners. So, of course, are costume, make-up, facial expression, the arrangement of the performers in space and bodily movement. On ritual occasions, like rainmaking, the performance might be viewed as a kind of dance, since it combines all the elements in an essential face-to-face encounter between performer and audience.

Bauman (1992:46) describes the characteristics of such events as follows:

First of all, such events tend to be *scheduled*, set up and prepared for in advance. In addition, they are *temporally bounded*, with a defined beginning and end, they are also *spatially bounded*, that is, enacted in a space that is symbolically marked off, temporarily or permanently, such as a theater, festival ground, or sacred grove. Within these boundaries of time and space, cultural performances are *programmed*, with a structured scenario or program of activity... (his italics).

This view particularly applies to the songs that are performed during rituals such as rainmaking and initiation. In performance, dance becomes a popular form of entertainment, which appeals to a wide audience. For dance to be powerful and attractive, it must involve colourful costumes, vivid steps and stirring music. In addition, dance consists of structured movements that usually are part of some larger activity. Kaepler argues that dance is created out of culturally understood symbols within social and religious contexts, and that it conveys information such as ritual,

ceremony, and entertainment. She further argues that “for dance to communicate, its audience must understand the cultural conventions that deal with human movement in time and space” (Bauman 1992:196).

The point is that the body movement of performers must be based on the cultural background of the society from which the audience comes. Gestures, which are bodily movements, occur in close association with the speech of that society. A body part may be moved in certain direction that is familiar to the audience. Gesture plays an essential role in the regulation of interaction. It must be kept in mind that different body movements or dances from within a culture may communicate different information to different audiences. In order to understand movement as a cultural entity, the performer and observer must have communicative competence in the medium, socially as well as cognitively.

It is important to note that the Batswana women’s songs are often accompanied by performance, that is, by the use of tone, voice, gesture, facial expression, body movement, rhythm, variously used to express emotions such as passion, humour, dignity. These strategies contribute to strengthening the desired outcome.

#### **6.4.1 Performance of the songs and enculturation, continuity and change**

During the interviews it became clear that Batswana women’s songs amply exploit literary devices like figurative language, changes in word presentation and poetic qualities. All these, in addition to the liveliness created by manipulations of voice, face, hands and body of performers make the songs a natural and essential expression of life, starting with gentle lullabies heard in infancy and continuing with games of childhood, performance of rites of passage, and the songs and dances associated with adult responsibilities.

Music may be used to speed up or slow down the pace of the action such as in work songs. Furthermore, music can arouse the expectations of the audience and so can be used to create tension. In addition to creating the relaxed atmosphere needed for performance, music also enhances the rhythm and balances and coordinates the performer’s movements and expressions in the event.

Historically most of the women's songs are usually fairly simple with a single, clear melody. Many of the songs are performed with the voice only. In many instances the same tune is used for several different songs. While keeping in mind that songs are a form of oral art, as they were transmitted from one generation to the other, they changed, so that the same song might be sung just a little differently in different places and at different times.

Tracey's (1967) model states that communication is made up of the performer or sender and the audience or receiver and that between them messages or meanings are circulated that can only be understood if the sender has the artistic skills and the intention to stimulate sufficient interest in the audience. This model is essential to understand performance since it highlights the importance of audience participation in the performance.

A number of symbols will be used to indicate how some of the women's songs are sung. Bold will indicate the part where the call and the response overlap. The underlined sections of the songs will indicate the group response. A single quotation mark (') next to a syllable will indicate that a note is shortened to less than its full value. A colon (:) after a syllable will show the length, which may correspond to a minim or half note, while a double colon (::) after a syllable will indicate a sustained semibreve, that is four beats. A long musical note equal to eight beats, that is a breve, will be indicated by a quadruple colon (::::) after a syllable. :-will show a sustained minim, and ::- will indicate the sustained semibreve of a drum or whistle. These symbols will be applied in the analysis of some of the songs performed by the Batswana women.

As we go through this chapter, we shall focus on the significance of dance to strengthen the power of performance. Finnegan (1970:2) stresses the following with regard to performance:

The significance of performance in oral literature goes beyond a mere matter of definition: for the nature of the performance itself can make an important contribution to the impact of the particular literary form being exhibited.

In the next sections I will apply the symbols of performance to a selection of the songs I recorded– some them while they were being performed, some in real life settings, others performed at my request. Firstly, the performance of lullabies and game songs will be considered.

#### 6.4.1.1 Lullabies and game songs

In this section the focus is on performances of lullabies and game songs, which are used by the women and girl-children to educate young children and also to teach the girls to care for babies. Furthermore it will reflect how the lullabies and game songs are performed to reveal the nannies' dissatisfaction, and how the performers interact face-to-face with the audience to make their voices heard during the process of circulating the message in the process of communication.

Ku:nkuru le::le:  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 O tla belegwa ke ma:ng  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 Mmaago o tima babele:gi::  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 Ba:belegi koma:  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 Ba re:kwa ka sero:pe:  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 Sero:pe sa nama:ne:  
 Kgaotsa nnaka:  
 Ku:nkuru le::le:  
 Kgaotsa nnaka

*I am lulling you  
 Keep quiet baby  
 Who will carry you on the back?  
 Keep quiet baby  
 Your mother is stingy to nannies*

*Keep quiet baby*  
*To honourable nannies*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*they are paid with a thigh*  
*keep quite baby*  
*The thigh of a calf*  
*Keep quiet baby*  
*I am lulling you*  
*Keep quiet baby*

As the lullaby has already been analyzed in chapter 3, in this section the focus will be on performance strategies. The performer of the above song applied her skills of rocking the baby by performing the song in a soft voice and with gentle movements that would lull the child to sleep. Joining hands at the back as if she is carrying a baby on her back she performed the song. In the phrase *Kunkuru-le-le kgaotsa nnaka* the word *kunkuru* is a bird, which is believed to have a melodic voice. The performer, in other words, uses a metaphor to compare the baby's cry with *kunkuru* as its cries in a soft voice. The traditional attire for the performance was a threaded skirt but on this occasion the performer did not use any special attire. The song is empowering because it teaches girls about caring for babies and it raises girls' consciousness about the importance of rocking babies. The song is empowering as it calls for the recognition of the work done in caring for babies.

Lullabies have good poetic qualities like rhythm, parallelism, etc. The rhythm and cadence of lullabies are devices that function to rock a child to sleep by combining a soft, soothing and gentle voice with the rhythmic body movement of the performer. Let us focus on the following example:

Moopelanosi	:	O tuntulala::
		O Nnana robala::
		O tla robala leng::
		O nnana robala ::
		O phimole dikeledi::
		O nnana robala::

Keledi tsa makgoa::  
 O nnana robala : :  
 O tuntulala : :  
 O nnana robala : :  
 Ngwana mme robala : :  
 Mme o etla : :  
 O nnana robala : :

*Solo* : *Oh close your eyes::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*  
*When are you sleeping::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*  
*Oh wipe the tears::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*  
*Tears of white people::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*  
*Oh close your eyes::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*  
*Mother's child sleep::*  
*My mother is coming::*  
*Oh baby sleep::*

In the above lullaby the term *tuntulala* is a hyperbolic expression which describes the act of sleeping, literally meaning that the child should close its eyes. The way the girl instructs the baby is an indication that she has the skills and capacities of a good nanny. The sentence *O phimole dikeledi* (Oh wipe the tears) is a hyperbolic expression, which is used to describe the nanny's wish to make the baby quiet. It is as if the baby is able to wipe its tears whereas only the nanny can do that. The sentence *Keledi tsa makgowa* (Tears of white people) has an aphesis where the word *dikeledi* has lost its initial syllable. In this way the performer demonstrates that she can tactfully soothe the baby so that she is freed from caring for it. It also gives the song a poetic ring. The baby's tears are metaphorically referred to as that of white people to make them important because black people believe that everything that belongs to white people is expensive. The lullaby conditions the baby to get used to the instruction and to perform as

required.

The song was danced in a kneeling position in the backyard under a big tree during the day. Twelve girls formed a circle and sang softly with the nanny. In the centre was a girl who carried a baby on her back in a sheepskin. She danced by moving softly inside the circle with a smile and bright eyes that reflected love. Their attire was threaded skirts that symbolise the Batswana tradition. The song is empowering in that it builds self-esteem by the empathy it involves and the advice it imparts in assisting the nanny to put the baby to sleep.

We are now going to focus on the following game song to analyze its performance strategy:

Moopelanosi	:	Go ne go le ngwanyana:: A dutse letlapeng :: A ntse a lela :: Ka nako tsotlhe:: Ema ngwanyana:: Phumula dikeledi:: Tlhopha yo mo ratang:: O tshegetshege nae:: Tlhopha yo mo ratang:: O itumele nae::
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<i>Solo</i>	:	<i>There was once a girl:: She sat on a rock:: She was crying:: all the time:: Stand up girl:: Wipe your tears:: Choose the one you love:: And laugh with her:: Choose the one you love:: Rejoice with her:</i>
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The song was performed by a group of girls aged between seven and eleven years. They were playing in the schoolyard at Tlokweng on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1998, during break time. Their attire was black dresses and white shirts. It is only a game and it did not reflect the real situation. The girls stood up with their hands joined sideways while another one kneeled in the centre pretending to cry. They jumped up and down at the beginning of the song and where the girl in the centre was ordered to stand up they stopped and clapped hands until she chose one of them to dance with a broad smile. When the song began again the chosen one was the one who kneeled in the centre. This performance strategy makes the song interesting and it might provoke the audience to listen to the message and use it to empower others.

The following song, *Re jelwang ke motlhwa* (Why are we bitten by wasps), is performed in this way: the performers form a circle and two of them dance in the centre. The chorus and song leader (*motlhabeletsi*) who constitute the outer circle do not dance, but clap their hands and beat them against their thighs. The claps as well as the two dancers who stamp their feet mark the rhythm of the song. It is considered a game that they play while standing. In context the song asks why they should not be happy as they have friends around them. It was performed in the girls' leisure or playtime at midday. The empowering side of the song is that it encourages the girls to share their knowledge and skills with others and to socialise with one another.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Re jelwang ke motlhwa
Baamogedi	:	<u>Re na le batho</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Re jelwang ke motlhwa
Baamogedi	:	<u>Re na le batho</u>
		<u>Ijoo ba itlhopha</u>
		<u>Ijoo ba itlhopha</u>
		<u>Ntate ntetle go tsena sekolo</u>
		<u>Jaaka abuti le nna nthute</u>
		<u>Ijoo ke a lela</u>
		<u>Ga ke sekate ke motho tlhe</u>
		<u>Ga ke sekate ke motho tlhe</u>
		<u>Ijoo ba itlhopha</u>
		<u>Ijoo ba itlhopha</u>

*Leader* : *Why are we bitten by wasps*  
*Chorus* : *While being with people*  
*Leader* : *Why are we bitten by wasps*  
*Chorus* : *While being with people*  
*Oh they discriminate against us*  
*Oh they discriminate against us*  
*Father allow me to attend school*  
*Like my brother educate me*  
*Oh I am crying*  
*Don't see me as waste but as a person*  
*Don't see me as waste but as a person*  
*Oh they discriminate against us*  
*Oh they discriminate against us*

The sentence *Re jelwang ke motlhwa re na le batho* (Why are we bitten by wasps while being with people) is a hyperbole that exaggerates their silence. The performers are requesting to be allowed to attend school.

In following song the girl reveals that she is being abused. The song is called *Koko wee tla o nkgatlhantse* (Grandmother hey come and meet me). The song is sung by girls who are divided into two groups, that, is one who calls and another that responds in a chorus. The chorus sings low-pitched syllables, similar to *Ijoo!*, and the whole song is performed slowly in contrast to the faster style of most girls' songs. The text comprises a few nonsense syllables, like *Ijoo* (Oh) that reveal sorrow and are onomatopoeic sounds that provide humour and some emotion. The girls' furrowed faces suggest tension and worry. Their words overlap with the last part of the leader's phrase and the penultimate syllable is rhythmically elongated.

*Moropa* : (: - : - :)  
*Motlhabeletsi* : *Koko wee tla o nkgatlhantshe*  
*Baamogedi* : *Ijoo ijoo ke jewa ke tau*  
*Motlhabeletsi* : *Koko wee tla o nkgatlhantshe*  
*Baamogedi* : *Ijoo ijoo ke jewa ke tau*

Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng

Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng

Iyoo yo-yo mpulele fa hekeng

Ijoo koko ke jewa dikobo

<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Grandmother hey come and meet me</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Oh oh I am consumed by a lion</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Grandmother hey come and meet me</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Oh oh I am consumed by a lion</i>
		<i>Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me</i>
		<i>Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me</i>
		<i>Oh-oh-oh open the gate for me</i>
		<i>Oh granny I am being sexually abused</i>

The dancers move their legs and stamp their feet to mark the rhythm of the song. They move their heads and wave their hands from side to side while shaking their buttocks to show that they are being sexually abused since the buttocks are the most important part that stimulate sex. The song is performed to the accompaniment of a musical instrument such as a drum that has been absorbed into the performance to catch the audience's attention. The drum also reinforces the handclaps of the chorus, and that makes the song more interesting than a mere game.

Performance of the above songs stimulates the memories of what the girls are taught which could lead to permanent changes in their behaviour.

#### **6.4.1.2 Songs that reflect women's struggle for political participation**

We are now going to focus on the songs that reflect women's struggle to make their voice heard in politics. Most Batswana women's songs are performed to the accompaniment of musical instruments such as drums, whistles, reed-pipes and cocoon rattles. The songs that will be discussed, include *Motsatsi re fe marumo*, and *Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka*.

The women in Tlokweng at Kgosing Section performed the following song on the 10<sup>th</sup>

May 1999. Its title is *Motsatsi re fe marumo* (Motsatsi give us spears). The women, about 16 in number, made two lines, one line facing the other. The performers stamped their feet and moved their hands as if they were fighting while they sang very loudly. According to the informants, the women used to sing the song when they were repressed and oppressed in order to challenge the patriarchy and to express their resistance.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Motsa:tsi re fe marumo : :
Baamogedi	:	<u>Maru:mo re tľhabane ntwā : :</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Motsa: tsi re fe marumo : :
Baamogedi	:	<u>Maru :mo re tľhabane ntwā : :</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Aiye-le-le : : : :
Baamogedi	:	<u>Ro'na re:- masole re lwa ka tľha:-ka::</u> <u>Mono mo Tlokweng::</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Aiye-le-le : : : :
Baamogedi	:	<u>Ro'na re :- masole re lwa ka tľha :-ka : :</u> <u>Mono mo Tlokweng::</u>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Motsatsi give us spears</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Spears to fight the war</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Motsatsi give us spears</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Spears to fight the war</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Aiye-le-le</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>We are solders we fight with assegai(s)</i> <i>Here in Tlokweng</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Aiye-le-le</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>We are solders we fight with assegai(s)</i> <i>Here in Tlokweng</i>

The women danced by imitating the style of a male war-song where they moved their hands with a great force. Their evil-looking eyes broadcast their emotions. Their faces assumed expressions of anger. This imitation of the male war dance is extremely important in terms of the desired outcome to challenge the patriarchy. This dance was intended to be ironic, because its mode of action implies much more forcefully than

words that women are equal to men should they be allowed to be warriors. By ironically miming a war-song this performance highlights the women's skills and knowledge and also raises their consciousness for liberation. The words *marumo* and *tšhaka* metaphorically refer to freedom and equality because they believe that by using them they will be emancipated and empowered. The chorus is divided into higher and faster parts, though both sing in rhythmic unison. The structure of this song shows this pattern quite clearly.

The following song, namely *Basadi ba Batswana* (Batswana women), was performed at Dinokana on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1999, in the morning near the royal kraal. It was sung to the accompaniment of a reed-flute, which was blown continuously throughout the performance by an elderly woman.

Letlhaka	:	(::- ::- ::::) (tswelelang) Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka Basadi ba Batswana re lwa ka tšhaka
Moropa	:	(:::: -::::) (tswelelang) Re lebile go morena Kgosi ya rona motlotlegi Re lebile go morena Kgosi ya rona motlotlegi Re fe dithebe le marumo Re tlhabaneng rona masole Re lwa ka tšhaka
<i>Reed flute</i>	:	(:: - :: - :: - ::) ( <i>continuous</i> ) <i>Batswana women we fight with assegais</i> <i>Batswana women we fight with assegais</i>
<i>Drum</i>	:	(:: - ::- :: - ::) ( <i>continuous</i> ) <i>We are looking forward to our chief</i> <i>Our chief his Excellency</i> <i>Give shields and spears</i> <i>We the solders must fight</i> <i>We fight with assegais</i>

The performers were 20 women. They formed a circle facing inside. Six of them had spears made of wood and shields made of hide. As they sang loudly those who had spears and shields moved rhythmically in accordance with the beat of a drum to the centre of the circle while raising their spears and placing their shields at breast level. This signified that they had confidence in their fighting ability. When they sang the sentence *Re lebile go morena* (we are looking forward to the chief) they put their spears down and held the shields forward as if they were pointing to the chief. Other members of the group sang and danced by stamping their feet wearing cocoon rattles. The informant (who was one of the performers) revealed that the song actually was a request to free the women from the minority status imposed on them by the practices prevalent in their patriarchal society. They also demanded to gain increased participation in political and economic areas, which would put them on equal footing with their male counterparts.

Nowadays Batswana women, like many African women, are participating in politics. As they interact with people from other cultures they unite in diversity and learn to accommodate each other's culture in terms of lifestyle and language. Let us focus on the following song, which was performed by South African women at the Union Buildings on the 15th July 1998.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Thabo: Mbe:ki::
Baamogedi	:	<u>Thabo: Mbe:ki Khuluma no Mande:la::</u> <u>Ayokhulula abafa:zi::</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Thabo: Mbe:ki::
Baamogedi	:	<u>Thabo: Mbe:ki Khuluma no Mande:la::</u> <u>Ayokhulula aba:fazi::</u> <u>Abafazi baphi:le ngoxolo::</u> <u>Abafazi baphi:le ngoxolo::</u>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Thabo Mbeki</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela</i> <i>To go and release women</i>
<i>Leader</i>	:	<i>Thabo Mbeki</i>
<i>Chorus</i>	:	<i>Thabo Mbeki speak to Mandela</i>

*To go and release women*

*Women must live in peace*

*Women must live in peace*

Jumping first on the right foot then on the left they performed the song while the right arm was raised to shoulder level in a fist. This is termed toyi-toyi dancing. The women wanted to be liberated and to be given the opportunity to gain equality. The women believed that the intervention of President Mandela might give them the opportunity to challenge all the forces that relegated them to an inferiority status, because he has been the only one who recognised women's involvement. They believed that the proper line of communication is to address Thabo Mbeki as deputy to the president. They demanded to be granted authority, legally and formally. The women dressed in takkies, trousers and T-shirts to allow themselves freedom of movement when dancing. As they sang their sweating foreheads suggested their worry but also their confidence.

#### **6.4.1.3 A song that reflects a love proposal**

We are now going to focus on the song called *Setlhaketlhakeng sa pelo ya lerato* (Island of love) which reflects the power of love as a tool for empowerment. A girl who has just experienced the proposal of love for the first time performed the song. It was recorded at Tlokweg in Lekubung Section on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1998. It was performed in a real life situation.

Moopelanosi	:	Se::tlhakatlhake::ng
		Sa pelo ya lera::to Dali
		Ke ya le we::na
		Ijoo:: ke ya le wena Da;li::
		Ke ya le we::na Dali::
		Ke ya le we::na
		Ijoo:: ke ya le we::na Swithi::
		Ke ya le we::na
		Ijoo:: ke ya le we::na Swithi::
		Ke ya le wena Swithi
		Ke ya le wena::

*Solo* : *To the Island*  
*of the heart of love Darling*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you Darling*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you*  
*Oh! I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you Sweetheart*  
*I go with you*

The performer was wearing a red dress and a pair of white shoes. She indicated that the colours of her clothes expressed her happy mood. She invited the researcher to come and hear her response and this is how she managed to record it. She stood at an intimate distance from the man who proposed to her, because she did not want other people to know what they were talking about. She smiled to make her facial expression positive about the man's proposal. Her sweating forehead suggested her nervousness while her eyes had the look of love with a downward glance that suggested modesty. Since she was shy to talk to him directly she answered his proposal by singing with her arms crossed in front of her. Her provoking smile made her more attractive to the man than before. She sang softly and slowly in a sweet voice. The song is empowering as it raises the proposed girl's self-esteem by placing her as the most important woman in society, since this man chose her above all the other girls.

#### **6.4.1.4 A song that reflects women's views of marriage**

The next song, namely *Legodimo ga lena poso* (Heaven has no post office), was performed by women who were tired of being abused by their husbands. The song was performed at Matlhaku on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1999, at the tribal office where the complaint of a woman (who was severely beaten by her husband) was heard. It was performed in the afternoon.

Phala	:	( ::: - ::: - ::: )
Baopedi	:	Legodimo:: ga le na po::so:: Nka bo ke kwalela Je::su:: Legodimo ga le na po::so:: Nka bo ke kwalela Je::su:: Nna nka bo ke kwalela:: Nka bo ke kwalela More::na:: Nna nka bo ke kwalela:: Nka bo ke kwalela: More::na::
Whistle	:	( ::: - ::: - ::: )
Singers	:	<i>Heaven has no post office</i> <i>I should be writing to Jesus</i> <i>Heaven has no post office</i> <i>I should be writing to Jesus</i> <i>I myself should be writing</i> <i>I should be writing to my Lord</i> <i>I myself should be writing</i> <i>I should be writing to my Lord</i>

Each of the performers covered her head with her shawl. The first step of the performance was marked by a whistle that was blown by the leader throughout the song in accordance with the rhythm. The song has a rhythmic elongation of the penultimate syllable that allowed the performers to express their sorrow. The women danced it kneeling down. They danced slowly by shaking their shoulders while moving slowly on their knees. They sang loudly and slowly. This action is often difficult to see since the dancers' knees are covered by their dresses. According to the informants, the performers' action of kneeling signified sadness since they sympathise with their friend who has been beaten. Their shivering voices revealed their fear and nervousness. The song was intended to be a kind of prayer and it functioned to evoke empathy and sympathy in the audience, which might force men to stop abusing women. The sentences *Legodimo ga le na poso, nkabo ke kwalela Jeso* (The heaven has no post office, I should be writing to Jesus) are modern metaphors – indications of cultural change. These metaphors encode the women's eagerness to get a positive response

from Jesus, who possesses the power to stop men from abusing women.

#### 6.4.1.5 A song that reflects women's solidarity in communal work

We are now going to concentrate on one of the action songs performed by the women. This song is performed in communal work activities and is transformed into a dance form independent of actual work. The example is the following song *Mmanku mpelegele ngwana* (Mmanku carry the child on the back for me). This example reflects the socially accepted female roles of grace and domestically-orientated work.

Motlhabeletsi	:	Mmanku mpele;gele: ngwana yo ke a lema::
Baamogedi	:	<u>O a mpo:na ke a lema::</u> <u>ke lema : ke le no : :si</u> <u>ga se pula monongwaga : :</u> <u>ke lema ke le no : :si</u> <u>ke tlhoka le motho yo o ka ntemisa :ng</u> <u>ke lema ke le no : :si</u> <u>banna ba ile dikompone : :ng</u> <u>ke lema ke le no : :si</u>
Motlhabeletsi	:	Mmanku mpelegele: ngwana yo
Baamogedi	:	<u>ke a lema::</u> <u>O a mpo:na ke a lema::</u> <u>ke lema ke le no : :si</u>
Leader	:	<i>Mmanku carry the child on the back for me</i> <i>I am ploughing</i>
Chorus	:	<i>You see I am ploughing alone</i> <i>There is a lot of rain this year</i> <i>I am ploughing alone</i> <i>There is nobody who helps me in ploughing</i> <i>I am ploughing alone</i> <i>Men went to the mines</i> <i>I am ploughing alone</i>

*Leader* : *Mmanku carry the child on the back for me*  
*Chorus* : *I am ploughing*  
*You see I am ploughing alone*  
*I am ploughing alone*

In this song there is a leader who leads the song and the others respond in a chorus. Among the dancers, one leader is recognized who cues the actions of pretending to be ploughing and the chorus imitates these actions. The actions are performed in strict rhythmic unison in accordance with the music. Each movement is performed to coincide with the main pulse of the music. A habitual smile on their faces reflects their love for the job.

In this song the woman asks for help in minding the baby while she ploughs. It is empowering in the sense that solidarity and communal work are embedded in Batswana culture. Transmitting the Batswana tradition through the song might help making women resilient and strong and teaching them the skills of sharing the workload with one another. The song is also empowering as it strengthens the women's spirit to cope with difficult work and it promotes solidarity among the women. A common focus of attention and a common emotional mood might result from this song.

In the above section an attempt was made to analyze the performance of the songs as vehicles for making an authentic women's voice heard. This included enhancing their common emotional mood, transferring knowledge and skills and freeing them from the unfair practices that underpin the patriarchy. The following section will analysis the actual singing of the songs.

## **6.5 CALL AND RESPONSE**

The oral artist has the power to perform her music in a way that challenges her listeners to respond. Antiphony can be described as a type of performance in which one voice makes a call and the other voice responds. Most of the Batswana women songs are antiphonal in form. In other words, there is mostly a person who leads in a song (*mothabeletsi*) and the other members of the group respond in a chorus. The chorus replies with repetitive motifs in a drone-like fashion. In many songs there is an overlap

between the call and the response. The leader should be a person with courageous manner and a pleasant yet loud voice that will inspire the group to respond. Highlighting the importance of group performance, Nketia (1975:22) maintains that

The performance of music assumes a multiple role in relation to the community: it provides at once an opportunity for sharing in creative experience, for participating in music as a form of community experience, and for using music as an avenue for the expression of group sentiments.

In this regard one might see the expression of group sentiments as a powerful tool for cultural continuity, empowerment and change, since it promotes a spirit of solidarity and helps the women to develop a sense of self-confidence and belief in their own abilities.

Let us focus on how the following song is sung. It is an example of how the Batswana girls love their traditional attire and it was performed during the interviews. The song is not commonly performed nowadays due to the influence of Western civilization, which brought new media such as television and radio. These media have had a profound influence on Batswana culture, because many Batswana children nowadays do not have the time to learn their customs and values properly as they spend their free time watching television or listening to the radio. This is an example of a song with an antiphonic structure:

Moeteledipele	:	Makgabe a a dirilwe ka eng?
Motsayakarolo	:	Ka ditlhale
Baamogedi	:	<u>Mmamakga'be a ditlha:le e ya koo::</u> <u>O ye ko ga'e o tlhabe:tsw::</u> <u>O tlhabe'tswe nku tshwa:na:</u> <u>Nku tshwa'na ngwana more:na:</u> <u>Wa morena wa konya:na:</u> <u>Konyana ya bo setshwe:ne</u> <u>Setshwe'ne wa magwaane</u> <u>Helee: helee: tsa bo mang gape?</u> <u>Tse dingwe gape tsa bo mang gape?</u> <u>O nne'nne o itese:</u>

O na:me nkoto

Le lengwe nnaka::

*Leader* : *What is this skirt made of?*  
*Participant* : *With loose threads*  
*Chorus* : *The girl who wears the skirt goes there*  
*Go home where they have slaughtered for you*  
*They have slaughtered a black ewe*  
*Black ewe for the chief's daughter*  
*Chief of the konyana*  
*Konyana of the Setshwene clan*  
*Setshwene who is not circumcised*  
*Hey hey who else?*  
*Others for whom else?*  
*Sit down and relax*  
*Stretch a leg*  
*One another baby*

In this song the slaughtering of the black ewe is a sign of the dignity and honour of a chief's daughter. Wearing cultural attire in this case might enhance the girl's self-identity and self-esteem.. The lack of circumcision is an irony that indicates that despite the fact that her great-grandfather was not circumcised he is still honoured in his descendents.

There are other instances where the calls and their corresponding responses are repeated four times. One can assume that this is a way of catching the audience's attention, and emphasising that they are expected to give feedback. Thereafter the leader (*motlhabeletsi*) sings with the group in chorus. Here follows an example:

Motlhabeletsi : Sewe: ledi:: sewana:lala Ijoo::  
 Sewe:ledi:: sewana:lala Ijoo::  
 Sewe:ledi:: sewana:lala Ijoo::  
 Sewe:ledi:: sewana:lala **Ijoo::**  
 Baamogedi : Ga le a re le nyalwa: ka kwa kgosing?

Tlheng mme: le tswele tsa maswai:le::

Ga le a re le nyalwa ka kwa kgosing?

Tlheng mme: le tswele tsa maswai:le::

- Leader* : *Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*Seweledi sewanalela Ijoo*  
*(yodeling sound)*
- Chorus* : *Why do you say you are marrying the chief?*  
*While you wear clothes of uninitiated female youth*  
*Why do you say you are marrying the chief?*  
*While you wear clothes of uninitiated female youth*

The symbols, which explain the manner by which the songs are sung, will also be applied in the following songs to indicate how the women and girls used their artistic skills to indicate to their audience their skills and knowledge of participating in the rain making ritual. The following song was performed during the rainmaking ceremony (*kopo ya pula*):

- Motlhabeletsi* : *Leru le::le::*  
*Le le kwa le ::le::*
- Baamogedi* : *Segamakwena::*
- Motlhabeletsi* : *Leru le::le::*  
*Le le kwa le ::le::*
- Baamogedi* : *le kwa le::le::*  
*Segamakwena::*  
*Le le kwa lele*  
*Segamakwena ka nkgwana ya bokone::*  
*Segamakwena ka nkgwana ya bokone::*
- Leader* : *The cloud there*  
*That is there*
- Chorus* : *Crocodile-milker*

*Leader* : *The cloud there*  
*That is there*

*Chorus* : *Crocodile-milker*  
*That is there*  
*That is there*  
*Crocodile-milker with clay pot of the north*  
*Crocodile-milker with clay pot of the north*

The significance of this song is that it teaches the girls how they should communicate with the ancestors during difficult times like famine in order to draw their attention so that they can relieve the people from hunger. Going to the ancestors' fountain shows respect for the ancestors and honours them for their protection. It can be seen as a form of cultural empowerment and continuity by which the knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. *Segamakwena* (crocodile-milker) refers to the clouds, which is the only source of rain. *Nkgwana* (clay pot) is a traditional storage vessel for water and beer, which again recalls an element from the heritage. It is called *nkgwana ya bokone* (clay pot of the north), since it is believed that the good rainmaker, chief Modjadji of the Balobedu community, used clay pots during rainmaking.

The following song is also an example of antiphony. The above-mentioned symbols are used to indicate the melody:

Motlhabeletsi : Mankorikori::  
 Koriwee mankorikori

Baamogedi : Mankoriba

Motlhabeletsi : Mankorikori::  
 Koriwee mankorikori

Baamogedi : O tla tswa jang  
Mankoriba  
O okome:tse sediba::  
Se se:na mapalamo::  
O okome:tse sediba::  
 Se se:na mapalamo::  
 O tla tswa jang.

*Leader* : *Mankorikori:*  
*Koriwee mankorikori*  
*Chorus* : *Mankoriba*  
*Leader* : *Mankorikor:*  
*Koriwee mankorikori*  
*Chorus* : *Mankoriba*  
*(yodelling sound)*  
*You peeped inside the well*  
*Which has no steps*  
*How will you get out*  
*You peeped inside the well*  
*Which has no steps*  
*How will you get out*

In this song the word *Mankorikori* is the proper name of the chief's daughter who has been given the role of leading the girls to the ancestors' fountain. The name means "someone who has inherited leadership" and the play on her name in the phrase *Koriwee mankorikori* signifies the honour and dignity that she will earn with her ability to lead them to the ancestors' fountain. The sentence *O okometse sediba se sena mapalamo o tla tswa jang?* (You peeped inside the well which has no steps how will you get out) in context means that although she has been offered the opportunity to lead the group to the ancestors' fountain, she still remains sidelined and marginalised like other females in the patriarchal society, because despite being the chiefs' daughter her social status cannot be higher than that of men. She is therefore requested to pave the way for women to be recognised and included in decision-making in public gatherings.

After the rainmaking ritual the rainmaker (*moroka*) will be thanked for this success in calling the rain by means of a song such as the following:

Motlhabeletsi : Moro:ka wee  
 Baamogedi : Moroka o monna tota:  
O biditse maru a pula  
 Motlhabeletsi : Bontsho bo: le:: ke bang bole

- Baamogedi : Ke bontsho ba maru::  
 Motlhabeletsi : Bontsho bole ke bang bole  
 Baamogedi : Ke bontsho ba maru::  
Kana ba phala:: ba lerole  
Lerole lehibidu::  
Bontsho ba maru:::  
 Pula! Pula! Pula!
- Motlhabeletsi : Gadima le: le:: ke lang lele  
 Baaomgedi : Ke gadima la maru::  
 Motlhabeletsi : Gadima le: le:: ke lang lele  
 Baamogedi : Ke gadima la maru::  
Kana le bitsa maru a pula::  
Pula ya medupe::  
Gadima la pula:::  
 Pula! Pula! Pula!  
 A e ne! A e ne!
- Leader : Rainmaker hey*  
*Chorus : Rainmaker you are a great man*  
*You have called cloud for rain*
- Leader : What is that black thing*  
*Chorus : It is the blackness of clouds*  
*Leader : What is that black thing*  
*Chorus : It is the blackness of clouds*  
*It is admired than dust*  
*Dust that is red*  
*Black of clouds*  
*Rain! Rain! Rain!*
- Leader : What is that lightning for*  
*Chorus : It is lightning of clouds*  
*Leader : What is that lightning for*  
*Chorus : It is lightning of clouds*  
*It calls clouds for rain*  
*Rain of gentle showers*

*Lightning for rain*

*Rain! Rain! Rain!*

*Let it rain! Let it rain!*

The success of the rainmaker in bringing the rain is an indication that the ancestors appreciate the women's involvement in the ritual and responded positively. It therefore enhances the women's status in the village.

The following song is performed by the initiands on the termination of the initiation period. There is a ceremony called *thojana*. The initiands (*dialogane*) sing this song with cadence and vibrancy in their voices to express their sense of self-identity and their pride in their achievements. The presentation will now be on how initiands performed *thojane* song in antiphonal way. The response of the chorus is underlined:

Motlhabeletsi: Tshwe:ne pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene

Baamogedi: Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Motlhabeletsi: Tshwe:u pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Baamogedi: Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Motlhabeletsi: Hee:: tshwe:u Ahee:::e::

Baamogedi: Hee:: tshwe:u ya bokolela

Ntshu wee A ke ke reke ka:: we:na dilo tsa batho::

Tshwe:ne pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Tshwe:u pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Hee:: tshwe:u ahee:::e::

Hee:: tshwe:u ya bokolela

Motlhabeletsi: Ntshu wee a ke ke reke ka:: we:na dilo tsa **batho::**

Baamogedi: Tshwe:ne pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Tshwe:u pha:tana ya yona e tse:na ka yona tshwene:

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Se ke eng se Ke mosadi wa tshwe::ne::

Hee:: tshwe:u Ahee::::e::

Hee:: tshwe:u Ya bokolela what does bokolela mean??

Ntshu wee A ke ke reke ka:: we:na dilo tsa batho::

- Leader* : *Baboon enters through its path*
- Chorus* : *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*
- Leader* : *Baboon enters through its path*
- Chorus* : *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*
- Leader* : *Hey white cow*
- Chorus* : *Hey white cow who is mooing*  
*Black can I buy with you people's goods*  
*Baboon enters through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Baboon enters through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Hey white cow*  
*Hey white cow*
- Leader* : *Black cow can I buy with you people's goods*
- Chorus* : *Baboon enters through its path*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*
- Leader* : *Baboon enters through its path*
- Chorus* : *What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*What is this? It is the baboon's wife*  
*Hey white cow*  
*Hey white cow*

*Black cow can I buy with you people's goods?*

Among the Batswana the baboon is a most important animal, a totem of the great leaders of the Bahurutshe. The song has repetition, which adds rhythm and emphasises keywords such as *ke mosadi wa tshwene* (it is baboon's wife). The baboon's wife is recognised as an important figure in reproduction just like the women. "It enters through its path" is a hyperbole that highlights the ability of the women to educate the girls to be responsible women who could be married with a "white cow" which signifies their fertility. The song was performed by the graduates (*dialogane*) during the celebration (*thojane*) of welcoming them back home. They wore thread aprons with bare buttocks and bare breasts. This was done to entice men who were among the audience to marry them, since it is believed that a woman's fertility is reflected in her buttocks and breasts. The beauty of the performers was increased by their smiles, which increased the expectations of the audience. The performers danced all night long shaking their hips while they repeated the song many times. The song was sung very loudly at a moderate speed, which created a relaxed atmosphere. Here again the young women have a common focus of attention and are mutually aware of that. A common emotional mood is created, and the ritual results in enhanced emotional energies and confidence in themselves as women and as full members of society.

Let us now focus on how Batswana women use figurative language to enrich their language, but also to transmit and change culture. This will be investigated in the next section.

## 6.6 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

The Batswana women use figurative language, that is, figures of speech such as metaphors, simile, and personification, to achieve special effects like revealing inner feelings, creating vivid images, or expressing a thought in a condensed, economical way. Sometimes the descriptive language reveals the speaker's feelings. Figurative language always helps to make a song, poem or speech more interesting than when it is presented in everyday language. In this way the audience becomes attracted to the performance and they may pay attention to the scene of performance. Examples of each figure of speech will be discussed in the songs below to highlight the potential of

women's songs as vehicles for cultural empowerment, continuity and change.

### 6.6.1 Metaphor (*tshwantshiso*)

Metaphor can be described as an implicit comparison. Women as oral artists use metaphor to explain an idea by making a comparison with some other branch of their knowledge or experience, for instance:

1. Re bone sego sa metsi

Seponono se dikoti

Se dikoti marameng

*We have seen the water calabash*

*Pretty girl with dimples*

*She has dimples in her cheeks*

In the first example the addresser compares the girl-to-be-wed to *sego sa metsi* (water calabash) which refers to a bowl in which her husband will be served. This metaphor indicates that a woman is very important in the family as she will nurture her husband. This raises her self-esteem.

2. Shako ya pitse didimala nnaka

Tlhako ya pitse didimala nnaka

*Horseshoe keep quiet baby*

*Horseshoe keep quiet baby*

This is part of a song which was discussed in chapter 3. The figurative language that appears here is a metaphor. The baby is compared to *tlhako ya pitse* (a horseshoe) because as it cries it hugs the sister's or the nanny's back like a horseshoe. The singer entreats the baby to stop crying and clinging to her and to fall asleep.

### 6.6.2 Simile (*tshwantshanyo*)

Simile is a literary device which makes an explicit comparison between two things, by using the word *tshwana le* (like) or *jaaka* (as) to compare the event or objects, for example:

Monna monna wee!  
 O bogale jaaka tau.  
 Ntate o rata basadi  
 O sasanka masigo jaaka baloi  
 Mosadi le bana lapeng  
 Ba motshaba go tshwana le molelo

*Man Man hey!*  
*You are as vicious as a lion*  
*My father is a womanizer*  
*He walks a lot at night like a witch*  
*His wife and children at home*  
*Fear him like fire*

In this song, a man is compared to a lion, because he sees himself as so supremely powerful that he can get away with unacceptable behaviour. Comparing the wife's and children's fear of him to fear of fire, means that they need to make him aware that he treats them harshly so that he can change his attitude. This simile can be empowering, because women who are aware of a husband's infidelity or abuse of his wife and children are not free to express this knowledge publicly but can articulate their feelings through songs.

### 6.6.3 Personification (*mothofatso*)

This is a form of figurative language in which abstract ideas or inanimate objects are addressed as human beings. The woman as a composer emphasizes her message with this type of imagery, which could be a way to raise the audience's awareness of inequalities. Let us focus on the following example:

Lerato wee o setlhogo jang  
 O kgaogantse mme le ngwana  
 Wa mo isa letagweng la bojalwa  
 Bojalwa, o thuba malapa a batho  
 O lwantsha monna le mosadi  
 Wa lere loso fa gae  
 Wena loso, o setlhogo jang!  
 O tseetse mosadi bana ba gagwe

*Love you are merciless  
 You separated mother and child  
 You took her to a drunken man  
 Beer, you are crushing people's homes  
 You caused a fight between a man and his wife  
 You brought death at home  
 You death, you are cruel  
 You dispossessed the woman her children*

In the above examples abstract ideas such as *lerato* (love), *bojalwa* (beer) and *loso* (death) are personified as human beings in order to underline their negative effects. Love is supposed to strengthen the marriage and enhance the status of the mother, but in turn it is compared to beer, which makes the intoxicated husband forget his promise of love and behave badly. Love seems to lead to drinking and drinking to estrangement, and eventually to death and dispossession.

The forms of communication discussed above place the performance of woman's songs in a ritual context and are important tools for social solidarity and in some cases for women's strategy of resistance.

We are now going to focus on how morphology is applied in the women's songs.

## 6.7 MORPHOLOGY

It is important to note that in some of the women's songs "words" have been altered to keep pace with the rhythm and to strengthen the women's actions in ritual situations. However, the vocabulary is rather simple and direct, and therefore the audience can understand it as they belong to the same society. A word is altered either by apheresis, syncope or apocope. The omission helps to maintain the rhythm. The above terms will be described below.

Apheresis occurs when a word loses an initial vowel or syllable and is used by a performer when she wants to stress her struggle for freedom and enhancement of knowledge and skills, rather than keeping silent and accepting their oppression as part of life. This format is common among the Batswana. For example:

(le)Fa tsatsi le tlhaba  
 Ntate le (a)buti ba itumella  
 Go rothisa (di)keledi tsa'mme

*When the sun rises  
 My father and brother are happy  
 To share to my mother's tears*

In the above song the omitted syllables or vowels are *le-*, *a-*, and *di-*. The girl who performed the song revealed that because she sympathised with her mother she wanted her to be emancipated as soon as possible. That is why she shortened some of the words, as she is eager to highlight her dissatisfaction in a way that would prepare her audience to listen to her song and emancipate her mother.

Sometimes a word is presented by omitting something from the middle; this omission helps to adjust the phrase to the rhythm, for example:

Ngwana'mme robala  
 O nnana'ka robala

*Mother's baby sleep*

*Oh my baby sleep*

In the above example the omitted syllable is *-wa-*.

Another type of word alteration is called apocope, which refers to the omission of the last part of a word, for example:

Ntate ntetle go tsena sekolo

*My father allow me to attend school*

In this example the omitted syllables are *-lele*.

It can be assumed that as the women are eager to be heard, their choice of words and the manner of presenting them is an indication that they want to speed up their struggle for cultural change and empowerment for all women and girls.

## 6.8 CONCLUSION

It is clear that performance of the songs is a most important aspect of Batswana culture. Music is an essential part of the communication. In performance, women exploit the situation to confront their audience face-to-face and to circulate their messages and express their feelings publicly. It has been indicated that they present their message in a way that might entice the audience to listen to their request. To this end the women used antiphony, figurative language, and types of morphology to strengthen their message of female solidarity. The songs are performed in a way that strengthens the desirable outcomes and attitudes, making the songs powerful expressions of an authentic female tradition that resists practices prevalent in their patriarchal society.

It can be said that through performance, the performer becomes the sender of the message who applies her skills tactfully to communicate her message. The audience, on the other hand, listens to the voices and watches the actions of the performers and these in turn help their responsive souls to interpret the message. The women apply skills and

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knowledge in the performance of the songs to teach culture, to maintain it and where necessary to reinforce cultural change. It can be concluded that like all types of oral literature the performance of the songs can be an important tool for making the women's voice heard and for building solidarity through ritual.

## **CHAPTER 7**

# **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS: BATSWANA WOMEN'S SONGS AND ENCULTURATION, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Throughout this study it was emphasised that the Batswana women are the transmitters of their culture. They guide, support and maintain their culture and its values, and they also help changing the culture, at least partly, by means of the songs that are incorporated into events and ceremonies at various stages of life.

This study focused on selected traditional and contemporary songs by Batswana women. The questions that the study investigated were the following:

1. Are the Batswana women's songs vehicles of potential enculturation, continuity and change?
  2. What are the functions of the songs in ritual context?
  3. To what extent do the songs tell about women and express an authentic female tradition?
  4. What is the relationship between the performance of the songs and enculturation, continuity and change?
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The chapters in this study addressed these questions from different angles either implicitly or explicitly.

The songs represent different stages of a woman's life, namely childhood, adolescence, married life, middle age, and the post-menopausal stage. Girls are included since they are subjected to the training in survival strategies and they are the future custodians of the revered social values.

## **7.2 THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Part of the background of the study is that in a traditional patriarchal society women are regarded as minors. Tracing back the origin of women's exploitation, it is clear that the patriarchal culture is the source of social stereotypes, which have always allowed men to assume a superior status without question. The Batswana woman's place was believed to be at home, conditioned by a structure of traditional norms, values, rituals and symbols. They are expected to be dedicated mothers, adoring wives who would sing their spouses' praise, and who would be willing to receive their husbands' new wives or concubines with open arms. Despite all that they are expected to remain silent. Stereotyping, disrespect and inequality form barriers to women's presence and visibility in the public sphere. In this situation women's motivation to make a better life for themselves involves both resistance and self-affirmation.

A major focus of this study is women's experience and their efforts to preserve their culture by means of songs. The women use songs as a reservoir of the society's values and to express their worldview. The songs thus give them the spiritual energy to live from day to day. Trying to strengthen social solidarity often needs a joint effort. Hence some songs are used to achieve the objective of socializing free individuals who would see advantages derived from participation in the group.

## **7.3 DESIGN AND METHOD OF THE STUDY**

The researcher used Collins' (1988) interaction ritual theory as an overarching model for understanding the data, Duncan's (1992) face-to-face interaction to understand how the performers interacted with the audience, and Tracey's (1967) model to reflect how

the message was transmitted from the performers to the audience. The framework is used as a tool for analyzing the women's songs as vehicles for enculturation, continuity and change.

The researcher defined the terms "culture", "cultural empowerment", "cultural continuity" and "cultural change", as they are the main focus of the study. Culture was defined as the attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviour and communication patterns shared by people belonging to a clearly identifiable group. Culture is displayed every day when people interact with each other in their everyday life. The above definition clearly reflects that culture is a force that creates a strong bond within a group.

Enculturation is defined as the process by which adults teach culture to the younger generation. In this way children are able to learn the culture from their social environment and assimilate its values. From this definition it can be said that enculturation is a way of teaching the traditional values, beliefs and norms of an ethnic group to the children belonging to that group in order to programme their minds.

Empowerment is defined as the process of bestowing power upon women by enhancing their skills and knowledge in order to give them self-confidence and belief in their own abilities. If women are empowered they will have economic independence and be able to mobilize themselves in order to resist abuse and domination. Women will have the capacity to participate physically and mentally in values, customs etc. which will be shared by a society, and they will live self-fulfilling lives.

Cultural continuity is defined as a process of maintaining a culture and its values. In this way an ethnic group protects and preserves their culture as it serves the group's interest. The knowledge and skills that are maintained are those that are needed for survival.

Cultural change is defined as a process by which a group of people select from knowledge and skills of different cultures during interaction and use them to survive under particular circumstances. Cultural change results from internal and external influences as well as from influences in the environment. It should be noted that cultural change does not occur at the same pace everywhere.

## 7.4 MAIN FINDINGS

### 7.4.1 The songs as vehicles of enculturation, continuity and change

Despite the immense barriers they face, Batswana women have a proven record and a burning desire to educate and guide their young children. Their low social status does not prevent them from providing unconditional love, warmth and support for their children. This study has shown that the women use lullabies and songs to empower their children with the values and morals of their culture. The knowledge embodied in lullabies and songs teaches young girls to perform domestic chores well and also gives them the opportunity to cultivate better communication skills and a deeper understanding of their culture. Furthermore it has been indicated how the songs are particularly helpful to raise the girls' awareness and to enhance their knowledge and skills of caring for babies.

It has also been demonstrated that the women are the mediators (*bagokaganyi*) between the tribe and the ancestors in rainmaking, and they make their request by means of songs that enhance the rainmaker's power to make rain. The rituals performed in a patriarchal society empower the young girls to be responsible adults who are able to cope with the challenges of life. That leads to cultural empowerment. The performances of the rituals would not be complete or even possible without the songs since the songs are essential parts of these rituals. They are also mnemonic devices that embody the tribe's traditions and wisdom.

It has been found that the Batswana women's songs are equally powerful forces of enculturation, continuity and change in the adult phases of marriage, childbearing and widowhood. They play an important part in building solidarity among women that can help them to adapt to new economical and political realities. The songs are used in the different stages of life to promote social solidarity and to express women's emotions and inner feelings, and, in so doing, to give voice to an authentic women's tradition.

Because of the challenges they face in providing for their families, the women organize themselves in *letsema* (work groups) as a way of assisting each other to perform difficult tasks. They use communal work songs to gain confidence and courage to

perform difficult and tedious chores despite socio-political and economic burdens. They learn to rebound into fellowship with other women when they are overtaken by oppression. Hence they see the need to enhance their knowledge and skills by empowering one another by means of their songs.

#### **7.4.2. The functions of the songs in ritual context**

The women chose to use songs because they regard them as powerful tools to be used in different rituals, as well as to subscribe to the practices prevalent in the society. By performing the songs the children remembered and internalized what was taught. The songs thus proved to be an effective way of enculturation. In the rituals such as rainmaking the songs are effective means to ensure the presence of the ancestors. The songs became a powerful force for social cohesion, which created moral and social solidarity, as well as reinforced a common identity.

The songs performed during initiation rites are powerful means to hand down the skills and responsibilities that come with womanhood. The songs serve as mnemonic devices by which the initiates learned and remembered the secret formulae that are not accessible to outsiders, and hence maintain the culture and its values. The songs empowered women to cope with and assist each other in communal work. In marriage the songs became a useful guide which led the participants from a phase to the other. In this way the participants were able to use the songs to form a common focus of attention, to evoke a common emotional mood and to strengthen the initiated alliance between the two parties. On the other hand, the women used the songs to highlight and resist unacceptable behaviour by their husbands and challenged the cultural change in widowhood. By using songs the women made their voices heard in the political sphere. The influence of modernization led the women to use the songs to request recognition of their performance in the economic sphere.

#### **7.4.3 The songs tell about women and embody an authentic women's tradition**

The study found that the women are reliable, obedient and responsible people who would stand by their word even in difficult situations. They highlight and challenge the patriarchy when they were not satisfied. The themes of their songs reflect their life

experience, knowledge and skills.

Batswana women in the three villages generally share similar attitudes, sentiments, opinions and beliefs about motherhood, femaleness, raising children and the issues of being wives. Hence, they honour the cultural ceremonies and retain the knowledge to conduct these ceremonies by means of their songs, which form an important base for the performances of the rituals. Their subscription to the cultural norms, values and beliefs is highlighted in the way in which they participate in the rites of passage such as rainmaking and initiation and incorporate songs into these rituals.

The women promote self-identity and the well-being of others in the social group by means of songs. They are powerful when organized in groups, and they show confidence and belief in achieving what they want. Women have the privilege and opportunity to empower one another. They extend caring to other women and provide mutual support by means of the songs.

#### **7.4.4 The relationship between performance and enculturation, continuity and change**

It is clear that the women as performers exploit the potential of face-to-face interaction with the audience to circulate their message and to express their inner feelings publicly. It has been indicated that the melodies of the songs will probably entice the audience to listen to their message and to respond favourably to it.

The songs were performed in a way that predisposes desirable outcomes from the audience. The women use body movements, figurative language, repetition and types of morphology to enhance the potential of the songs for enculturation, continuity and change.

Through rituals, the performer has the opportunity to apply her skills tactfully. The audience, on the other hand, listens to the voices and watches the actions of the performers and these in turn help their responsive souls to interpret the message. It should be kept in mind that the language they use to describe what they sing and what they value is itself embedded in culture.

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Now that the findings about the women's songs have been presented, it is time to focus on the challenges ahead in order to reinforce women's visibility and recognition of their participation.

## 7.5 CHALLENGES AHEAD

As one considers the importance of the women's songs, one needs to make the women aware of their special task, which is to present their position in the country in all its aspects. Women are expected to remain in traditional roles like caring for babies and looking after families. As they sincerely fulfil their roles they can take advantage of the situation and redefine their roles. As there still is much injustice in the family, in the society, and in political organizations, Wisker (2000) advises:

As women we must work for our own future; we must overthrow the status quo, which harms us and must no longer submit to it. Like men, we must use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon ... within African literature; room must be made for women ... room we will fight for with all our might.

This means that for women to *communicate* their thoughts, feelings, views and experiences, they must write them down. Through literature women will continue to teach culture, to maintain it and also to struggle to shatter the culturally enshrined silence. Their voices will also represent women's life agonies, and confront, condemn, and reject any social ills directed at women in their respective communities.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) spells out some guidelines to highlight the various commitments of African female writers. According to these guidelines, women writers are expected to:

1. tell the people about being a woman;
2. describe reality as it is in Africa from a woman's point of view;
3. be committed as a writer, a woman and as a third world person; and
4. always be themselves by keeping abreast of their times and being able to observe any new changes (economic, political and social) that may impact on their personal visions of life and on their craft.

The researcher agrees with this view since women are the only people who can make society aware of the importance of their presence in society. It is time for women to reclaim their own sacred energies and bring to mind their powerful heritage.

Through their voices women can create awareness in other women and can work towards creating a more enduring society without gender discrimination in which women will be able to live peacefully side by side with all the members of their own and other countries.

The following factors need to be strengthened in order to ensure cultural change. They include the entire morality of human interaction, locus of control, and the same opportunities for advancement that discipline, fairness, tolerance and respect demand.

The South African Constitution realizes that democracy would not be complete without the emancipation of women from male dominance. In the Constitution there is a Bill of Rights, which is the cornerstone of the new South Africa's democracy. The Bill of Rights is about our rights as citizens, our values, our respect for one another, our equality and our freedom. This indicates that we are equal before the law. Any transformation in women's position requires a change in the oppressors to see women as equal partners in life; hence they should all bear the responsibility to change their behaviour. In order for women to create an enabling environment, free from gender discrimination, they must struggle hard to be able to practice their knowledge and skills to their full potential as equal citizens in a democratic South Africa.

Since much of the labour performed by women is not recognised regardless of its importance to the economy, there is a need to reassert the economic issues. Democracy seems to be tough and complex. Nevertheless it provides a compass of how many efforts need to be made to ascertain the change in the economic status of women. Today's era highlights the power and experience brought from the past towards changing the paradigms of contemporary socio-economic and political policies and discourses. Preserving and promoting the heritage can achieve this. Women can use their previous knowledge and skills of art and culture to enhance the economy. The government recognises the commemoration of Heritage Day on the 24<sup>th</sup> September to allow all South Africans to celebrate their diversity, their many cultures, languages and

religions. This is an indication that we must all stand together to build one South Africa for all.

Underpinning the women's struggle and the mode of using songs are the principles of justice, equality and equity, and equal access to and enjoyment of opportunities globally and within South Africa in particular. The commitment of our government is to support the emancipation and empowerment of women. This will be successful when parents are equally involved in ensuring that the rights of children are not violated. They include the right to education, the right to family care, the right to health care services and the right to be protected from neglect and abuse. The achievement of these will be a distinction that will enable women to champion a principle of one nation and thus a non-racial and non-sexist society.

In order to achieve full democratic rights, there is a need to put in place a mechanism for men to help women fight against injustice as a wider political rebuilding of our nation. All women and men in our country must be extended the right to full, secure social, political and economical life. Access to basic services and the right to health care, eradication of poverty, food security, political stability, and economic progress that will benefit children, women and men and promote gender justice will equalise the position of all in a democratic South Africa. Democracy in the new South Africa is reflected in our National Anthem *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika* and in a national flag which shows all the different colours of what makes us South African. Allow me to quote the words of our former President Nelson Mandela when he was sworn in as President on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1994, when he said, "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another ...".



## ANNEXURE A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

### SETSWANA

#### KAROLO YA NTLHA

- Leina la gago ke mang?
- O na le dingwaga tse kae?
- Seemo sa gago sa lenyalo ke sefe?
- O nna mo karolong efe ya motse?
- O ana eng?

#### KAROLO YA BOBEDI

- Le bona maemo a bomme mo morafeng a tsewa jang?
- Ke goreng basadi le basetsana ba rata go opela?
- Le ikgantsha ka eng le le bomme?
- Ke dipina dife tse le di ratang thata? Goreng le di rata?
- Ntlotleleng ka:
  1. dipina tsa setso
  2. dipina tsa metshameko le mekirietso
  3. dipina tsa go kopa pula le tsa thupiso
  4. dipina le tsamaiso ya manyalo
  5. dipina tsa go tshola bana
  6. dipina tsa go supa kutlobotlhoko ya botlholagadi
  7. dipina tse di rotloetsang basadi go kgotlelela go dira mo letsemeng le kwa madirelong
  8. dipina tsa go supa ngongorego mo go tlhaolweng ga go tsaya karolo mo polotiking

#### KAROLO YA BORARO

Ke kopa gore le bine dipina tse le ntseng le ntlotlela ka tsona.

**ENGLISH****SECTION 1**

- *What is your name?*
- *How old are you?*
- *What is your marital status?*
- *What is your totem?*

**SECTION 2**

- *How do you see the status of women in the society?*
- *Why do women and girls like to sing?*
- *What makes you proud as women?*
- *Which songs do you like most?*
- *Why do you like them?*
- *Can you tell me about:*
  1. *traditional songs*
  2. *lullabies and game songs*
  3. *songs for rainmaking and initiation*
  4. *songs for marriage*
  5. *songs for childbearing*
  6. *songs for widowhood*
  7. *communal work songs and songs for employment*
  8. *songs for political participation.*

**SECTION 3**

*Would you kindly perform the above-mentioned songs?*

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