

# SETLAOLE

# HISTORY, HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROJECT

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# HISTORY, HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROJECT

2008

Research commissioned by:





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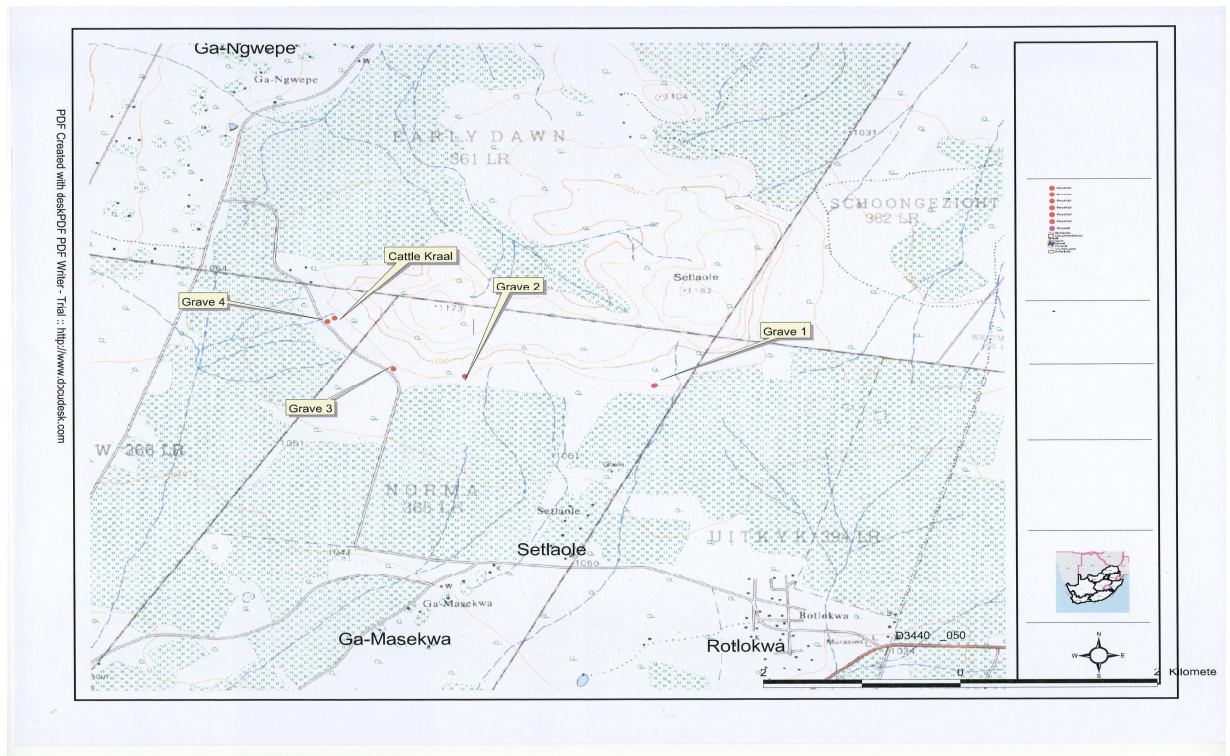
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Setlaole Hill, home to the Bakone group who settled at its foot prior to the land purchases/forced Removals of the 1940's. The hill stands on the western side of Senwabarwana, adjacent to the Makgabeng mountains (in distant background to the north).

(Picture by Richard Munyai)



Map of Setlaole with some old graves marked in red, as well as neighbouring villages like GaMasekwa, GaNgwepe and Botlokwa.



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**Another aim with the Setlaole project is to develop and rebuild it into a tourism facility like this Mmakau old African settlement in North West. Picture with courtesy of Dr. Udo Küsel.**

## AND PROJECT AIMS

The research on the history, heritage and tourism of Setlaole was commissioned by the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority in the 2008/9 financial year in accordance with the provisions and requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999). In the terms of reference for this research project, it is clearly stated that the service provider should gather and package information in a manner that would uncover the history, heritage and tourism potential of the heritage site. The community of Setlaole was stripped of its dignity when it was dismantled by the land policy of the White regime in the 1940's. The envisaged development and rebuilding of the village has the potential to attract tourists from far and near to the site and create employment for the local communities.

In order to achieve the above objective, an assessment, survey and mapping of the heritage resources of Setlaole Hill and the surrounding areas has to be conducted. The reconstruction of the history of Setlaole which includes the political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of that history forms part of the project. In order to gain insight into the life of the people who lived around the Setlaole Hill, a description and analysis of the tangible, cultural and living heritage and its hinterland is vital. After an investigation into the tourism potential of Setlaole, it would become part of the African Ivory Route. In conclusion, the report will make recommendations for appropriate heritage management according to the guidelines provided by the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999).

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### a. INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

In line with the culture of Human Rights embraced by the Republic of South Africa in its constitution, this report is an attempt at recognizing the history and heritage of the previously disadvantaged communities of Black people. Setlaole represents many communities who were forcefully removed by the White government in re-structuring the land in the 1940's to suit the divide and rule policy. The project seeks to revive the settlement and turn it into a model Bakone village for tourists to gain insight into the original life of this group.

The terms of reference clearly articulate and specify six deliverables the service provider is expected to realise. The service provider is expected to deliver on the following:

- The research project, to be considered as complete when the information, particularly on history and heritage, is fully gathered and well documented in the format prescribed by the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority.
- The realization of all legislative requirements and the comprehensive stakeholder interaction with interested and affected parties as well as the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority.

of all documents and correspondence generated during the process to the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority in a final report at the closure of the project.

- The submission of monthly progress reports to the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority as follows: 28 November, 2008 - first progress report; 30 December, 2008 – second progress report; 30 January, 2009 – third progress report; and 28 February, 2009 – fourth and final report.
- The reservation by the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority of the right to request progress reports on dates other than those mentioned as intervention measures.
- The keeping and submission of an attendance register and minutes of all meetings, and interactions with stakeholders and the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority as part of the submission of progress and final reports.

In line with these terms of reference, the service provider observes that this report is the final report to be submitted to the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority, the progress reports having already been submitted as required.

## **b. TYPE OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

This project constitutes research on the history, heritage and tourism potential of Setlaole and the surrounding areas. The research design and methodology deployed in this project seriously take on board and critically engage current thinking and ideas about how to conduct research in a rural, culturally African environment. Setlaole is rural and African. This fundamental reality of the rurality and Africanity of the research site/area necessarily establishes specific methodological principles which it is necessary to take on board if the research is to produce valid, reliable and relevant outcomes/knowledge/information.

It must be remembered that all research methodology has worldview specificity (Asante, 1989; 2003; Diop, 1974; Mazama, 2001; 2002; Reviere, 2001; Carroll, 2008). Conducting research in an culturally African environment utilising methodological principles and perspectives rooted in the European worldview leads to the production of distorted information and therefore flawed knowledge about Africans, their historical and cultural experience and heritage (Carroll, 2008). Only methodologies rooted in the African worldview are appropriate for conducting research about culturally African phenomena. It is only such methodologies which are capable of

and useful knowledge about Africans and experiences. This is why, in this research on Setlaole which is culturally African, a methodology rooted in the African worldview has been deployed. This research methodology has been called the Afrocentric research methodology by its proponents (Reviere, 2001; Mazama, 2001).

In order to appreciate the full significance of the approach we have taken regarding our research on the history, heritage and the tourism potential of Setlaole, it is necessary to explicate what the concept, worldview, means. Also important is a clear understanding of how the different worldview orientations of researchers lead to the deployment of different methodologies in research. A worldview refers to the way in which people make sense of their surroundings; and make sense of life and of the universe (Marimba Ani, 1994). All people have a worldview which is a product of their lived experience and which constitutes the lens through which the world of sense perceptions is reduced to facts. A culture's worldview is invisible but crucial in explaining the behaviour and thought patterns of the people.

A people's worldview is the deep structure which influences and shapes the culture, the behaviour and the thought-patterns of its members (Marimba Ani, 1994). A worldview inclines one to a particular way of thinking and behaviour. Thus, to grasp the thought-patterns and behaviour of a people and hence their history, cultural experience and heritage, a researcher has to have knowledge of their worldview. The methodological principles a researcher deploys in gathering and analyzing data must, for instance, derive from the particular worldview of the people being researched in order to properly grasp their behaviour and thought-patterns. If a researcher deploys methodological principles which are derived from a worldview which is not that of the people being researched distortions inevitably occur.

duced. Since the people of Setlaole are  
in the African worldview, only those  
methodological principles deriving from the African worldview must be  
utilized in research on their problems if valid and reliable knowledge is  
to be gained. The Afrocentric research methodology is the only  
appropriate methodology to grasp the history and heritage of the  
people of Setlaole. While colonialism has imposed some elements of  
an alien European worldview on some members of the Setlaole  
community, the African worldview has largely survived and continues  
to influence the behaviour and thought-patterns of its members.  
In the light of what has been said above, it is necessary to point out  
that the service provider believes that the decision to conduct an  
Afrocentric research type is neither arbitrary nor irrational but culturally  
sound and logical given the African cultural reality of Setlaole.

### **c. THE AFRICAN WORLDVIEW AND AFROCENTRIC METHODOLOGY**

In order to begin to explain the specific methodology deployed on the  
research on Setlaole, it is necessary to clearly explain how research  
methodologies derive from specific worldviews. It must be  
remembered that a research methodology has worldview specificity  
(Carroll, 2008). And Carroll (2008) has identified seven components of  
the worldview concept whose different articulations and orientations in  
the different worldviews account for the different methodologies  
deployed by researchers in their work.

in view and specifying the articulations and orientations of four key components – axiology, ontology, cosmology, epistemology and logic, the nature and shape of the Afrocentric research methodology is utilized in this study. The actual of data collection and analysis used in the study will be clearly understood.

Mazama (2002) sees the African cultural and philosophical principle of the unity of being as deriving from spirit. This spirit/energy is of cosmic origin and permeates and lives within all that is – human beings, animals, plants, minerals, and objects, as well as events. The energy/spirit shared by all confer a common essence to everything in the universe, and hence the principle of the unity of being. This energy constitutes the dynamic principle that animates creation and can be identified as Life itself. The whole universe is dynamic and a living reality.

The African view acknowledges the necessity of the five senses in understanding reality but does not limit reality and knowledge of this reality to only the five senses. Indeed research which limits itself to probing materiality and explanations of African events and problems be they social, economic and political, to materiality are woefully inadequate. Afrocentricity and Areocentric research constructs questions which deal specifically with African spirituality. These questions are fundamental to understanding African thought patterns and behaviour.

Our study of the history and heritage of the people of Setlaole has been guided by this Afrocentric thinking.



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#### **d. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH**

of this research project follow closely the guidelines provided by the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority. Guided by the terms of reference provided, the scope/objectives of the research included the following:

- An assessment, survey and mapping of the heritage resources of Setlaole Hill and the surrounding areas.
- A reconstruction of the history of Setlaole which includes the political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of that history.
- A description and analysis of the tangible, cultural and living heritage of Setlaole and its hinterland.
- An investigation of the tourism potential of Setlaole and its hinterland.
- Recommendations for appropriate heritage management according to the guidelines provided by the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999).

The entire research and its outcomes were be packaged in a manner usable for the needs and operations of the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority and the people of Setlaole.

The key issues in the investigation/research included the following:

- A thorough description of the topography, flora and fauna of Setlaole which brings out the importance of these in the lived experience of the African people. Also important was the unpacking of the nature and pattern of evolving relationships between the people and their natural environment (topography, flora, and fauna).
- A thorough identification of the earliest inhabitants of Setlaole as well as a detailed description of their cultural identity which brings out the political, economic and socio-cultural institutional structures which sustained their lives.
- A critical analysis of the intrusion of Western/Colonial forces in the form of explorers, hunters, traders, fortune seekers, and Christian missionaries who were forerunners of the colonial subjugation of the area. Emphasis was placed on the response and agency of the African people of Setlaole in the face of these agents of Western expansionism.
- The creation of the colonial state in the area and the subsequent political, economic and socio-cultural dispossession of the African people. Primary resistance to the imposition and establishment of the colonial state and economy were analysed. The forms and nature of this resistance was unpacked to determine the actual nature and significance of African agency.

ation of the phenomenon of African  
in the area which brings out the impact of  
the phenomenon on the lives of the people involved.

- A clear description of the heritage resources of Setlaole as well as a critical analysis and interpretation of the significance of this heritage for the questions of African cultural liberation, renaissance, nation-building and the deepening and consolidation of democracy in the Republic of South Africa. Both the tangible and intangible heritage of the research site were critically analysed and interpreted.
- The tourism potentials of Setlaole and its hinterland was explored and suggestions made for their recognition and subsequent development.

What needs to be pointed out is that the examination, analysis and interpretation of these key issues was framed by an Afrocentric theory and lens constructed out of the best and enduring in the values and ideals of the indigenous people of the area. This involved a clear paradigm shift since the dominant perspectives in the analysis and interpretations of such issues have been alien and Eurocentric.

The significance of this paradigm shift is that it decolonizes the history and heritage of the people, which hopefully will begin to build a solid foundation for the empowerment of the people of Setlaole. The production of truthful information and Afrocentric knowledge about the history and heritage of the people of Setlaole will hopefully provide the people of Setlaole with the means to control their own destiny.

## **f. STAKE HOLDERS AND RESEARCHERS CREDENTIALS**

The key stake holders in this project are the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority which commissioned this research project and the descendents of the original African inhabitants of Setlaole who asked the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority to investigate the feasibility and possibility of preserving their history and heritage as well as developing the tourism potential of the research site. The Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority has the statutory power and responsibility to manage all heritage resources in Limpopo Province which are clearly defined in the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999. The people of Setlaole, conscious of the importance of their history and heritage as well as the economic and developmental potential of tourism in their ancestral home of Setlaole have a primary stake in the research project. They are aware of the fact that the success of the project has the potential to change and transform their lives and those of future generations for the better.

The researchers have the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct and complete the research project. The researchers, Dr A.V. Dhliwayo and Mr R. Munyai, combine knowledge, skills and experience in conducting research in history, heritage, and archeology in Limpopo Province. Dr A.V. Dhliwayo is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Limpopo. He teaches History and social science research in the

and Education at the university. He was part of research on the Kransplaas Old Church Heritage Project commissioned by the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority last year (2008). Mr R.Munyai is a qualified working archaeologist who has been engaged in crucial archaeological investigations in Limpopo Province. He has also been engaged in research on heritage issues. He was part of the team engaged in the rehabilitation of Mapungubwe, a world renowned heritage site situated in Limpopo Province. The focus of his attention lately has been directed towards evolving new techniques and approaches to the study of African archeology.

Dr A.V. Dhlwayo and Mr R. Munyai bring a new paradigm – the emerging Afrocentric paradigm to research and study of African phenomena. The cognitive, structural and functional aspects of this paradigm have been developed by internationally renowned scholars. These scholars have developed a new discipline called Africology which involves an Afrocentric study of African phenomena. Dr A.V.Dhlwayo and Mr R. Munyai have successfully deployed the new Afrocentric paradigm in their research projects.

# SETLAOLE HISTORY, HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROJECT

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## **CHAPTER 1**



A View of Setlaole Hill from Uitkyk No.1, where the members of the community call themselves Batho ba Setlaole<sup>1</sup> due to proximity from the hill

(Picture by Richard Munyai)  
Co-ordinates

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
SETLAOLE HILL	BLOUBERG	LIMPOPO	S24°17.738'  E 029°31.735'

In this section we describe the geological and topographical features of the site-Setlaole Hill/Formation and its immediate environment. This description includes the physical – spatial structure of the site plus the flora and the fauna characteristic of the site. Of critical important in this description is the unpacking of the impact human activity has had

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<sup>1</sup> The Setlaole pople

The interaction between the people and their characterization of Setlaole Hill and its hinterland as a heritage resource makes sense or derives its meaning and significance. It is in the quality of this interaction, overtime, that the heritage resource derives its historicity and cultural significance. It is the enduring pattern of relationships, emerging overtime, which mark or constitute Setlaole Hill and its environs as a heritage resource. Without humans and their activities talk about heritage is meaningless. In this regard, the central issue in our investigation is not what we researchers think about the resource but what the indigenous people of Setlaole themselves think about the resource. The critical issue is how the people of Setlaole view, interpret and value Setlaole as a heritage resource. Our approach, as pointed out earlier on, is qualitative and Afrocentric.

## 1.1 GEOLOGICAL / TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Our description, analysis and interpretation has, however, also benefited from the scholarship of Eastwood (1995), Kent (1990) and Brand (1986). The Setlaole Formation /Hill is part of a complex of larger and higher mountains in the northern part of Limpopo Province. It is located at the base of the Waterberg Group / System. The Waterberg Group constitutes a complex system of plateaux, mountains, and hills etc, which are geologically / stratigraphically, related to each other, according to the classification systems of recent geological surveys. Some of these larger formations are Makgabeng, Blouberg and Soutpansberg. Setlaole Hill stretches from the old Mmakathiba village in the West to Uitkyk No.3 in the East. It stands adjacent to the Makgabeng formation and is overshadowed by it. Makgabeng, rising about 200 meters above the surrounding plains, towers far above and makes Setlaole look unimpressive to a casual observer. This however, is not so for the people whose lives have been associated with and shaped by the Setlaole Formation. To them, Setlaole moulded their lives to an extent, degree and depth which cannot be simply described in physical terms. They also affectionately call it Letšhutšhung due to the many Metšhutšhu trees in the area. Our respondents / informants who are descendants of the people who lived on its foothills observe that Setlaole Hill constituted a crucial dimension of how they actually defined themselves as a people. They call themselves the people of Setlaole or the Setlaole people, an identity configuration which has not been undermined by the many years of colonial / apartheid subjugation and dehumanization. Mountains /hills, it would seem, trigger mysterious imagination, which penetrates to the soul of the people associated with them. This issue will be unpacked below.

constituted of rock types and forms similar to those of the larger formations mentioned earlier on. It is part of the Hout River Gneiss, the Rooiberg Group and the Nebo granite. Its maximum thickness is about 1,000 metres in South Villa Nora but gradually thins towards the Blouberg area. Brandl (1986) observes that Setlaole consists of medium-to-coarse-grained, dark-coloured sandstone with intercalations of conglomerates, feldspathic grit, arkoses and blackish mudstone. Locally and around Setlaole Hill, a six-metre-thick volcanistic bed represented by fine-grained, blackish tuffaceous shale and ignimbrites developed at the base. This ignimbrite occasionally exhibits flow banding.

What is particularly relevant and important to point out, as our informants observe, is that Setlaole Hill was not only important for security in times of enemy depredations but also an asset economically – in particular, agriculturally. In terms of security, Setlaole and its trees and thick bushes provided considerable cover from marauding enemy forces, such as the racist Boer Commandos who invaded the area in the late nineteenth century. Setlaole, indeed, acted as the first line of defence and natural shield from enemy attack. If Setlaole Hill became inadequate as a shield the people of Setlaole retreated to the larger Makgabeng with its thicker cover, caves and ravines.

Economically, and in particular, agriculturally, the Setlaole rock formations gradually weathered to form various soil types whose natural properties and chemical composition have allowed plants to grow. We observe below that the soils of Setlaole, though not fertile for the purposes of intensive crop husbandry, have nurtured a variety of flora and fauna which constituted the lifeline of the people associated with the hill.

## 1.2 THE FLORA AND FAUNA



The main gate into the Setlaole camp at the foot of the hill near the Norma B village.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

in a vegetation zone characterized by a grassy ground layer and a distinct upper layer of woody plants and trees. This vegetation forms part of what is referred to as the Savannah Biome (Low & Rebelo, 2002). This biome ranges from shrubland to woodland. Almost half of the Setlaole area and its environs can be characterized in this manner. Uncontrolled human activity and the pressure of stock grazing, have, over the years decimated a large part of the vegetation cover.



**The Setlaole heritage site is currently used for grazing and the result is environmental degradation.**

**(Picture by Richard Munyai).**

The fencing of farms in Setlaole since the establishment of colonial occupation has triggered a process of environmental degradation which is likely to lead to desertification if appropriate rescue measures are not initiated. The main problem is that the human and livestock



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beyond the carrying capacity of the land on  
aole Hill itself still carries thick Savannah  
woodland portraying to the observer what the hinterland looked like  
before the uncontrolled exploitation of land and vegetation with the  
onset of the plunderous European colonial rule and apartheid.



According to the villagers, the deep and wide furrow started as a path and worsened into this donga due to neglect.

(Picture by AV Dhliwayo).



**The land is wounded as erosion eats deep into the soil that used to sustain vegetation  
(Picture by A. V. Dhlwayo).**

Low and Rebelo (2002) have identified the vegetation which has been characteristic of the area. On shallow soils, the red bush willow dominates the vegetation. Other trees and shrubs included the common hook-thorn, sickle-bush, live-long and various grewia species. Grass species include finger grass, Kalahari sand quick, wool grass and various *Aristida* and *Eragrostis* species. Species which dominate on deeper and sandier soils are silver cluster leaf, peeling plane, wild raisin. The scanty grass sward species which are characteristically present are broom grass and purple spike cat's-tail. All these grass species are important as they mostly provide food for game and livestock.



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Due to the scarcity of water, the local authorities have introduced this windmill to cater for the cattle inside the Setlaole camp.

(Picture by A. V. Dhlwayo).

The Setlaole Hill and hinterland were originally home to abundant and diverse fauna characteristic of the Savannah. As in the case of the flora, the fauna has virtually disappeared due to uncontrolled human intrusion, exploitation and the presence of domesticated animals. Most of the species, which were originally found in Setlaole, have permanently migrated elsewhere or have been moved to game reserves such as Blouberg, Waterberg and Limpopo Valley.

Our older informants observe that the Setlaole Hill and surrounding area was habitat to populations of elephants, giraffe, rhinoceros, lions, leopards, hyenas, sable, antelopes, hartebeest, kudu, eland, gemsbok, tsessebe, plain zebra, blue wildebeest, mountain reedbuck and other mammals. Our informants, however observe that, nowadays some baboons, monkeys, hyenas, porcupines and other small mammals are

area but soon disappear due to hunting  
human habitation.



Mogwane Tree / Its tiny round fruits used to feed both people and baboons.  
(Picture by Richard Munyai).



and hard fruits are also eaten by people when ripe and en raw and green.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

Other fruit trees include Mmupudu, Mohlatswa, Mpuru, Monobe which are mostly found on top of the hill. Other non-fruit mountain trees are Mokgopo and Modumela. At the foot of the hill the most common fruit trees include Mokgalo, Morutle, Mogwaane, Mothetlwa, Morula. The most common non-fruit tree is Mohweleretšhipi; Mohwelereboya is very scarce. Other trees include Monakane, Mosehla, Moselesele, Mokaka/Mongangana, Monoto, Moduba, Mogohlo, Mošwana and the legendary Mohlopi tree.



Two of the legendary Mohlopi trees whose roots saved the lives of thousands of the Northern Sotho people during the time of the Great Famine commonly known as Tlala ya Mohlopi.

### 1.3 HUMAN EXPLOITATION OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA

All human cultures have exploited and continue to exploit the flora and the fauna since time immemorial. While all cultures depend on the natural flora and fauna, the relationships with and attitudes towards nature in general and towards the flora and fauna in particular have been diametrically different. The basis of the difference lies in the difference in the worldviews of the cultures. We have examined these differences earlier on. What however it is necessary to mention and which is relevant for this discussion, particularly as it touches on the question of the degradation of the environment and the virtual demolition of the floral and fauna species identified earlier on, are the ontological and cosmological differences between European and the indigenous African worldviews. Carroll (2008: 4 – 27), Mazama (2002: 218 – 233) and Mbiti (1990) have discussed, extensively, indigenous African ontology and cosmology. Our discussions of African spirituality and religion with our informants who are the descendents of the inhabitants of Setlaole all of whom are Bantu reveal a kinship of their ideas with those articulated by these scholars despite the fact that these informants have been subjected to alien European ontological and cosmological influences.

A basic principle at the root of African metaphysics is the unity of being. This unity is a product of the energy/spirit of cosmic origin, which permeates all that is – human beings, flora, fauna, objects as well as events (Mazama, 2002: 218 -233; Mbiti, 1990). This energy which is shared by all confers a common essence to everything in the world and thus ensures the fundamental unity of all that exists. This

... an active, dynamic principle that animates  
... identified as Life itself (Mazama, 2002:218 – 233).  
Indeed, Africans believe that we (humans) are of the same essence  
with plants, animals and other objects which we are accustomed to  
think are inanimate.



**Mohwelere Tree/ It is used for fire wood and people are only allowed to cut the dry wood. Due to its value, a fine of R600.00 is payable if caught cutting the green one. It characterized the Setlaole vegetation.**

**(Picture by Richard Munyai).**

The principle of ontological unity has profound cosmological implications, that is, the principle of connectedness of all that is, based on a common essence; and the principle of harmony, based on the organic solidarity and complementarity of all forms. These principles have had a tremendous influence on the way Africans organise their relations with nature (plants and animals). If humans are fundamentally

plants and animals, it is not surprising if or of respect to nature in general and to plants and animals in particular. Living in harmony with nature, with plants and animals, which is a core principle of the African worldview derives from the ontological and cosmological principles just mentioned. Thus in the African worldview human beings, plants and animals cannot be conceived as separate from each other.

Nature, plants and animals must therefore not be dominated, plundered and destroyed but nurtured, protected and preserved. African culture thus organizes its relationships with flora and fauna to establish harmony. The European worldview is different. Control and domination of humans over nature is a central principle. Since humans are conceived as separate from nature there is a tendency towards the objectification and thus control, domination and plunder of nature; of the flora and fauna.

It is therefore not surprising that European Colonial/cultural domination over Setlaole, as was the case with other parts of South Africa, disrupted the harmony and balance which Africans had with the flora and fauna. The harmony and balance which Africans had with the flora and were gradually replaced with relations of control, domination and plunder. The careful nurturing of "mother" earth, which had organized relations between humans and nature were, in most cases, replaced with wanton exploitation and destruction of the earth's resources. The heritage, in life giving flora and fauna, which the people of Setlaole wanted protected and preserved came to be permanently threatened through thought- patterns and behaviour deriving from the domination of an alien European worldview.



**Mokgalo Tree/ Fruits are eaten by both people and animals; its cutting down is prohibited during the rainy season. Culprits are brought before the traditional court for trial and punishment. It is believed that its cutting stops the rain.**

**(Picture by Richard Munyai).**

But, as we have observed earlier on, the reestablishment harmonious and balanced relationships with nature-flora and fauna continue to animate the behaviour and actions of the people of Setlaole. Thus we see the imposition of fines on reckless individuals who cut down trees unnecessarily. We also find attempts to prevent overgrazing and the balanced utilization of land through the zoning of various activities. These practices were not introduced in Setlaole by Europeans. They are practices which are rooted in the African worldview. They constitute part of the living heritage of the African people of Setlaole.

However, the pernicious influence of the European worldview continues and has been evident since European intrusion in the nineteenth century. European hunters, farmers and traders whom we

ize as fortune hunters and capitalist  
ent automatic rifles and efficient sews and  
axes, initiated the decimation of the flora and fauna. They inculcated  
an ethos of plunder – for profit on those Africans they imprisoned in  
colonial schools and churches they established. Early missionaries in  
our area of study manifested, in extreme forms, separation and  
alienation from nature and the earth's natural resources which in  
African spirituality were regarded as divine gifts from Modimo<sup>2</sup>. Our  
older informants observe that the Wesleyan and Lutheran missionaries  
in Setlaole feared snakes and wild animals which they regarded as  
dangerous and had to be killed. Forests and mountains were treated  
as obstacles to be subjected and conquered for the advancement of  
Christian civilization. Their homes and settlements were conceived as  
barriers against barbarity and bases from which light would conquer  
and disperse that darkness spawned by the wild forests and animals. It  
is therefore not surprising that the African flora and fauna started to  
disappear with the arrival of European fortune hunters and the  
subsequent imposition of colonial domination and European  
supremacist rule.

---

<sup>2</sup> God



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Mokwerekwere/ Edible fruits and branches are used to build a sorghum beer storage.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).



Mookgopho/ Its dry branches are used as a torch/lamp when dark. It grows both on top and at the foot of the hill.

The African living heritage of harmony and balance with nature which continues to animate those who have not been incarcerated in patterns of thought and behaviour deriving from the European worldview can only be preserved and consolidated if Africans return to source, that is, relocate themselves in the cultural values and ideals of their ancestors. The descendents of the original inhabitants of Setlaole are aware of this pivotal need and this is why they insist on the protection and preservation of their heritage.

#### **1.4 SETLAOLE TODAY**



Descendant of the Setlaole people, Mr. KS Ramoroka stands in the middle of what used to be a cattle kraal, though currently covered by the long grass.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

The picture of Setlaole Hill and its surrounding areas we have today is largely a product of change and continuity; processes brought about by the confrontation of considerably different cultures with different worldviews which we described above. Aspects of this picture are portrayed in the photographs which we have produced and the maps we have acquired. We will leave out some details because the pictures and the information accompanying them tell the story. However, some aspects of these pictures need some clarification.

Approaching the area from the direction of Senwabarwana one is immediately confronted by demarcated and fenced farms owned by Africans who bought them from European companies who had colonially acquired the land from its African owners. The Setlaole Hill overlooks these farms; one of which is Farm Norma A- which was

to originally occupied its southern foothills. Specific, was bought and transferred to the buyers in 1937. The seller was Bourke Trust and Estate Company. The buyers were twenty one Bakone men and women who had came together for the purpose of this purchase as required by the law of the Transvaal Boer Republic. These predominantly Bakone families of Ngwepe, Ramoroka, Mojela, Setumu and Masekwa nick-named their village Bohlapamonwana<sup>3</sup> due to water scarcity. The Bakone totem is a small bird called Tlhanhlagane<sup>4</sup>. Boys and hunters in general are prohibited from killing the bird, let alone eat it. It is their sacred bird!

In this transaction, which violated Bakone custom based on the communal ownership of land, the twenty one Bakone were represented by Kgoši<sup>5</sup> Sekgoari Matlala of the Matlala Polity. The transaction clearly stated that the mineral resources which might be found on the land belonged to the state rather than the buyers of the land.



<sup>3</sup> Wash only your fingers/toes (literal)

<sup>4</sup> Scaly feathered finch, scientifically known as Sporopipes Squamifrons

<sup>5</sup> chief

Senwabarwana, after Uitkyk 1 follows the Uitkyk 2 turn-off  
work in the road; the road to the Right leads to these farms

(Picture by A. V. Dhlwayo).

Setlaole Hill is surrounded by these farms bought by groups of Africans who came together as required by law. As pointed out earlier on, one of these farms is Farm Norma A. The land vacated by the buyers of Farm Norma A is Farm Norma B which was bought by Africans from as far a field as Botlokwa, Ga-Dikgale, Mamabolo and Moletji. These outside buyers managed to buy the farm, according our informants, because the owners of the land delayed to organise themselves for the purposes of the purchase due to disagreements as to whether or not they should buy land they regarded as theirs. But the Bourke Trust and Estate Company was in the business of selling land and was prepared to offer it to any group which had the means and was properly organised for the purchase. This is how the original owners of the land lost out to people who came from outside Setlaole area.

On the farms are dwelling houses and other structures constructed according to European architectural styles. Attached to each plot/home is land utilized for agricultural purposes. Livestock such as goats, cattle, sheep and donkies can be seen feeding on the farms.



**Herdmen lead the cattle to greener pastures.**

**(Picture by A. V. Dhliwayo).**

Setlaole Hill itself is still covered by the Savannah vegetation we described earlier on. Some of the trees produce edible fruits and the wood of some of the trees is used for the various purposes indicated in the information accompanying the photographs. The graves of the original inhabitants, the descendents of whom are in Norma A, are a prominent feature of the land on the foothills of Setlaole. These graves shown in the photographs are still visited by the descendents of those buried in them. Some of them are properly cleaned and provided with appropriate protective cover while others are not and therefore difficult to identify. It is, perhaps, the flora, fauna and the graves which constitute the critical markers of the historical and cultural significance of Setlaole Hill.

## CHAPTER 2

### NATURE OF INVESTIGATION AND RESULTS

This section unpacks the history, the tangible, cultural, and living heritage of Setlaole Hill and the surrounding area from an Afrocentric perspective as articulated by Molefi Kete Asante, the originator of Afrocentricity. In his first major work, Asante (2003) defines Afrocentricity as follows:

*Afrocentricity is a mode of the thought and action in  
Which the centrality of African interests, values, and  
Perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is  
the placing of African people in the centre of*

phenomena.

anyone to master the discipline

*Of seeking the location of Africans in a given phenomenon. In terms of action and behaviour, it is the devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behaviour. Finally Afrocentricity seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a trope of ethics.*

*Thus to be black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, pedophilia, and white racial domination.*

The nature of this investigation is therefore Afrocentric. African values and ideals animated the entire process of investigation. The people of Setlaole are African, so there is no other way to grasp their history and heritage than Afrocentricity. There was thus logic and rationality in jettisoning Eurocentric theories as far as this investigation was concerned. The values and ideals which are generally accepted in the Afrocentric school of thought, which have thus animated this investigation are the following:

- (a) the centrality of the community – communalism;
- (b) respect for tradition;
- (c) a high level of spirituality and ethical concern;
- (d) harmony with nature;
- (e) the sociality of selfhood;
- (f) veneration of ancestors;
- (g) the unity of being (Mazama, 2001: 387 – 405).

## 2.1 HISTORY

The earliest inhabitants of Setlaole must have been attracted to the area by, inter alia, the security cover provided by the hill as well as the food provided by the flora and fauna we identified and described earlier on. These earliest inhabitants were hunters / gatherers as well as herders of domesticated livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats. The hunters /gatherers who had probably been settled here for at least ten thousand years were the ancestors of the San while the herders who arrived much later were ancestors of the Khoikhoi (Woodhouse, 1978). These earliest inhabitants were the pioneers and the initiators of

...a, a process which was continued with the  
...oikhoi, and the Bantu – speaking people, a  
group to which the current dominant people of Setlaole belong.

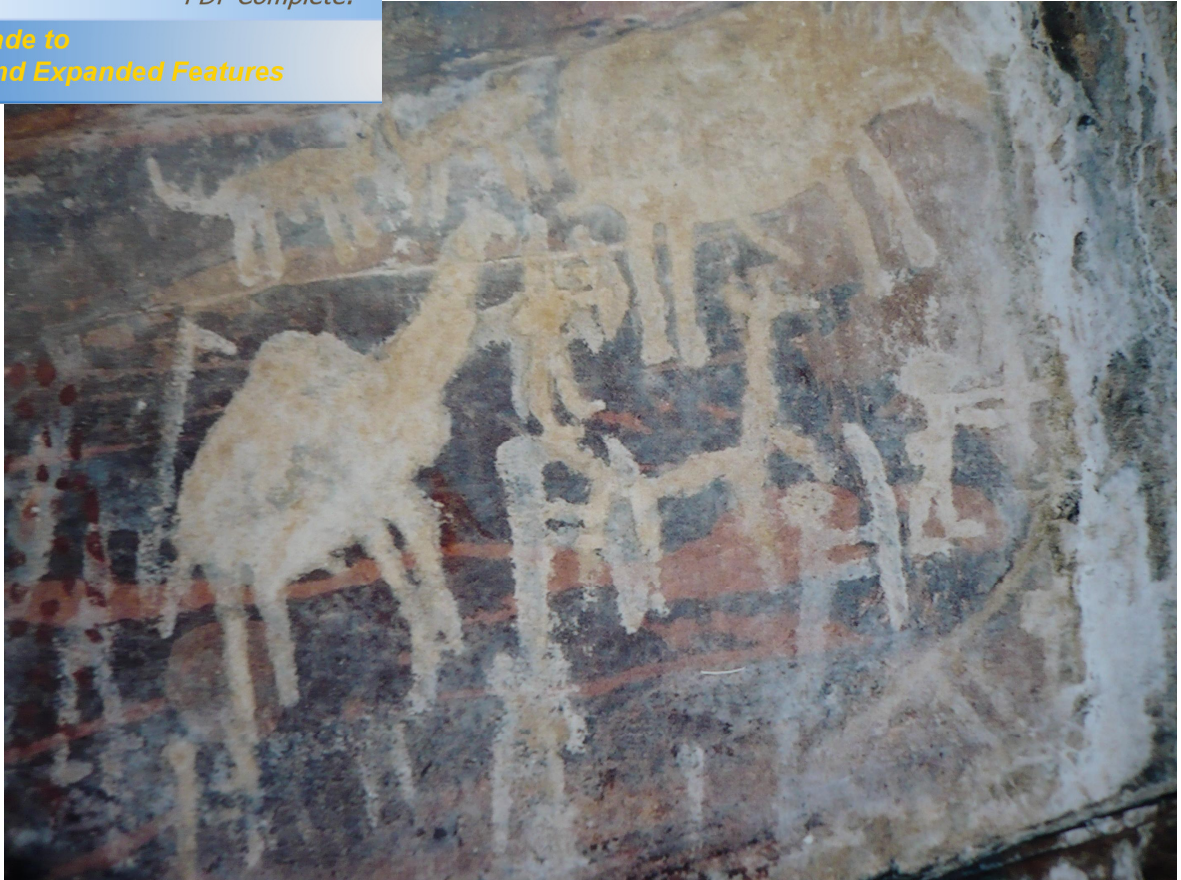
### **2.1.1 The San**

Van Aswegen (1988) has observed that the San were the earliest known inhabitants in South Africa. Eastwood (1983), who has conducted archeological and rock-art surveys in Makgabeng, observes that the San began to settle in the area in about 700 AD. Since Setlaole was close to Makgabeng, it is not unreasonable to assume that the San were settled here at about the same time. Evidence of roc-art has not been found in Setlaole as in Makgabeng.

the Setlaole still has to be conducted. This whether or not the San were actually in the area in about 700AD. At present, we can only make an assumption. We cannot be certain.

However, based on the archeological rock art surveys already conducted on Makgabeng and assuming that the San were settled in Setlaole, it is possible to reconstruct generally the main socio-cultural and political institutions of San as they emerged over a long period in the area. Such institutions served the San well in their struggle for survival and humanisation of their environment. The abundant flora and fauna must have attracted the San to this area.

It was these flora and fauna out of which the basic needs for food, shelter and clothing were satisfied. To survive, mainly on hunting and gathering, required a sophisticated knowledge of the natural properties of the flora and the behaviour of the fauna in the area.



**In adjacent Makgabeng mountains these rock art paintings of the white camel are a clear evidence of the presence of the Khoi-San people in early years.**

**(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).**

The San prepared their food over an open fire and used tortoise and ostrich eggshells as receptacles for food and water (Smith et al, 2002). They seem to have acquired the techniques of making clay pots from the Bantu, which demonstrates the San's adaptability to their changing environment. Their clothing was made of the floral and faunal species they found in the area. Men wore the loin-cloth while women wore a kind apron and skin cloth (Smith et al 2003). Women beautified themselves with adornments consisting of a variety of beads, necklaces and bracelets made out of ostrich eggshells and bones.

of one homogeneous group but formed communities, which spoke the same San language. They lived in small groups of 10 to 14. Larger groups of 20 to 25 sometimes existed. The small group was ideal for the constant migrations and mobility in search of food. Van Aswegen (1988) observes that marriages were concluded without much ceremony and few children were born in the family. The migration and nomadic way of life seemed to have militated against the bearing of many children.

Conflict and cooperation among the various San groups was minimal. Cooperation only occurred temporarily to deal with a particular situation at hand as when non-groups such as the Khoikhoi and the Bantu who had a different way of life intruded their hunting grounds. Accommodation rather than conflict seemed to have characterized their relations with other indigenous African groups. This does not however imply that some conflict did not occur. This occurred particularly in the case of competition for sources of livelihood with those who, like Bantu, were pastoralist. Serious conflict occurred only when Europeans arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Europeans actually treated the San as sub-human (Van Aswegen 1988). This European attitude is explainable in terms of a world orientation of domination and control over nature and other human beings (Vide Carroll, 2008: 4 – 27).

Economically, the function of each member was to provide food. There was a clear sexual division of labour since men hunted to provide meat and women searched for veld food. The main weapon used for hunting was the bow / arrow combination. For maximum effect the arrowhead, made of bone or stone, was dipped in poison. The San latter acquired iron arrow heads from the Bantu who bought iron melting techniques from the north. In addition to the bow and arrow, the San also used traps and snares made of various types of plants,

to catch smaller animals. While meat  
the diet of the San, food supplements such

as fruits, vegetables, bulbs, tubers, roots, locusts and nutritious ants were  
also important. It was the women and children who provided such  
foods.

San religion was centered on the belief in the Great God who was  
Creator of the World, food and water. There was also belief in the  
existence of lower gods who are supernatural beings. Worship of the  
supernatural involved song and dance during which some got into a  
trance state. Medicine men were believed to have the power to  
make rain. These medicine men were normal members of the group  
who participated in the everyday activities of the group.

The San have been very adaptable to the changing human  
environment. With the arrival of the groups such as the Khoikhoi and  
the Bantu, they incorporated innovations into their culture. While  
scholars such as Schapera (1930) and Sollas (1924) expected the San  
to die out with the intrusion of other groups, they survived, retreating to  
inaccessible areas such as the deep aridity of the Kalagadi Desert,  
which was shunned by other groups. Some, of course, assimilated and  
integrated into the communities of Khoikhoi and the Bantu since their  
worldviews shared similarities. In any case, the Khoikhoi and Bantu  
worldviews did not incorporate notions which encouraged the  
genocidal elimination of other groups. The greatest danger to the  
survival of the San was posed by new diseases which came from  
Europe and gun wielded by the European, not by other Africans.

The contribution of the San to the progress of African culture must not  
be underestimated. Their knowledge of the behaviour of animals and  
plants was phenomenal. Their knowledge of edible veld foods was an

and with them. The same applies to their use of the bow and arrow and various traps and snares mentioned earlier on. The San knowledge systems, particularly, those related to medicinal plants may yet transform the pharmaceutical industry. A lot of research is still required in this area. All this knowledge needs to be preserved and protected from knowledge pirates and thieves from Europe and the United States of America.

### **2.1.2 The Khoikhoi**

The Khoikhoi brought a new culture to the Setlaole area and certainly impacted on the lives of the San and latter arrivals such as the Bantu. They however had more impact on the San than on the Bantu. Because of this, there has developed a tendency to group them together as the Khoisan. However distinctions have remained while similarities are evident because of the mutual interaction between the two (Eastwood et al. 1986).

The Khoikhoi are the Africans known for introducing pastoralism and animal husbandry (fat-tailed sheep, cattle) and domesticated dogs in South Africa (Eastwood et al.1986). They also introduced pottery-making. The San learnt the practice of keeping of domestic stock and hunting with dogs from the Khoikhoi.

a greater degree of social and political ownership of domesticated stock and thus the development of animal husbandry and the need to deal with issues of property inheritance gradually transformed their social, economic and political relations in the direction of a clear division of labour, responsibilities, power and authority. Thus the Khoikhoi developed clear social and political institutions whose functions were relatively defined.

The core of the Khoikhoi community was the family, which, in some cases, was large since married male children were incorporated into it. Families fused into clans which were headed by captains who were the most senior members of the clans. Clans elaborated into larger polities under the authority of chieftains. The chieftaincy was hereditary with the eldest son succeeding the father at death (Van Aswegen, 1988). The greater social and political cohesion of the Khoikhoi communities enabled them to survive the social and political disruptions occasioned by the immigration of the Bantu and Europeans into their areas.

While the Khoikhoi hunted and gathered veld foods from the abundant flora and fauna in our area of study, their economy was more stable due to the ownership of domesticated animals and the practice of trade. The herds of cattle they owned provided a fixed supply of meat and milk. Cattle were slaughtered for ritual purposes and to obtain fat to rub on their bodies. The practice of rubbing fat on bodies, which was normally practiced by powerful chieftains, symbolised wealth and spiritual power (Van Aswegen, 1988).

Trade was a particularly important economic activity for the Khoikhoi. Trade originated from the need for items such as iron and copper not freely available to them. Iron was used to make arrow heads and

...ioned into earrings, pedants and bangles.  
...ga, which was apparently also used for  
aesthetic and religious purposes.

While there were differences between the San and the Khoikhoi in terms of their material culture, the deep structure of values and spiritually were almost identical. The principle of the unity of being, the connectedness of all that exists based on a common essence, and the principle of harmony based on the organic solidarity and the complementarity of all forms were central tenets of the San and Khoikhoi worldview. Of critical importance in the worldview of the two – San and Khoikhoi – was the positing of spirit/energy as constituting ultimate reality and the foundation of all that existed. The attempt to possess spirit/energy which was manifested in the trance states achieved during the dance and song of religious ceremonies was common for both groups.

The possession of spirit was regarded as the highest and purest form of life. It was a form of return to source since life originated from spirit/energy which itself originated from the High God. The centrality of spirit/energy in the worldview of both groups was manifested in artistic creations of both groups. Those who have studied the artistic creations of both groups and compared the images portrayed in these creations and saw fundamental differences in the art of the two groups may not have sufficiently grasped the unity of these creations based on the principle of the spiritual foundations of existence (Vide Woodhouse 1978: Eastwood et al 1986). It was suggested for instance, that the San painted images of animals, human beings and so on while Khoikhoi painted only geometric forms such as circles, rayed circles, concentric circles and so on. With regard to the images of animals, it is suggested that this was a form of "sympathetic magic" in which the painter of an

...him power to control and capture the ... have been the case but based on the principle of the unity of being and the principle of living in harmony with nature, a sound interpretation of the painting of the images of animals would be that this represented the San aspiration to co-exist harmoniously with nature –Gods divine creation which, like them, were fundamentally spiritual. The concept of control and power over nature, animals etc did not exist in the San worldview. The San did not view themselves as separated from other beings to wish to exercise control over them. To the San, the animal and human world merged into one world which was at the most fundamental level spiritual.

The geometric circles painted by the Khoisan were, we suggest, spiritual symbols; symbolizing most clearly the connectedness of all that there is. The circle is an African symbol representing the unity of being. It is not often realized that the Khoisan were African and thus shared with other Africans the basic tenets of the African worldview. Mazama's (2002: 218 – 234) explanation of the circle may help us to explain the mystery of the circles painted by the Khoisan:

*The circle which is the African spiritual symbol par excellence, takes on its full meaning as it stands for the constant renewal of life through death and birth. The Bambara have a beautiful saying: Life merges from divinity through death, through this cyclical transformation, we achieve immortality.*

Through Mazama refers to the cyclical transformation of Spirit/Life through birth and death, the symbol of the circle can be exemplified



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ness of all forms based on their common

Though the relations between the Khoikhoi and the San were not always peaceful due to their differing modes of livelihood and survival, as when the San resisted the intrusion of the Khoikhoi in their hunting grounds, the fundamental similarities of their worldviews tended to emphasize cooperation, not conflict, between them. The tendency of observers to merge them into one group represented by the name Khoisan is in fact a manifestation of the common values they shared. Indeed we will observe below that the Bantu speaking people who migrated from today's Nigeria-Cameroon border had in their worldview, similar principles which underpinned the patterns of their thought and behaviour. Most scholars who have studied African (San, Khoikhoi, Bantu) culture posit the existence of a common cultural system in Southern Africa characterized by communal / collectivist principles deriving from the unity of being based on the spirit/energy of cosmic origin (Mazama, 2002: 218 – 234; Mbiti, 1990).

### **2.1.3 The Bantu and the Formation of the Bakone of Setlaole**

The Bakone of Setlaole are an integral part of the Matlala pre-colonial polity. This polity traces its origins to Bantu migration from what today is the Nigeria-Cameroon border. These migrations led to the overwhelming influence of the culture/civilization of the Bantu in Southern African before the intrusion of Europeans in the area. The Khoikhoi and the San experienced the full impact of Bantu civilization. They were either assimilated or displaced by the Bantu.

Before we unpack the historical and cultural practices and experience of the Bantu in general and the Bakone in particular it is necessary to deal with a few problematic historiographical issues which have confronted historians of the area. First of all, there has not been any radically new information on what precipitated the migrations, the timing of the migrations, the routes followed and the general distribution and settlement patterns of the Bantu in the region since the investigations of Vansina (1968) and Davidson (1991). We know, for instance, that the acquisition of ferrous technology by the Bantu provided them with the means to survive in all sorts of geographical environments. The resultant increase in population necessitated movement away from the Nigeria-Cameroon border area.

The migratory process cannot be characterized as some form of mass exodus of people, as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Boer escape from the British

out as a gradual infiltration into new areas  
C. (Vansina, 1968).

One historiographical contention and problem, though, has been laid to rest. This relates to the European colonialist claim that the Bantu arrived as migrants on the highveld of what came to be known as the Transvaal at about the same time that Jan Van Riebeeck settled at the Cape (Davidson, 1991). This colonialist claim which has been used to justify European supremacist rule in Southern African has been completely demolished. It has been shown to be a pernicious figment of the European imagination. Davidson (1991:3) has this to say about this issue:

What is now South Africa, in short, embarked upon Iron Age (i.e. Bantu type) of community development some twelve to thirteen centuries before the arrival there of the earliest European settlers and invaders.



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Two of the early Bakone villagers of Setlaole's graves have been marked with concrete slabs for future generations to recognise.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).



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Another grave marked with a concrete slab, but in a different pattern of the time.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

In fact Davidson has noted that the Bantu had reached south of the Zambezi by the first century AD and by the fourth century had reached the South-most tip of the African continent.

We are not certain when the Bakone settled in our area of study. We know however that by the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Bantu who identified themselves as the Bakone were already settled in the area (Tyrrel & Jurgens, 1983; van Warmelo, 1930). A key problem which needs to be thoroughly investigated is that related to the process by which the cultural and political identity, the Bakone, and that of others – Babirwa, Bavenda, Bakwena, Batau, Matebele – by which the people of our area of study are known were formed. There has been a tendency among anthropologists, particularly among those working for the Apartheid Government in the Native Affairs Department and who approached their subject synchronically to miss the dynamism as well

characterized cultural identity development. Informations which these anthropologists branded as "tribes" were treated as static phenomena stuck in a barbaric past, without history; that is, entities which did not experience any form of change and transformation and which contributed nothing of worth and value to human civilization (Vide van Warmelo, 1930; Tyrrell & Jurgens, 1983). When it comes to the history of the origins of the Bakone and others and their migratory movements within the region, the focus has been on family disputes which caused splits. These disputes and splits are viewed in a disembodied fashion, which leaves out a description and analysis of the worldview which animated them. It is not realized that the real history of the Bakone and other Bantu groups cannot be understood without an appreciation of the African Bantu worldview and the historical links the Bantu had established before they migrated into Southern Africa. Diop (1974) has advised us on the most useful approach to the study of African history:

*Ancient Egypt was a Negro [Black African] civilization. The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt. In particular, the study of languages, institutions, and so forth, cannot be treated properly, in a word, it will be impossible to build African humanities, a body of African human sciences, so long as that relationship does not appear legitimate. The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled, he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic. Imagine, if you can,*

able position of a western  
as to write the history of Europe  
without referring to Greco-Lation antiquity and  
try to pass that off as a scientific approach.

Diop (1974) has observed correctly that Egypt is to the rest of Africa  
what Ancient Greece and Rome are to the rest of Europe.



Some graves were marked with heaps of stones, especially before the advent of cement. Mr. KS Ramoroka points at his grand father's grave, while the one near it is said to be that of son of a Xhosa speaking Methodist Church priest.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

The basic elements and features of the Bantu African civilization – philosophy, religion, kinship-based political and social structures, and communal economies based on fishing, agriculture, pastoralism and crafts-were already evident before migration. Vansina (1968), however, insists that iron technology was first acquired by those Bantu groups who migrated to the East African Rift Valley-Great Lakes area.

introduced into the area from Meroe which in the 10th century BC. What is particularly important with regard to this civilization is that it was a synthesis of ideas and values deriving from Black Pharaonic Egypt, Nubia, North and West Africa. This civilization, however, has not been static. The exigencies of migration and the need to adapt to new physical and social environments led to changes so that by the time the Bantu had reached the southern tip of the continent a lot of the features of this civilization had been lost and had to be rediscovered anew.

This is so particularly with regard to aspects of material culture and the natural and biological sciences. Research is needed in this area. What is certain however that is the philosophico-religious, ontological, cosmological and axiological worldview survived as is evidenced in commonalities of institutions in the entire continent. Diop (1974) and Obenga (1994) have identified institutional practices all over Africa (including Southern Africa) which were derived from or were similar to those which emerged in Ancient Pharaonic Egypt (Kemet) the first civilization in the world.

We have to observe here that practices and institutions such as totemism, circumcision, kingship and ethical principles such as Maat are found among the Bantu, and to be specific among the Bakone of Setlaole, so closely resemble those which developed in Pharaonic Egypt (Kemet) that it is not unreasonable to hypothesise an Egyptian/Kemetic derivation. Let us remember that the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. The fact that the Bantu in general and the Bakone specifically migrated from the north, an area which clearly came under the influence of the Nile Valley in ancient times makes it most probable that they migrated to Southern Africa carrying with them elements of Egyptian/Nulbian civilization. The

Southern African empty handed. They  
of an ancient civilization with which they  
developed their communities in Setlaole.



Trees were also used to mark graves as seen here.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

It is technically incorrect, though, to state that the Bakone originally came from the north or somewhere near the Zambezi at the same time when all Bantu-speaking communities migrated from the north and central Africa about 2,500 years ago as Tyrrell and Jurgens (1983) claim. It is more accurate to say that the group which would subsequently call themselves the Bakone migrated from the North.

Indeed the Bakone have traditions which link them with the Great Lakes area in East Africa. At one time they settled in what are now Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They were at one time called the Bakgalaka, presumably because of their association with the Bakgalaka of Zimbabwe. After crossing the Limpopo, they are said to

ame to be known as the Transvaal in (000). In the Transvaal, they adopted "Thantlhagane" as one of their totems because of their admiration of the bird with this name, but Kone remained their principal totem (Phaladi, 2000). From the Zoutpansberg they settled at the following places respectively: North-West Swaziland at a place called Bokone or Ngonini in Swazi, Sekhukhuneland (Bopedi), at Bokone near Lydenburg, Tshutshwe on a farm Rooiwater and finally they made Bokgalaka (Ga-Maake on Eastern side of Haenertsburg) their residence.

There was a major split at Ga-Maake in about 1700 led by Matlalabole which contributed to the dispersal to various parts of what became the Northern Transvaal. They settled at different places before they could settle at Ga-Matlala-a-Thaba-Bogosi in what became Seshego District. They settled at Molautsi (Blood River) in the present day Mashashane area, Khorolwane near Marabastad, Thabatšhweu (next Tubatse River) and Polokwane. Several splinter groups dispersed and settled in various places in the region. Some settled around Setlaole Hill and identified themselves as the people of Setlaole. They were however a integral part of the Matlala polity.

## 2.2 THE WORLD-OUTLOOK AND IDEOLOGY OF THE BAKONE OF SETLAOLE



; the green plant is called lehwama<sup>6</sup> and is usually planted  
ed as the preferred spot of the ancestral spirits.

According to our informants, before the penetration of colonial culture the world-outlook of the Bakone was centered on distinct cosmogonic and theologic views. As in the case with other Bantu groups, the world-outlook of the Bakone was mythological. Their political and legal views had not yet separated off from the single syncretic outlook and the order of things on earth was regarded as an integral part of the cosmic order, divine in its origin and content. This is very clear from our respondents. The earthly life of the Bakone, their political, social and legal institutions, relations with gods and with one another were treated within the framework and on the basis of the mythological version of the origin of the cosmos (cosmology) and the gods (theogony). It must be pointed out that these cosmogonic and theogonic views, as will be fleshed out later, were not simple narrations of events that had occurred in the past, but were an obligatory outlook upheld by Bakone custom and tradition as one of the foundations of life. Myths of origins, as a particular form of historical knowledge were at the same time a source of mandatory rules and standards of behaviour which were to be strictly observed at present and in the future. Myth served as a model of human relations sanctified by divine authority. Myth indeed constituted the basis of a historical ideology which could not be contested any rival notions, conceptions and doctrines.

According to our informants the Bakone consciousness was dominated by the idea of the divine, supra-human origin of the existing social and political order. The cosmos was created by Modimo and its orderliness and certain natural events like rain, hailstorms, whirlwinds, lightning, famine, draught, death, sickness and health were a manifestation of

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<sup>6</sup> A wild potato plant marking the ancestral worship corner

<sup>7</sup> Traditional courtyard

er. Bogosi, which, in the cosmology of the  
pin and font of legislative, executive and  
judicial wisdom and practice, was mandated by Modimo. The same  
applies to custom and practice relating to marriage, family and the  
land-tenure system which were basically communal in character.

It must be noted that in the Bakone religio-mythological consciousness  
law had not yet turned into a body of legal norms of behaviour as in  
the current Western European sense. It existed as one of the aspects of  
the private, social and public life that was in conformity with tradition  
and public sentiment. The laws of the Bakone reflected the  
mythological, religious, ethical and other views closely knitted together  
and were generally traced to the divine primary source. They were  
ascribed directly to Modimo and Badimo<sup>8</sup>. They would for instance say:  
Modimo said a human being must not be killed (murdered). Since the  
legal order and earthly rules were conceived as an integral part of  
cosmic order, all thought of violation of traditional rules, rites and norms  
by individuals were believed to pose serious threat to celestial and  
terrestrial harmony and to be fraught with cosmic catastrophe.

This explains the meticulous ordering of the people's conduct and the  
various religious taboos like incest that were to be observed on pain of  
severe punishment both in this and other worlds. Furthermore, since the  
existing order and laws were regarded as divine and sacred, their  
violation was tantamount to challenging Modimo and Badimo.

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<sup>8</sup> Ancestral spirits

### **2.3 BAKONE OF SETLAOLE CULTURE IN PRACTICE**

This subsection will focus only on practice as it relates to bogoši, law and the economy. In Bakone cultural belief and practice there was no division between spiritual and secular authority. The authority of the kgoši lied in his/her spiritual power as the only link between the people and their Badimo. The kgoši interceded with the ancestors as the supreme and only supernatural power which could ensure the prosperity and well-being of the people. He was thanked for rain, good crops and for general prosperity. As a ruler his credentials were mystical, unique and irreplaceable.

The kgoši was the father of the people. The term “father” in this context described the reciprocal relations between the kgoši and people. The

...an extension, through various phases, from ...<sup>9</sup> to the ethnic group (polity) of paternal authority with its attendant rights, duties and privileges. As these are exercised in the family so does the kgoši at the level of the polity. He watched over and attended to the problems of all. He also helped the aged, the disabled and the poor.



The Masekwa family heads the Norma A people on behalf of Kgoši Matlala. Here, Mmakgoši Raesibe Elisa Masekwa is seen sitting between Mr G Ramoroka (L) and Dr A.Dhliwayo (R) during fieldwork discussing leadership matters of the Bakone ba Setlaole.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

As executive head of the Bakone polity of Ga-Matlala he was informed of all occurrences of importance and was advised of births and deaths. He also had to give his permission for marriages and burials.

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<sup>9</sup> Traditional court

of economic activities, the distribution of crops. He was the commander in chief of the army and the main protector of his people from external aggression.

As legislator and supreme judge he had to protect or punish and provide justice to the people. His court was the ultimate court of appeal. Central also was his function of determination of the policy of the polity, and the initiation and promulgation of new laws. In this area, as in others, he had access to the traditional acumen and wisdom of key men (bakgomana) of the polity, as well as his Badimo.

The law of the Bakone was largely a manifestation of their belief system. Their attitude to their laws was very similar to their attitude towards religion. Laws were mainly to maintain the proper order as defined in their cosmology and theogony. Thus legal norms were largely based on religious concepts. A few examples will illustrate the Bakone conception and attitude towards their law.

The Bakone, as mentioned above, regarded their law as supernatural and as divine in origin. They believed that their law was created simultaneously with the creation of human beings by Modimo. Laws were normally expressed like this: Modimo o rile, motho ga a bolawe - God said: man must not be killed. All laws were therefore laws of the Supreme Being. This in fact is still the case among the Bakone today as our respondents observe.

The breaking of the law was treated as if it were sin or a challenge against Modimo and Badimo. A good example was prostitution. Prostitution was both sin against Modimo and Badimo and a molato<sup>10</sup> against society. So also were murder and theft. All these called for

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<sup>10</sup> Case/offense

tions. Even if these were tried in court and the complainant, the matter did not end there. Spiritual cleansing was still necessary for societal order and harmony to be re-established. It must be remembered that a wrong committed did not just affect the individual involved. It affected the community in that it disturbed the natural order mandated by Modimo at the beginning of the world.

The Bakone economy was based on access to land. Land, it must also be noted, was not treated simply as an economic asset. Attached to the land and its various properties such as hills, mountains, rivers, valleys and vegetation was a spiritual dimension. At one level, land was Modimo's creation and a gift to humankind for use in order to enhance the well-being and prosperity of humankind. At another level land was spiritual not simply because of the ancestral graves and some hills and forests which were regarded as sacred, but mainly because land was the source of life. Its very existence was a manifestation of Modimo's presence and eternal power.

It was therefore inconceivable that an individual could either own land privately or sell land for private gain. Land was held in trust by the kgoši for the benefit of all the Bakone pastoralists and agriculturalists. The kgoši and his subordinates distributed land to all adult males without exception. The produce of the land belonged to the producer. The kgoši was entitled only to a small part of this produce (in kind) as sebego<sup>11</sup>. The tribute was not treated as a tax or some imposition but as recognition of his royalty and its acceptance.

It has been suggested by colonialists that this communal ownership of land was the cause of the backwardness and poverty of the Africans.

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<sup>11</sup> tribute

al ownership ensured that every family had and that in times of drought and famine everyone had access to means of survival through a process of redistribution of the tribute which went to the kgoši. It is also not true that communalism bred conservatism which was a block to progress and development. Actually, the world-outlook of the Bakone which placed a premium on the need for the enhancement of human well-being and prosperity on earth tended to galvanize whole communities to expand production while preserving the land resources which were a gift from Modimo. Indeed, sustainable development which has suddenly become fashionable today was part of the tradition of the Bakone who produced to satisfy their current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy theirs. The natural environment was treated as God-given and thus, it was wrong and sinful to misuse and abuse it.

The pre-colonial world-outlook of the Bakone did not have the binary oppositions which are common in the European world-view (vide Williams, 1985). Though this weltanschauung was interpenetrated with religion, it was anthropocentric. All the economic, political and social arrangements were tailored towards the creation of harmony, both between humans, and between humans and nature. The Bakone regarded Modimo not as the original 'diviner' of the Afrikaner and White Dutch Reformed Church, but the original harmonizer and unifier. The primary concern of both the spiritual world and the human world was human fulfillment.

Before European invasion and conquest, the Bakone of Ga-Matlala had developed into a distinct people, though sharing some aspects of a common culture with other Bantu speaking peoples. This culture and civilization was however to be undermined considerably, with the

However, a lot of the Bakone culture has  
in the next pages.



Stone walls were a reliable means of protecting the homestead.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

### **2.3.1 European Intrusion, Conquest and Creation of the Colonial Political Economy**

European explorers, hunters, traders and missionaries who intruded in the Setlaole area in the early decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were agents of an alien and aggressive capitalist system centred in Europe. These groups initiated a process which culminated in the creation of the colonial state which subjugated the Matlala polity turning its people

dispossessed of their political sovereignty, land and resources. The impact of European colonialism in the form of Boer/British administration wreaked havoc on the people of Setlaole and surrounding areas. Perhaps the greatest negative impact of colonialism in its various phases, including the imposition of the apartheid system since 1948, was the systematic attempt to deculturalise Africans through the imposition of institutions and practices rooted in the European worldview.

The main aim and objectives of these alien impositions were to lay a foundation-

a colonial foundation which would facilitate the siphoning and plunder of African wealth for the benefit of White centres of power in both South Africa and Europe. The claim about the need of Europeans to spread civilization and progress among Africans which one sometimes reads in colonial history texts produced by historians who belong to the Afrikaner and liberal schools (Smith, 1988) is patently false. The colonial system of European imperialism was the worst destroyer of indigenous African civilization. It would take years of bloody resistance on the part of indigenous people to free themselves from Europe rule.

The process of decolonization continues even after the African National Congress take-over of state power in 1994 because colonial domination transcended the material dimension of African life to involve the spiritual dimension. It is perhaps the spiritual dimension of African liberation which is the most difficult to consummate (Mazama, 2002: 218 – 234). Liberation, from an Afrocentric perspective, involves the relocation of the African within their culture and the utilization of the best in the values and ideals of that culture for African modernization (Asante, 2003; Mazama, 2002: 218 – 234).

European racist expansionism in Setlaole and in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Makhura, 1993). They were traders and hunters who were attracted by the faunal species we identified earlier on. The most prominent of these were, in all probability, the Buys brothers led by Coenraad Buys (Makhura, 1983). They did not settle in the Setlaole area but in the Soutpansberg area. They however were known to have combed the whole of the area trading and hunting. Other explorers and traders who visited the area were Thomas Baines and Alexander Struben (Makhura, 1983). Coenraad Buys and his heterogeneous group of Khoikhoi/African women intruded on the Highveld in 1814 and were active in the Makgabeng - Blouberg – Soutpansberg area in the 1820's.

The early traders and hunters dealt with merchandise such as ivory, hides, salt and feathers. They had very little impact on the communities they were in contact with. They however heralded the coming of colonialism in some ways, particularly in so far as they attacked uncooperative/resisting African communities, in some occasions, command style. While they adopted some of the customs and behaviours of the African communities in which they lived, such as polygamy, they represented alien European cultural values and ideals. They were, for instance, Christian, a religion which became a key pillar of European domination and supremacy in the area. Their knowledge of the geography of the area and elements of the local African culture would be utilized latter by the Boer and British colonial invaders to construct colonialism in the area. They were thus spies and informers of the Boer and British colonial invaders. The Boers, infact, later incorporated the Buys people in the colonial administrative structures they created to facilitate the exploitation of the human and the natural resources of the area.

came to Setlaole and surrounding areas in 1836 (Makhura, 1993). The Boer invasion of the area was part of the so called Great Trek which was infact nothing more than a few thousand Boers escaping from the Cape Colony because they disagreed with British colonial practices and wanted to found their own independent state. Their dream of an autonomous state was temporarily realised in 1852 when the British conceded that autonomy with the signing of the Sand River Convention. The Boers then took advantage of this Convention to establish the ZAR (South African Republic/Transvaal) in 1860 (Makhura, 1993).

From 1860 to 1877 the Boers who claimed ownership and rulership of the vast expanse of African land from Lekwa River<sup>12</sup> up to Limpopo River struggled to establish some form of administration. The African polities in the area of our research such as Matlala and Malebogo which were sovereign and independent naturally offered resistance to Boer claims. The Boers none-the-less went ahead to consolidate their power through the establishment colonial administrative units or districts/divisions. Setlaole fell under the Soutpansberg Division. The colonial administrative infrastructure was manned by the representatives of the Boers, the Buys brothers and the Portuguese communities in the area. The titles of some of these administrative agents show the contempt the Boers had for the Africans in the area. Joao Albasini was for instance appointed "Superintendent van Kaffer-Astammen" responsible for the collection of taxes (Makhura, 1993). The Buys brothers were given such duties as the tax-collecting and wagon driving. They also performed the role of guides due to their knowledge of the area and the contacts they had established.

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<sup>12</sup> Vaal River

and the surrounding areas naturally began to attract Boer settlers. Their presence in the area precipitated a cut-throat competition for resources such as water, farming land, grazing land, hunting grounds and labour. The Boers were pastoralists who coveted fertile grazing land and water areas as well as the livestock of the African communities. Their worldview which incorporated aggressive individualism, the institution of private property and contempt for blacks came into conflict with the African view which was based on communal collectivist principles.

Perhaps the most central sources of conflict between the Bakone of Setlaole and the Boers was over the control of land and taxation. Initially the Bakone leadership allowed the Boers to use their land for grazing purposes in exchange for guns and gunpowder. The Boers rooted in the European worldview thought they had been granted private ownership of the land. Some Boers went to the extent of setting up and employing land speculating companies such as Oceana Company to survey and develop land which the Bakone regarded as theirs. Another source of conflict was the imposition on the Bakone of strange taxes such as poll tax, hut tax and dog tax (Makhura, 1993). Since the Bakone had never ceded sovereignty to the Boers these taxes represented an arrogant attempt to undermine the ruling class.

An upsurge of British imperialism in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly (1867), led to the annexation and repossession of the Transvaal in 1877. With more resources and motivated by the need to exploit the mineral wealth of the region, the British tried to erect a more effective administrative infrastructure in the Transvaal. In particular, the institutions of the Native Commissioner as well as the Native Police composed of African personnel which were officered by whites were created. Their function

and order close to the Africans and to ensure  
in order to boost the needed revenue for  
administration. The principle initiated by the British administration was  
that Africans had to bear the costs of their colonial subjugation. The  
British administration over the Transvaal was terminated in 1881 when  
the Boers reclaimed their autonomy. The costs incurred by the British  
due to the wars of resistance waged by the Zulu and the Bapedi of  
Bapedi in the late 1870s forced the British colonial authorities to reduce  
their commitment in the interior.

The British interregnum (1877- 1881), particularly as this related to  
creation of more efficient structures of colonial control, provided  
lessons to the incoming Boer colonialists on the best methods and  
tactics to destroy African resistance and power. The “tired and tested”  
tactic of divide and rule was ruthlessly implemented by the Transvaal  
Boer administration. Kgoši Matlala of the Bakone was transformed into  
an ally of the Boers in their colonial war against Kgoši Malebogo of the  
Bahananwa. This culminated in the defeat of Kgoši Malebogo in 1894  
and the subjugation of both polities. Both peoples, the Bahananwa  
and the Bakone, paid the price of division by effectively becoming  
powerless servants of an alien European administration.

The power of the chiefs of the Bakone and the Bahananwa were  
usurped by Boer colonial administrators. The sovereigns of the Bakone  
and the Bahananwa were incorporated at the lower levels of the  
Transvaal colonial administration as mere tax collectors and  
implementers of a harsh alien colonial law and order. This situation  
paved the way for the creation of a colonial economy in which land  
and labour became objects serving the interests of the Boer colonial  
masters.

ion introduced new principles of land alien institution of private property. Land which was formerly communally owned was surveyed and demarcated into farms to be bought and sold on the market. The whole of the Setlaole and the surrounding area was transferred into private farms some of which were bought by people from far afield as Mamabolo. Farm Norma A was bought by the original inhabitants of the foothills of Setlaole. The certificate of transfer of the farm is dated 1937.

The transformation of the people of Setlaole into colonial subjects also owed a lot to the cultural and spiritual transformation of the Bakone brought by colonial Christianity. Missionaries and their Christian religion became powerful cogs which entrenched the colonial system of imperialism in the Setlaole area. It was in fact in their attempt to covert people from African indigenous religion to Christianity that European missionaries could be said to have become an enduring pillar of white colonial domination and supremacist rule in the Setlaole area.

In either abandoning their traditional religion or adopting a syncretistic form of religion which combined elements of both African belief systems and an alien version of European based Christianity, Africans in the Setlaole area became unwilling agents of European colonialism. Christianity blunted their resistance to the colonial construction of political and economic institutions – colonial police forces, native commissioners, tax collectors, Labour recruiters, private ownership of land etc – which served the oppressive and exploitative interests of the European colonial masters. Thus the majority of the people of Setlaole today identify themselves as either Wesleyan Methodists or Lutherans.

invaded the Setlaole area in the first half of the 19th century. It is remembered that this was the same time that other agents of colonialism such as explorers, hunters and traders were active in the area. The missionaries were therefore inextricably tied up with the process of the colonization of the area. Both the Lutheran and the Wesleyan Methodists found themselves entangled in the political and economic transformation of the area. The main objective of the missionaries of gaining Christian converts tied up very well with the colonial administrator's role of turning Africans into highly exploitable servants of the colonial political economy. The missionaries wanted to create a "New African" imbued with the protestant ethic of hard work through engaging in agriculture on individually owned plots, seeking wage employment on white European farms and other enterprises. To achieve this objective the African had to abandon the communal ethos characteristic of the African worldview and identify with the individualistic ethos rooted in the European worldview. The Christian church, the primary school and the medical clinic attached to the church struck at and tried to eliminate customs and social practices such as reverence of ancestors and polygamy which were part of the traditional worldview. Our informants who are descendants of the original inhabitants of Setlaole tell stories of systematic attempts by missionaries to crush institutions such as initiation into adulthood and first-fruits ceremonies. Such institutions were represented as paganism and the work of the devil. African traditional healers and herbalists were dismissed as witch-doctors and agents of Satan. The brewing of traditional African beer which accompanied these African indigenous practices were forbidden or banned among those African who had been converted to Christianity.

In fact Christianity, according to Mazama (2002: 218 – 234) tried to desacralise African cultural space by condemning belief in the

and other nature spirits which dwelt in the  
be educated, from a Christian perspective,  
meant abandoning crucial practices such as initiation, the extended  
family system, polygamy, and reverence of ancestral spirits which  
provided cultural unity and continuity in indigenous African society.  
This is why it is justified to characterise Christianity as Christian  
colonialism.

Missionaries also tried to undermine the power and authority of the  
indigenous ruling class, particularly the chiefs. Missionaries took  
advantage of African rulers' relative lack of knowledge of colonial  
structures, institutions and practices of governance to position  
themselves as guardians of African political and economic interests. It  
was not uncommon for missionaries to act as negotiators and go-  
betweens in transactions involving land, taxation, war and peace in  
the region. However their widespread frustration with the show pace of  
Christian conversions forced them to align with the colonial  
government. Missionaries come to realise that as long as the power  
and authority of the chiefs of the Bakone and the Bahanwana  
remained intact it would be virtually impossible to gain Christian  
converts (Makhura, 1993).

It was in this context that the Lutherans and Wesleyans cooperated to  
ensure that the African chiefs were defeated in their wars of resistance  
against the Transvaal Boer administration in the 1890s. The defeat of the  
Bahanwana in the Boer-Malebogo War of 1894 must be partly  
attributed to the missionaries, particularly Christopher Sonntag, who  
counseled the Bahanwana patriots to give up their struggle and  
descend from the mountains where they continued to harass Boer  
commandos. Their influence on the Matlala polity ruling class was  
clear in the latter's refusal to join the Bahananwa in their resistance to

Resistance to Boer Colonial control led to the  
versions in the area.

In this regard it is important to highlight the role of African evangelists in Christianity in the general area. In the Setlaole area names of certain evangelist have become immortalised in the history of the spread of Christianity. Our older informants tell vivid stories about the pivotal role of one of their ancestors, Philemon Setumu, in the consolidation of Christianity in Setlaole.

Philemon Setumu was converted to the Wesleyan faith while working in the gold mines in the south. It is in his role as a dedicated and disciplined Christian and promoter of Western education that he has been immortalized. Most of his converts were taught reading and writing. Some of his converts were Joshua Masekwa, Charles Ramodika, Isrom Ramoroka and Bethuel Ramoroka; the sons of Tshabisi Ramoroka and Mokgadi Moselekwa.

Philemon Setumu's grave is lying on the southern foot of Setlaole but the legacy for which he is known – Wesleyanism and Western education – lives on. Equipped with Western education and Wesleyan Christianity he became a trusted leader of his own people. He was consulted on the issue of buying farms in the area. His own people latter bought Farm Norma A, which though small has provided the former occupiers of Setlaole with some place which they call their own.



Traces of early western methods of building houses can still be noticed in some of the ruins. The carefully selected rocks indicate that this was a community facility.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

Phillemon's people did not all continue to embrace Wesleyanism. Some broke away and embraced the Zion Christian and Apostolic faiths. In fact Setumu's son, Ikgetheng Steven Setumu, together with Thipa Setumu, Abiel Mojela and Binas Ramoroka were baptized into the Zion Christian Church in the 1940s.

It must however be pointed out that Christianity is a non-indigenous faith and was closely interwoven with Western colonial and neo-colonial interests. In this connection Christianity, though real in the lives of the people of Setlaole today, must be counted as one of the most difficult obstacles in the struggle for African cultural liberation in the area. While Western Christianity is always associated with progress and civilization by its votaries, from an Afrocentric perspective, it is a pillar of Western domination. This is, infact, a paradox because Christianity itself

from the Kemetic mystery system which is Maatic values of justice, truth, order, righteous, balance etc which are at the base of African civilization. Mazama (2002: 218 – 243); Diop (1974), Ben Jochannan (1986), and Geoghagen (1997) have noted that it was when Christian values penetrated Europe that they were transformed into a force of oppression of humanity. Christianity was used in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, to justify the enslavement of African people. So also was its use in the justification of the construction of colonial rule. We also know that the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church provided theological justification for a system – apartheid-which was declared by the United Nations system, a crime against humanity. Whether African Christians like it or not the oppressive role played by Christianity in its various phases since its origination by Jesus Christ cannot be disputed. Its role in attempted distabilisation of African spirituality cannot also be disputed. Finally, its role in the preservation of White supremacist domination in Africa cannot also not be disputed by any African who is sane. Christianity, rooted as it is, in the European worldview is part of the problem liberators of Africans have to confront. As Mazama (2002: 218 – 234) has pointed out, without a return to African spirituality and the values and ideals it represents the liberation of the African on the continent and in the diaspora cannot be said to be complete.



The plant that marks the spot where the Badimo were worshipped can still be found near some of the lapas<sup>13</sup>.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

If the return to African spirituality is central to the restoration of African dignity, the resolution of the current land question which has its origins in colonial ideology is a critical project in the attainment of African economic renaissance. The appropriation and alienation of productive and rich land by White settlers constituted the twin blows which initiated the dehumanization of the African in South Africa. The land situation in Setlaole today continues to bear the pernicious scars of colonialism in its South African apartheid form. From the time the Boers invaded the area in the 1870s, followed by the enactment of the land Acts of 1913 and 1936, through the introduction of the practice of buying mini-farms by Africans to the present, the land question has been a major festering sore which has agitated the troubled lives of the people who occupied the foothills of Setlaole.

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<sup>13</sup> courtyard



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central pillar of Bakone worldview, as we have noted, was that land belonged to the community as a whole and everyone had the right to have access to the land and to enjoy, communally, the fruits of the land. The worldview of the Boer and British colonizers introduced a new discourse in the ownership of land which negated the pivotal African principle that every human being has the right to land. Today landlessness is the norm among Africans.



g for their fields. Some still return to their dispossessed  
fore-fathers did.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

The buying of land in the Setlaole area followed the dispossession of African land by White Companies who acquired it for speculative purposes. The selling of farms to Africans who afforded the farms was administered by the Native Affairs Department. Usually African purchasers of farms were required to form themselves into “tribal” groupings and sponsored in their purchases by a recognized chief. In our area of study, Setlaole, all purchases by the Bakone were sponsored by Kgoši Matlala. If buyers came from other areas they were sponsored by Chiefs of those areas as in the case of purchasers of Farm Norma B most of whom hailed from Botlokwa and were sponsored by Kgoši Machaka. The purchasers of Farm Norma A who were the original occupiers of Setlaole foothills and who bought land from the Bourke Trust and Estate Company were sponsored by the Chief Sekgoare Matlala in 1937. All the purchasers belonged to the local Bakone clans mentioned earlier on. All purchase of the land in the area excluded the ownership of mineral rights which were retained by the European colonial authorities.

The most painful aspect of the purchase of farms was that in some cases Africans lost their original land and had to buy land somewhere else which meant that they had to abandon their ancestral homes and graves with all the spiritual dislocation and loss which this process entailed. The violent uprooting of people from their land caused divisions and tension in the communities affected. Some were, for instance, opposed to buying land which belonged to them and had to migrate away from their homes in protest. This is what for instance

...y which eventually bought Farm Norma A. The concept of buying land and had to migrate. Some initially refused to vacate their ancestral homes and abandon the graves of their ancestors but had to move off when new buyers moved in. None of the original occupiers of the land which became Farm Norma B are to be found in that farm. They were forced to relocate to Farm Norma A which they bought when they realized that the trend towards the selling and buying of farms in the area was irreversible.

They thus lost, permanently, their land to people who came from Botlokwa, Ga-Mamabolo, Ga-Dikgale and Moletji who bought their land. While their descendants have reconciled themselves to this painful loss because they are at least permitted to visit their ancestral graves to propitiate their ancestors, they continue to refer to themselves as the people of Setlaole and are working hard to preserve the memory of Setlaole by applying to have the hill and its immediate environs declared a heritage site. Setlaole Hill and its surrounding environs constitute their heritage. What they have however permanently lost is the land which they can no longer communally own. The communal ethos which animated their lives in the pre-colonial area has been lost for ever. What they can preserve for posterity is their tangible and the intangible heritage if the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority agrees to declare the area a heritage site and further developments in the form of tourism become viable in future.

The people of Setlaole, since the acquisition of Farm Norma A, have lived through the political and economic impact of the Homeland system and the dawn of the new era of Western liberal democracy with its inspiring hope for the rebuilding of their lives by taking

opportunities brought about by the new area, including Farm Norma A, are not providing the descendants of Setlaole with a viable livelihood.

Since the 1930s, the people in the area could only survive through migrating to white farms, mining areas and urban centres in the South to look for employment. Most of our informants count among themselves migrants to white controlled urban centres. Those who were educated in colonial educational institutions have migrated permanently from Setlaole even though some occasionally come back to their homes in the area to offer innovative ideas about how to bring development in the area. These ideas are however still located within the European idea of development which may run counter to the heritage they want to preserve. It may be noted that the current notions of development rooted in the neo-liberal agenda pursued by the new governing coalition of African nationalists, conservative purveyors of the old order in the white political parties and traditional chiefs are not likely to transform livelihoods in Setlaole which is envisaged by the poor rural dwellers. The return of the land which constitutes the incessant cry of the rural dwellers seems to recede far off the horizon with the lapse of time. The cry for change, transformation and reconstruction which characterizes the demands of people in rural Setlaole seems to have been overtaken by the demands for caution which comes from the pens and mouths of these who control the levers of power who subscribe to the conservative neo-liberal ideology which religiously respects the market.



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Water scarcity forced some cattle owners to trap this vital source of life in holes like this one for survival.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).

The history of water scarcity in Setlhalole is legendary to a point of its residents naming their village Bohlapamonwana. The name implies that due to the scarcity, one could only wash a tiny part of his body. Old ladies testify to the fact that they used to go ask for water at Kgatlo village's Nonono river. When the Kgatlo residents blocked the river with bicycles, the Bakone of Setlaole turned to the GaRaweši village's Seepebane river. They so appreciated the generosity that they coined a praise for the river:

*Seepabana sa Bakgwele*

*Seana Makwaeba*



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to the Mafifing river. Those who grew up in  
back and remember the long road they used  
to travel to Shokwe beyond the Makgabeng mountains to fetch water.

## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURE AND HERITAGE

This section deals with the vital issues of culture and heritage in Setlaole and surrounding areas. The focus is on those aspects of culture and

all inhabitants of Setlaole who are Bakone significant for them and which they regard as necessary and imperative to preserve and protect presumably because such aspects provide them with a distinct identity. To properly describe and analyse this culture and heritage, it is necessary to spellout clearly what culture and heritage mean in this investigation. We find the definition of culture by Nobles (1985), an Afrocentric scholar, the most appropriate for our investigation. He defines culture as "a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality" (Nobles, 1985:102). In this instance, the culture of the Bakone refers to the beliefs, values and morals of the Bakone people, along with their outward expression. Afrocentric scholars usually differentiate these components of culture through the usage of the concepts such as deep structure and surface structure. For us, the deep structure of beliefs, values, and morals and knowledge is very important since this structure influences the way a people organises their lives. Their social institutions such as marriage, the family, religious practices etc are largely influenced by this deep structure and material creations and artifacts of culture such as crafts, dress, clothing, shelter, domestic implements as well as agricultural implements for instance largely derive their functionality, meaning and significance from the deep structure.

Heritage defines the vital features and aspects of culture, traditions and national assets preserved from one generation to another. They are preserved because they are positively functional for the people concerned. They are preserved and protected because they are deemed essential for the survival of the culture and defines the identity of the people. They are preserved because they define what development actually means and involves for the said people.



Culture is passed o from one generation to the next by elders like granny Kgomedi Sebalamakgolo Ramoroka.

Heritage is usually differentiated into intangible heritage and tangible heritage. Intangible heritage defines practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Tangible heritage defines a heritage resource associated with human interventions into the natural environment and movable artifacts. Tangible heritage is divided into movable and immovable resources.

A critical issue which must be observed to fully understand the current cultural and heritage landscape is the impact of European culture particularly in its racist apartheid form. That the apartheid system, rooted as it was in the European worldview, impacted very negatively on African culture and heritage cannot be disputed particularly if one



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perspective. Whatever and wherever one destroy those aspects – African spirituality, communalism, positive interpersonal relationship etc – which were at the heart of African indigenous lived experience. But the African response – African resistance – saved some of these values. There is much truth in the observation by Asante (2003) that African culture is indestructible. African culture has survived the vicious blows of apartheid. Africans, defined culturally, exist in South Africa as we now have to observe.

### 3.1 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE



Tlhanhlagane (scaly-feathered Finch) is the totem of the Bakone in general, including those of Setlaole.

Copyright: Olivier Paris.

Among the many praises of the Bakone ba Setlaole, this one stands out at special occasions as it reveals their origin, history, totem and pride in the hill of their fore-fathers:

*Ke Bakone, ditlhanhlagane tša Mogoši  
Nonyana ye nnyane ga e jewe.  
Bana ba Mmakgaša' bošego,*

Neighbouring Makgabeng mountains also enjoy praise from the Bakone as granny Kgomedi Ramoroka rolls on:

*Makgaba' Masewela  
Go welang, go wela tlou  
Tšhukudu e wela ka lengope.*

Our informants in Farm Norma A respect their African spiritual heritage. Their concept of reality, including the concept of their own existence as human beings, is rooted in African spirituality as defined from an Afrocentric perspective (Marimba, 2002: 218 – 234). The Christian religion has failed to demolish this. A few examples are apt. Their visits to the graves at the foothills of Setlaole Hill are not simply to put flowers and branches on top of the graves. From the perspective of our informants, the people buried in those graves are alive.

Life is infinite and knows no end, and therefore death is simply another form of existence, a rite of passage that allows one to gain another existential status, that of ancestor, that is, of a purely or almost purely spiritual being. For the elders of Norma A there is actually no waterproof separation between the world of the spirits and the world of the living. Life is one so there is no dichotomy between the so-called natural and supernatural world. They observe that the only difference between the world of the living and the living-dead (ancestors) is in the degree of visibility, the world of the ancestors being largely invisible.

ancestors (Badimo) as guardians of family values. Regarding ancestral spirits (Badimo) as being closer to Modimo (God), they petition God through ancestral spirits. In times of family crisis such as serious illness or problems like unemployment, they visit the graves to seek ancestral spiritual intervention. They believe that most of the crises that they face in life are a product of the fact that they no longer offer adequate reverence to their ancestors.

This spirituality pervades a large part of their lived experience, including as we have observed, their relationship with the flora and fauna. The flora and fauna still available in Setlaole Hill are regarded not simply as material /economic assets but spiritual assets which have to be respected and preserved. Some trees are actually believed to have the spirit/energy to cure illness. The leaves of the monakane tree are believed to have the spiritual energy to cure stomach pain. This is a concept which cannot be captured by the notion of medicinal plants as articulated in the European worldview. The mphalatsa-maru tree is said to have the spirit/energy to stop rain. If they have an important function which is disturbed if it rains, they burn the branches and leaves to disperse the clouds. These trees are a gift from Modimo and have to be respected and preserved.



**Mphalatšamaru/ It is used to disperse rain clouds; by burning it if the rain threatens to disrupt an important function.**

**(Picture by Richard Munyai).**

Spirituality also pervades political structures and practices. The Masekwa family which holds the political headship in Farm Norma A and acts as the representative of the Queen of Ga-Matlala holds secular as well as spiritual power. It is however the spiritual power which is accorded the most reverence and is largely responsible for the political continuity and stability which has characterized governance in Farm Norma A, our informants observe.

The observation of our informants that it is this spiritual power which provides legitimacy to the current head who is a female is very significant. The practice of female heads or queens is, in fact, part of African heritage. The first queens in human history were African. Ancient Nubia and Kemet (Pharaonic Egypt) had queens as heads of

in the Kingdom of Swaziland today, hold  
d influence.



**Monakane Tree/ Serves as medicine for stomach ache while Its logs are used as fencing poles. Also healing stomach pains is a mountain tree known as Modumela.**

**(Picture by Richard Munyai).**

Africana womanism, a component of Afrocentric theory, articulated by Hudson-Weems (1993) and Dove (1998) has provided incontrovertible historical evidence to show that the practice of having females as heads of state is part of African heritage. In fact the concept and practice of matriarchy which originated in Africa, highlights the complementarity aspect of the female-male-relationship or the nature of the feminine and masculine in all forms of life, which is understood as non-hierarchical.

Dove (1998: 515 – 539) has this to say about female/male complementarity in African cultural experience:

...an and the man work together  
...social organisation. The woman  
is revered in her role as the mother who is the  
bringer of life, the conduit for spiritual  
regeneration of the ancestors, the bearer of  
culture, and the centre of social organisation.

Patriarchy is actually an European institution which has been imposed on the African socio-cultural landscape by Europeans through the various waves of European invasions since Ancient Greek times (Dove, 1998: 515 -539).

Those who believe that patriarchy and the oppression of females by males is rooted in the African worldview and thus originated in Africa distort and falsify African history. Patriarchy and the oppression of females by males is of European origin (Diop, 1974). The practice of female political headship as practiced in Farm Norma A is not a strange phenomenon. It is, in fact, a continuation of a cultural phenomenon which was central to the organisation of classical African civilizations as manifested in the power of queens in Ancient Nubia and Kemet.

The institution of the kgoro, which according to our informants is a potent force for democracy and democratic decision-making based on consensus, is at the deepest level a manifestation of African spirituality. Every adult has a respected voice based on our common essence as the children of Modimo. Ontological views such as these orientate humans towards a common basis and consensus in resolving challenges facing a community. In fact, at the fundamental level, the communal ethos which pervades kgoro meetings and discussions is a manifestation of African spirituality. If the self is social and one person's

humanity of others, it becomes imperative are inclusive and which promote the regeneration of the whole community as demanded by African spirituality.

Beyond this however the kgoro has material significance and has powerful lessons to offer to those who want to improve the practice of Western democracy imposed on Africans by European supremacists and their deculturised colonially educated African agents who run African governments today. But before we unpack such lessons it is necessary to conclude the discussion on the intangible heritage of African spirituality by briefly describing its role in preserving African identity.

Our informants observe that their ancestors are the guardians of their values, traditions and ethics etc and therefore breaking links with them precipitates the risk of destroying the whole community. This notion of the spiritual guardianship of the ancestors provides a solid basis for the defense of cultural continuity. Reverence for ancestors transforms into reverence for their values and ideals thus providing a solid basis for cultural continuity. This also provides a potent force for resistance against alien European cultural aggression.

The defence of cultural continuity and resistance to cultural aggression are two complementary processes manifested in the visits to the graves by the people of Setlaole. The constant returns to the graves of the ancestors have translated into a constant return to African spirituality, a relieving and a re-enactment of the cultural values and ideas of the ancestors. In this way the people of Setlaole were not only continuing and protecting their intangible spiritual heritage, they were constantly reaffirming and redefining who they were culturally in the face of the

a materialistic worldview brought by the missionaries such as the Christian church, the colonial school, the European merchant and farmer. These and other agents were involved in the systematic effort to deculturalise the people of Setlaole. It must be remembered that the process of deculturalisation is an integral part of the European colonization process. It includes, according to Dove (1998: 515 -539) any or all of the following things: the removal of the people from their lands, the forbiddance of the people to speak their languages or practice their cultural forms, and the inculcation of alien values and practices either through forced and subtle means. It is, in this context, a dehumanising, violent, and brutal process that includes denying people their humanity, taking control of or destroying traditional institutions, violently removing real leadership, using torture and abuse on children, women and men physically, mentally, economically, and spiritually to achieve control, and withdrawing access to cultural knowledge and imposing ideas that are hostile to cultural continuity of people. These aspects of deculturalisation are supported by a belief in the morality and righteousness of this process. The people of Setlaole have been victims of these European racist attacks.

The process of deculturalisation of the people of Farm Norma A is painful and graphically represented in their grossly unfair ejection from their lands, their buying of land which they considered their own, their containment in a tiny farm which cannot afford any decent livelihood, the satanisation of their ancestors and institutions such as initiation which they regarded as pillars of their identity and humanity, and their conversion to alien Christian cults such as Wesleyanism which enveloped them in a religious worldview which negated all their values and ideas etc. It is in this sense that their visits to the graves of their ancestors can be regarded as a struggle for liberation. Indeed, in the

218 – 234), African liberation cannot be  
Africans have not yet returned to African  
spirituality.

At the secular political level the continuing existence of the kgoro as a critical forum for local governance in Farm Norma A is a clear demonstration of the respect with which indigenous democratic practices are held. Our discussion with Raesibe Elisa Masekwa who currently holds the headship of Farm Norma A reveals that issues such as land use, water and sanitation, domestic disputes etc. are still tackled democratically within the framework of the kgoro.

All adults have a voice in kgoro discussions and decisions. She however voiced concern that some western educated elements undermine the kgoro by refusing to attend meetings, refusing to pay levies, and taking their local concerns directly to the municipalities thus by-passing the African democratic institution. The institution has however survived the corrosion and erosion brought by apartheid and the current western liberal democratic ideology championed by the post – 1994 African ruling elite. It is however hoped that the push by traditional leaders to have a separate department which deals with traditional leadership issues will see the renaissance of those indigenous democratic values in which adult men and women complemented each other in building communities living in harmony with each other and nature. The indigenous intangible heritage embodied in the kgoro which was a crucial link in the democratic governance practices of the Matlala polity rooted in the Bakone Bantu worldview which we discussed in the previous section deserves to be preserved and protected.

specific reference to the vital need to ethos and spirit in which disputes were settled and justice dispensed within the context of the traditional kgoro. They are concerned about the negative influence alien law and jurisprudence – a product of colonialism and apartheid – have exercised on the proceedings of the kgoro in Farm Norma A. Specially, these negative influences derive from English common Law and Roman Dutch Law.

The jurisprudence which underpins these legal systems is based on the idea of retributive justice, in which an impersonal state and bureaucracy hands down punishment with little consideration for either victims or perpetrators (Odora Hoppers, 2004). Disputes and disorder in the community are approached and settled in terms of adversarial trial, proof, guilt and punishment.

In the Bakone indigenous kgotla<sup>14</sup>, as our informants observe, the settlement of breaches in the customs and regulations of the community was rooted in the African worldview and involved the redressing of imbalances and the restoration of broken relationships. The idea, they point out, was to restore balance and harmony in the community as a whole, because the violation of the customs and the laws of the community by an individual negatively affected the whole community the perpetrator had to be reintegrated into the community. This was the Bakone idea of justice. Justice actually involved healing and restoration of harmony.

Our informants observe that some of the thinking which now characterises the decisions of the kgoro on matters such as the cutting of the green mohwelere tree where a fine of R600, 00 is imposed is

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<sup>14</sup> Tribal meeting

remembered that in Setlaole only the dry wood of this wood produces good fire for domestic purposes. In this case and others the whole notion of the reintegration of the perpetrator in the community is absent. The idea of restorative justice is continually being weakened by the borrowing of thinking rooted in an alien worldview. They however observe that traditional thinking on justice is very resilient and requires conscious preservation for the harmonious development of the community of Farm Norma A.

Contemporary African thought on the significance and importance of the intangible heritage of indigenous African indigenous knowledge and skills is rooted in the realization that Western knowledge systems have precipitated Africa's crisis of development (Dhliwayo, 2007; 2008). The values which underpin Western European models of development have wreaked havoc on African ideals and values of development. What we have had since the invasion and domination of Africa by Europe is not development but misdevelopment. Any form of development of Africans based on the destruction of African culture, knowledge systems and skills is misdevelopment.

It is not so much the prohibitive costs of development based on European knowledge and skills which are of major concern to contemporary African thought but the fact that such development has undermined African values and ideals embedded in African ontology, epistemology, cosmology, logic etc we have unpacked in previous sections.

Our informants in Setlaole believe in the value of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) for their own development. They decry the fact that such knowledge continues to exist in their community but is hardly utilized for their own development. Such knowledge, they

ge which promoted food production (soil), the construction of shelter and making of clothing from the flora and fauna, the promotion of health through the utilisation of ancestral spiritual power and the energy/spirit found in flora and fauna.



The erection of this kraal at Norma A was informed by the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). Note the closeness of the logs, dug into the ground without anything tying them together.

They observe that such knowledge was handed down from generation to generation but some of it belonged to specialists such as diviners and herbalists who passed it within their families. Because of the critical importance of health in their community and the prohibitive costs of specialist medical treatment offered by Western trained doctors and also the availability of trees and plants which are known to have the energy (properties) to promote health on Setlaole Hill, our informants emphasized the need to investigate and protect the intangible

ican medicine to which we directed our

The problem in this area of investigation is historically associated with apartheid policies and laws which sought to destroy the knowledge and practice of indigenous medicine and the Christian church which militantly denounced such practices as witchcraft and the wiley work of Satan. Our informants who are Wesleyans observe the negative impact of Christianity on indigenous African medical practices. But apartheid policy added legal force to Christian beliefs. Laws passed to destroy indigenous medicine included the Witchcraft and Suppression Act No. 3 of 1957 amended by the Witchcraft Suppression Amendment Act No.50 of 1970. This Act classified all African doctors and herbalists as witchdoctors. Other Acts made the practice of indigenous medicine illegal relegating this its practice to the medicine to backyard. Despite this, Africans continued to use African medicine to promote their health.

In Setlaole our informants took us to Setlaole Hill to show us the flora which had potent energy. The monakane tree was, for instance, identified as having properties to cure stomach pains. Many other trees whose fruits are eaten such mohwelere, morutle, mokgalo, moretlwa, mogwane, mokee, mokwerekwere, and moroberobe are also believed to have medicinal and healing energy/power. They are also believed to have the energy to prevent people from becoming ill by boosting the immune system. Our informants observe that it is prohibited to waste such trees through unnecessary cutting. Such trees are traditionally protected.

Setlaole Hill was and continues to be a source of medicinal herbs and plants to cure common diseases such as stomach ulcers, stomach ace,

a, kwashiorkor, malnutrition, swelling legs, soning, colds and flue according to our informants. Our older informants are still knowledgeable in the herbs and plants which cure these diseases. They however point out that the dominance of pills and cures available in the pharmacies, clinics and hospitals is gradually diminishing the use of these traditional herbs particularly among the Western educated younger generation. Furthermore, the inferiorisation of such traditional cures by the Western schooling and educational systems prevent the younger generation from openly using traditional cures. They do not want to be branded as uncivilized, although they hide in their bedrooms when they “drink” traditional cures, our informants observe.

Our informants however observe that the people of Farm Norma A continue to believe in the efficacy of the knowledge and skills of herbalists and diviners in the promotion of health. Our informants also observe that while most go to Western hospitals they also consult traditional diviners who throw bones and herbalists during times of critical illness. Illness and disease is still believed to be a product of both natural and supernatural causes. Witchcraft and the anger of ancestral spirits are believed to cause illness and disease. This is why diviners are consulted in order to find out what must be done in order to appease the angry ancestors and to counter the evil power of the witches. As we have observed in our discussions of African spirituality these beliefs and ideas force the people of Setlaole to ensure that living in harmony with others and fostering positive interpersonal relationships constitute the basic principles of a healthy life.

Those who violate the traditional norms of the society endanger their own health and that of the community. Illness and disease are not simply the products of biological causes but also and mainly the effects

cultural values of the community. Thus  
and herbalists are not simply the guardians  
of biological health but also of spiritual health. Health and healing of  
the sick thus involve the complementary processes of tackling the  
biological/physical and spiritual dimensions of living. African medicine  
is therefore holistic in its approach to health care. It is more  
comprehensive and all-encompassing compared to Western medicine  
which tackles only the material dimension of life. This heritage  
constitutes a critical resource for tackling the problems of African  
humanity and existence and is therefore worth preserving.

Despite all the ruthless efforts to deculturalise the Bakone, they  
continued to speak their language, which is a dialect within the  
Northern Sotho language. They subtly rejected some of the names  
given to their land by the White settlers. Examples of preferred African  
names of their villages include the following: GaRaweši (Harriets Wish),  
Mokudung (Bayswater), Kubuše (Breda), Bohlapamonwana (Norma A)  
etc. It was a common practice among the Bakone ba Setlaole to  
name their children after wild animals like Tlou<sup>15</sup>, Kwena<sup>16</sup>, Nare<sup>17</sup>,  
Phuti<sup>18</sup> etc. Interestingly, the pronunciation of the names differs from  
that of the animals, with a raised tone on the last syllable. Many  
villagers still answer to these names even today.

Other name features are those of girls named after males and boys  
named after females without adjustments as in other cultures. Some  
names mark important historical events. Born in the census year, granny  
Kgomedi who was named after a male relative was also nicknamed  
Sebalamakgolo<sup>19</sup>. This was done to mark the year in which people and

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<sup>15</sup> elephant

<sup>16</sup> crocodile

<sup>17</sup> buffalo

<sup>18</sup> duiker

hundreds. Like most adults, even at her old  
y glorify her name as she sang:

*Ke Sebalamakgolo a batho,  
Dikgomo tša šala ka morago  
Agee, Phuti!*

Although now blurred, gender roles were clearly demarcated in the past. Women brought children up while men went into the veld to look for food. As the children grew into boys and girls, women trained and nurtured the girls in preparation for adult life; the men did the same with the boys. The most formal way of achieving this was through initiation schools/circumcision. As the boys' initiation took place in the mountains, theirs was also known as mountain school. These annual institutions of learning had names like Makgalwa, Mabitsi, Marulana, Mangana etc. Every class would be led by a young initiate from the royal kraal. At the end of the process the graduates would assume new names like Maesela (boys), Ramaesela (girls) and Madimetja (boys), Ramaesela (girls). By then they would be ready for adulthood; the females to look after the household chores like cooking while males take care of the family wealth like cattle.

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<sup>19</sup> Count hundreds (literal)



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A young graduate upon completion of the mountain school dressed in traditional hides and beads in celebration of manhood  
(Picture by TM Mojaelo)



Young female graduates on their big graduation day.  
(Picture: [www.sacultures.org.za](http://www.sacultures.org.za)).



The family wealth of the Bakone, cattle was as important as today's bank account and it was the main responsibility of young men to look after them.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

In modern Norma A cattle are outnumbered by donkeys due to among other factors, drought and manageability. They say cattle need a herdboys while donkeys can be knee-haltered. A donkey is easily used as a means of transport without a cart. Some villagers go as far as singing praises about this stubborn but useful animal:

O se ke wa bona tonki go nanya,  
E fihla matšhona.  
Gobane kgole go ya pelo,  
Ge e le kgauswi go ya dinao.  
Le ge o ka e bitša molahlwaleboya,  
Metse yona e phuthile magole  
Bošwana bja tšwa ka lapeng.



Donkeys can be seen almost in any part of Norma A as a common means of family transport – mounting, carrying bags on back and ploughing. Owners say unlike cattle, they are easy to monitor.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

Music is part and parcel of the daily life of the Bakone. Most of the song lyrics have been passed on from generation to generation and their composers are not known. Song and dance accompany initiation, celebration, mourning, worship, reaping and many other activities of the Bakone.

The male dance known as kiba is dominated by instrumental music performed by blowing pipes known as dinaka. The rhythms are determined by three sets of drums viz. kiba<sup>20</sup>, phoisele<sup>21</sup> and matikwane<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Father drum

<sup>21</sup> Mother drum

<sup>22</sup> Small twin drums



The dinaka/kiba dancers in full swing. Note the colourful regalia.

(Picture: [www.sacultures.org.za](http://www.sacultures.org.za)).

Music by females is rich with lyrics, either inherited or as social comment. Though they sing with their voices, they also utilize instruments like whistles to signal the different paces in their dance. Normally, they dance to the rhythm of one drum simply referred to as Moropa<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> drum



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Like peacocks, women love bright colours as they move to the beat of the cowhide drum.  
(Picture: [www.sacultures.org.za](http://www.sacultures.org.za)).



Though western civilization has introduced new building patterns, some of the Bakone ba Setlaole still entertain their original way of building their houses. Note the murals.

Tangible heritage defines a heritage resource associated with human interventions into the natural environment. Tangible heritage is usually divided into movable and immovable resources. Humans intervene in the natural environment to modify it for the purposes of their material and spiritual sustenance. The most crucial intervention in the natural environment involves its modification for the purposes of providing for shelter, clothing and food. This is basic and material intervention. There is also what we may refer to as spiritual intervention which is associated with the provision of places of worship (churches, shrines) burial places such as graves.

Human intervention in the natural environment is however not capricious or random. Human values and ideals enter into the patterns

al environment. What we have referred to  
ure of cultural beliefs, customs and morals  
influence the mode of intervention and the resultant movable and  
immovable resources and artifacts. These artifacts are actually a  
manifestation of the deep structure of culture and help to define and  
sustain the identity of the people.

A survey of the ancestral land of the inhabitants of Farm Norma A on  
the foothills of Setlaole Hill clearly reveals the impact of human  
intervention in the natural environment. There is evidence of  
homesteads or living compounds and cattle kraals in the form of ruins.  
There is evidence of farmland on the periphery of the homesteads and  
living compounds. All the manifestations of human intervention which  
are still etched on the landscape reveal the cultural values, customs  
and ideals of the people. These manifestations of human intervention in  
the form of dwelling houses, cattle kraals, farmland went into ruins  
when the people were ejected from their lands in the 1930s.



There is relatively clear evidence of a spatial pattern in the organisation of the Setlaole settlement or village as well as the zoning of activities in the form of living areas, farmland and grazing land. Indeed these settlement patterns and activity zones indicate that the process of human intervention in the natural environment was not arbitrary and haphazard. There was order and form rooted in the worldview of the Bakone of Setlaole. It is possible to reconstruct the spatial pattern of settlements and activity zones if thorough archeological investigations are conducted. In this way we will have a picture of the material structures and creations of the people of Setlaole. Such material and surface structures will no doubt represent the deep structures of cultural beliefs, customs, values and ideals of the people of Setlaole. There is an unbreakable connection between the deep structure and the surface structure manifested in the immovable creations of the people. It must be pointed out that the various components of a people's culture are inextricably interwoven and inseparable.

The most prominent manifestation of human intervention in nature are the graves which contain the remains of the ancestors of the current owners and inhabitants of Farm Norma A. From the location, disposition and structure of these graves as well as the discussions we had with the descendants of the people buried in these graves, it is possible to reconstruct the cultural values, beliefs and customs of the people of Setlaole.

There was no common cemetery where the dead of the village were buried. Each family buried its dead in the homestead or close to the compound. The dead were buried with some of their belongings.

earlier on, was a form of transition to the ancestor – a spirit – who was the guardian of family affairs, traditions and ethics. The ancestral spirit was therefore supposed to reside within the compound to be better able to protect the living and petition Modimo on their behalf. Ancestral spirits are part of the family. Their only difference with the living is that they are invisible. Mbiti's (1990) conception of the ancestors as the "living dead" properly captures the Bakone view of the ancestors and their role in the affairs of the living. All the graves have an east-west alignment with the head of the dead pointing to the west where the sun sets. The symbolism of the setting sun represented in this burial practice is meant to capture the notion of death as the ending of earthly life. But the Bakone also translate, in the view of our informants, this symbolism to represent the end of visible life and the beginning of invisible life. Life, in the view of our informants, knows no end; cannot be terminated. The visits to the graves and the reverence with which graves are regarded in Bakone culture explains why the desecration of graves is treated not as ordinary crime but a crime against the ancestors which can be corrected only through rituals in which the forgiveness of the ancestors is sought by the perpetrator. Graves are protected and cannot be tampered with.



Despite the sacredness of the graves, with the advent of burglar proofs, some families sought to re-inforce the protection of the tombstones of their loved ones against wild animals and natural forces.

(Picture by Richard Munyai).



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One of these wooden spoons is called leho<sup>24</sup>, while many are maho.  
(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>24</sup> A wooden spoon used for the dishing out of porridge



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The different stages in the making of a lefehlo<sup>25</sup>: as sticks, sticks with holes and finally with stirring wires.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>25</sup> A stick with wires attached to one end for stirring soft porridge



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Another form of local art is expressed on the floors when the women do what is known as go kgopha<sup>26</sup>.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>26</sup> Smear the floor with fresh cow dung in order to protect and decorate it



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The grass-woven mat is known as legogwa/legogo<sup>27</sup> is used for both sitting on and sleeping purposes.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>27</sup> Mat used both for sitting on and sleeping purposes



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This shallow bowl known as leselo<sup>28</sup> is made of wood.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>28</sup> Traditional shallow bowl used to shake grains in the purification process



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This old wooden vase known as motole<sup>29</sup> is used for containing grains during the stamping phase just before the purification process. The log used to stamp is called mose.

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>29</sup> A tall and deep wooden vase used in the process of thrashing grains



These wooden bowls are used for keeping porridge fresh and warm and one of them is called mogopo<sup>30</sup> (many megopo).

(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>30</sup> A wooden bowl used to keep food fresh and warm



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An old deep bowl used for containing grains or meal is called seroto<sup>31</sup>  
(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>31</sup> Deep bowl mostly used to carry meal or offerings at feasts



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One of these traditional scoops is known as morutlo<sup>32</sup> (many merutlo).  
(Picture by Jonas Tlouamma).

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<sup>32</sup> A scoop used to pour liquids into containers, especially sorghum beer



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Marula piercing instrument is made of a bone, and it is known as lehlabo<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Bone piece used in the peeling of marula fruit in the process of making the morula drink

## **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS, EVALUATION AND SYNTHESIS**

Cabral (1970) observed that when Goebbels, the tragic brain behind Nazi propaganda, heard culture being discussed he brought out his revolver. He was fully aware of the centrality of culture in the structuring of human thought and behaviour. He was also fully aware of the power of culture in resistance to foreign domination. European colonialists and white supremacists, to consolidate and perpetuate their oppressive domination over Africans, thus facilitating the plunder of their resources, made a systematic attempt to annihilate the key values and ideals which defined Africanity and African identity.

There was an aggressive attempt to strip away the ancestral culture of the African and replace it with European culture. This was the process of deculturalisation described earlier. Perhaps the most effective strategy the White European supremacist oppressors designed to blunt African struggles for liberation and emancipation was to produce an "educated" African elite which was ashamed of African culture and history, but who glorified European history and culture. This is what Woodson (1933) referred to as the "mis-education of the Negro." He was referring to the destructive effects on the African mind by schools which used a pedagogy and curriculum which deliberately omit, distort or trivialize the role of African people in and their seminal contributions to world history and culture. The end goal of mis-education is to produce an African people who militantly identify with and embrace the culture and heritage of Europeans as their own, but who are ambivalent or indifferent toward African history, tradition and

to produce what Carruthers (1994) termed  
ing people who have had their intellectual  
development arrested by the public school system.

Finally, the ultimate goal of mis-education is mentacide, a term linked to genocide, which refers to the European-orchestrated campaign to destroy the African mind as a prelude to destroying African people. The White European supremacist rulers of Africa and their culturally dislocated and decentred supporters in the ruling African elite clearly understand and recognise that mis-education is the backbone of White domination.

Mis-educated Africans manifest culturally destructive and negative features such as conceptual incarceration, learned indifference and what Uhuru Hotep (n.d) calls utangano. Conceptual incarceration is the term for African imprisonment in White European belief systems and knowledge bases. Learned indifference is a self-destructive psychological disorder marked by indifference to issues, causes, and organizations that promote the political and economic liberation of African people. Utengano, according to Uhuru Hotep (n.d), is a Swahili word meaning "disunity" and refers to "the deeply entrenched, intergenerational predisposition among Africans to accept dysfunctional divisions in the African family and community as normal." This disorder afflicts those African who expect and tolerant teenage pregnancy, absent fathers, inferior schools, rundown buildings, ineffective leaders, unsafe streets filled with drugs, alcohol, x-rated music as normal and thus acceptable (Uhuru Hotep, n.d).

The conditions we have described above have precipitated a cultural and intellectual crisis in Africa which can only be resolved comprehensively by deploying Afrocentricity in confronting these conditions. Asante (2003), as observed earlier on, defines Afrocentricity

and action in which the centrality of African perspectives predominate. In terms of theory, it is the placing of African values and ideals in the centre of any analysis of African phenomena. Asante (2003) further notes that Blackness itself is a trope of ethics; insisting that to be black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, pedophilia, and white racial domination.

The analysis, evaluation and synthesis of what has been gathered on the history and heritage of the people of Setlaole has, therefore, to be framed by Afrocentricity. This is the only way they can be provided with information and knowledge they need to liberate themselves from all forms of colonialism and apartheid.

#### **4.1 The San and the Khoikhoi: Analysis, Evaluation and Synthesis**

The representation of the San and the Khoikhoi as Bushmen and Hottentots respectively in colonial and racist European historiography has done a lot of damage to our appreciation of their contribution to the development African civilization in particular and human civilization in general. Even liberal and Marxist historiography, rooted as it is in the European worldview, distorts our understanding of their contribution. That representation and categorisation as Bushmen effectively placed them at the level of savages and animals whose culture, if they were said to have any, would vanish with the arrival of more advanced people. Indeed, nineteenth evolutionary theory and the Eurocentric idea of progress predicted that they and their culture would vanish. The incontrovertible fact that the San and the Khoikhoi are still alive in parts of South Africa and Botswana, for instance, is a tribute to the resilience and indeed to the functionality of their culture. It is often forgotten that the San and the Khoikhoi were the first Africans to humanize the region. Their religion and communal organisation rooted in a worldview which said they had to live in harmony with the flora

ive contributed to the preservation of the

Their knowledge of the behaviour of the flora and fauna which included knowledge of their medicinal and healing power contributed to the emergence of sustainable human communities in the region before the arrival of the Bantu and the Europeans. The hunting techniques of the San and the advanced animal husbandry of the Khoikhoi who are known to have introduced livestock in Southern Africa provided later arrivals (Bantu and Europeans) with the knowledge and skills to survive in a new environment. It is indeed a tribute to the advanced knowledge of the natural environment of the San and the Khoikhoi that the South African Defence Force used this knowledge in their failed attempt to crush African liberation. They used the knowledge and skills of the San in tracking animals to track and kill African freedom fighters.

Perhaps the most important lesson they passed on to others was the value of intercommunal cooperative living which fostered intercommunal harmony. There is no evidence of major San-Khoikhoi wars in Southern Africa. While there may have been conflict over hunting and grazing land there is no evidence that these conflicts degenerated into near genocidal wars as when the Boers hunted and killed the San with automatic rifles the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact what we have is evidence of cooperation, sharing and exchange of goods and skills. The San and Khoikhoi communities tended to merge into each other to the extent that they appeared to have formed one culture. The term Khoisan is indeed a reflection of this process of intergration and mutual cooperative living. This is a far cry from the bitter legacy of racial segregation and separation which the Europeans have given to us. Racial separation, segregation and

Dutch inventions rooted in the European to the San, Khoikhoi and Bantu African worldviews.

The artistic creations of the San and Khoikhoi, though absent on Setlaole Hill, are part of the heritage of all Africans. The Makgabeng mountain nearby, is host to San rock art which depicts their communal way of life. Art in the African worldview is functional. The notion of art for art's sake does not exist in the African view. In this regard, it is sound to hypothesise that the images depicted on the rocks in Makgabeng and other areas were meant to preserve their lived experience and culture. Living in harmony with the natural environment from which they acquired their wherewithal to survive was a key component of their worldview. The theory that depicting an animal on the rock represented some form of attempt to control and kill it in a hunt does not properly fit into the substance and essence of the San worldview. We would hypothesise that the images of animals depicted on the rocks represented the San ontological desire to live in harmony with animals. The circles drawn by the Khoikhoi are also understandable in terms of the symbolic significance of the circle in African cosmology. As we pointed out earlier on, the circle symbolises the connectedness of all that exists. It symbolizes the unity of being based on a common essence – spirit/energy. Afro-circularity is so pervasive in the African lived experience that even their houses are circular in shape.

What it is important to mention is that the arrival of the Bantu did not lead to the colonization of the San and the Khoikhoi. The meeting of the Khoisan and the Bantu led to a virtual integration of the particular cultural contribution of each group into a synthetic whole which is African culture in Southern Africa. When the Bakone arrived in the



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laole, they influenced and were influenced  
been built by the San and the Khoikhoi.

Though the origin of the name is a contentious matter, most sources believe that it means we've travelled to this hill far-away from our place of origin (Se – It/we; tla – came; hole – far).

## **4.2 The Bakone of Sellaole: Analysis, Evaluation and Synthesis**

and other groups in Southern Africa has not been reliable. This implies that we do not have a reliable knowledge of Bantu culture and heritage as well. This is so because culture and heritage are precipitates of history. The distorted knowledge we have of the history and culture of the Bantu is simply a product of the fact that the perspectives which have dominated the production of this historical and cultural knowledge derive from the European worldview. It might have been assumed that the post-World War II Africanist historiographical revolution would have changed this situation but it did not (Temu & Swai, 1981). The so-called Africanist history was, in fact, an African version of European history. While Africanist history restored historical agency to the African, that agency was conceptualized in liberal or Marxist terms, or to put it differently, in Eurocentric terms. The agent of history in Africanist history is either an individual who maximises his/her individual interests or a member of a class (peasantry, proletariat, bourgeoisie) who similarly maximizes his/her class interests. All this conceptualization of agency is thoroughly Eurocentric. We do not find in the history which has been produced an agent located in the African worldview; an agent whose behaviour is imbued with African ontology, epistemology, logic, teleology, cosmology, axiology, and ideology (Carroll, 2008: 4 – 27). This is why the history and cultural knowledge we have is not useful for the African. This history and cultural knowledge does not provide the African with a consciousness of victory (Asante, 2003). It does not allow the African to regain his/her African spirituality (Mazama, 2002:218 – 234). In short, this history and cultural knowledge does not contribute to African liberation and emancipation.

What the producer of African historical and cultural knowledge must do to contribute to useful, reliable and liberatory knowledge is to follow the advice of Diop (1974) which is worth repeating:

will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt ... The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled; he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic. Imagine, if you can, the uncomfortable position of a western historian who was to write the history of Europe without referring to Greco-Latin Antiquity and try to pass that off as a scientific approach.

The people of Setlaole, the Bakone, came from the north-what today is the Nigeria-Cameroon border. It must be remembered that, that region received the historical and cultural impact of Egyptian civilization. The destruction of the Ancient Egyptian state through the successive waves of European invasions beginning with the Hyksos (1645 BCE), followed by the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs led to successive waves of migrants from the Nile Valley into regions to the west, south and east (Diop,1974; Asante & Asante,1985). While not all the Egyptian cultural and civilisational concepts survived due to the environmental conditions in the areas of migration which were different from those obtaining in the Nile Valley, some survived and certainly continued to animate the construction of social, economic and political institutions among those Africans, like the Bantu (Bakone) who settled in what became Setlaole. Diop (1974) and Obenga (1992, 1994) between them mention totemism, circumcision, kingship, cosmology, matriarchy and ethical principles deriving from Maat. We have mentioned, in our study of the Bakone of Setlaole, the significance of their worldview which allowed them to live in



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fauna, the communal ethos of their social  
ic features of their socio-political institutions  
such as the kgoro, initiation / circumcision, matriarchy manifested in  
female leaders and rulers, and, most importantly, African spirituality  
which manifested in the constant visits to the graves of their ancestors.  
All these concepts were highly developed in Pharaonic Egypt (Kemet)  
which cradled human civilization. All these concepts provided the  
Bantu, including the people of Setlaole, with the energy to resist and  
fight against colonialism and apartheid.

### **4.3. The Colonial Period Analysis, Evaluation and Synthesis**

There is no period of African existence which has been written about by European scholars more than the colonial period. The continuing insistence by Europeans that their control of African since the 15<sup>th</sup> century has been more beneficial to Africans than it has been damaging, and the continuing attempt by African patriots to reveal the utter falsity of this position has contributed to the production of a large number of books and articles purporting to be knowledge about Africans. Most of the so-called knowledge about Africans is nothing more than what Europeans want the world to believe about Africans; knowledge which turns out to be mere justifications of European oppression and plunder of African resources. Most patriots, though well meaning and determined to free their various people from the nightmare of European domination, have not achieved their goal because they are still imprisoned in European concepts and belief systems. What has been produced about African existence during the colonial period disconnects Africans from their heritage and culture. Why? Uhuru Hotep (n.d) answers this question by observing that

in their heritage and culture are more easily  
than people who are not."

The data and events involving the people of Setlaole which we have collected point to their continuing attempt to control their own destiny in the face of powerful and negative European forces. The activities of hunters, explorers, traders and early missionaries were largely puzzling to most of the Bakone of Setlaole who could not make sense of these activities. It was when these Europeans acting in conjunction with the British and the Boer administrations insisted on collecting all sorts of strange taxes (e.g. dog taxes) and began to take over Bakone farming and grazing land and insisted on its use to the exclusion of the rightful owners that the Bakone grasped the alien and oppressive nature of the European presence. These activities and the emerging White-master and Black- servant relations initiated the period of White-Black confrontation which has not ended up to now despite the ascendance to political office of the ANC. The missionaries, we have observed, were an integral part of the colonial system of European imperialism. They constituted the spiritual arm of colonialism and they remain an enduring pillar of Western European supremacy in the area. The Christian religion, in its attempt to regulate the conduct and the behaviour of the Bakone, tried to uproot them from their cultural values and African spirituality and replace these with values and ideals rooted in the European worldview. Their judging of the indigenous religion and spirituality in terms of their own led them to satanize the ancestors of the Bakone. This extreme and radical condemnation of African religion and associated spirituality has failed to completely wipe out African religion as we have seen. Four forms of reaction seem to have characterized the Bakone of Setlaole in Farm Norma A. A section has made Wesleyanism a reality in their lives. Another section combines elements of both (Christianity and African religion). The third has moved

such as Zionism (e.g. the Zion Christian Church) as remained African in terms of their religion and spirituality. Our discussion with informants in Farm Norma A seems to indicate that the first group is in the minority. Bakone indigenous religion continues to exercise a powerful pull on the people of Setlaole.

Perhaps the most critically painful event in the lives of the people of Setlaole was when they were forced to abandon their original land when that land was bought by Africans from outside the area, and then forced to buy from a European company a tiny portion of the land they called their own. Farm Norma A is a far cry from the communal freedom they used to have over wide swaths of the Setlaole area.

The critical issue to remember here is that the land they originally communally owned constituted the fundamental dimension of their definition of themselves as the people of Setlaole. The descendants of the Setlaole people in Farm Norma A insist that land on the foothills of Setlaole is theirs. From any Afrocentric perspective this position is sound. No one could be deprived of the land of their forefathers and foremothers in the arbitrary fashion of the 1930s. Only if one were accused of witchcraft or some such spiritual evil could one be ejected from land on which the graves of their ancestors were there for everyone to see. Graves, it must be remembered indelibly mark land on which they are located as belonging to the descendants of those buried in the graves. In African culture it is not proper to bury your dead in a foreign land or on land which does not belong to you according to custom. The idea of cemeteries far removed from home/or homestead is European. So also is the idea of buying a grave. This is nonsense from an Afrocentric perspective.

farms such as Norma A and Norma B is that violation of the African worldview. The institution of a bought farm, as is the practice of private ownership of land, has had a negative impact on the culture and heritage of the people of Setlaole. Land constituted the pillar on which all their social relationships were structured. Land, it must be remembered was not simply an economic asset but a spiritual asset which tied people to Modimo since land was a gift from Modimo. Everyone in the community had a right to the use of land, a right which private ownership now denied in principle. The land the ancestors of the people of Setlaole had owned communally, part of which is now Farm Norma B, is the heritage of the people of Setlaole which, from the African worldview was not supposed to be alienated. The return of that heritage and its reclaiming are fully justified from an African perspective. In fact they should have claimed it in terms of the legal requirements and processes governing the current land reform programme. However, declaring that land the heritage of the people of Setlaole is still possible.

It is important to conclude this section by observing, with Chinweizu (2005), that a society's ancestral culture is the backbone of a people, the immune system of a society which identifies what is socially self, that is, what ever displays the ancestral culture and protects it from the intrusive and alien. Like the immune system when it is functioning properly, culture will repel alien invaders. It will react to invaders by mobilizing its society for resistance. This is why the culture and heritage of a community/society must be preserved and protected.

The land, the flora and fauna and their products, knowledge systems, the graves; in short, the tangible and the intangible heritage of the people of Setlaole survive, but in a weakened form, and can still be



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for their cultural liberation, emancipation  
a sound proposition. However, this requires  
steps, processes and policy initiatives which are in line with an  
Afrocentric vision of development. The question of possibilities of  
realizing such an Afrocentric eventuality falls outside the scope of this  
research. However, such an eventuality can be imagined.

## CHAPTER 5

### TOURISM POTENTIAL IN SETLAOLE

Discussions with tourism experts at the African Ivory Route offices at Library Gardens in Polokwane and our informants who live in Setlaole have helped us to look into the possibilities of developing tourism in the area. The question we were investigating was: What, in the natural features, history, culture and heritage of Setlaole, would attract local, national and international tourists to the area?

We, first of all, explored the possibility of eco-tourism in the area as promoted by the African Ivory Route. The now famous African Ivory Route has its origins in the legendary exploits of early ivory hunters and gold traders. The route which boldly penetrates the length and breadth of South Africa integrate the diverse natural splendor, wild life, the exceptional cultural richness of Limpopo Province. It was established as a sought after eco-tourism and adventure travel destination in South Africa.

We have unpacked the topographical, faunal and floral features of Setlaole and its environs in this research. We have, for instance, observed that the Setlaole Formation Hill is part of a complex of larger and higher mountains in the scenic northern part of Limpopo Province. Some of these larger formations are Makgabeng, Blouberg and Soutpansberg. Setlaole Hill stands adjacent to the Makgabeng Formation.

which can be made here with regard to this which relates to tourism. The scenic beauty of the area which combines these mountains is awesome and would no doubt attract tourists. Makgabeng, as is well known, hosts some of the finest rock art images in South Africa. Lovers of art and others interested in the culture and worldview of the earliest inhabitants of South Africa would naturally be attracted to the area.

The flora on Setlaole Hill which includes various types of trees whose fruits are edible to both humans and baboons, as well as mysterious trees (e.g. Mokgalo tree), whose leaves burning stops the rain cannot fail to attract tourists to Setlaole. What of the presence of wild animals in the area!

The concept which is being canvassed here is that Setlaole Hill which is very close to Makgabeng with its famous San rock art and magical scenery of hard rock, sharp outcrops, legendary pathways and crevices can be linked together and then linked to the Waterberg, Blouberg, Soutpansberg and Limpopo Valley which are at present part of the African Ivory Route. This would open up Setlaole and Makgabeng as an integrated tourism package.

The cultural and spiritual significance of the graves and burial practices of the Bakone of Setlaole have been described. Their east-west alignment and the pattern of their general distribution in the area would certainly attract enthusiasts of African culture and worldview in the area. The graves of the early African Christian pastors such as the Setumus would also attract those who are fascinated by the courage and determination of those early African Christian "soldiers" who marched in Setlaole as to war. It must also be observed that a careful investigation and research of the area by Afrocentric archaeologists

lead to the construction of a model of a village showing its various dwelling houses and other structures and their relationship to the cattle kraal. Again this would attract enthusiasts of Bakone African culture.

There is land in Setlaole area to build facilities such as sleeping accommodation and restaurants for tourists. The area is accessible by road which can be tarred if there is need. The area exudes a quiet and peaceful rural environment which soothes the nerves and stress of those tortured by the hectic pace and cut-throat competitive lifestyles of urban environments in South Africa and developed capitalist countries abroad.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

The collapse of the apartheid system and the dawn of a new democratic dispensation with the capture of state power by the African liberation movement led by the African National Congress led to drastic changes in the management of heritage in South Africa. The apartheid exclusionary and discriminatory legislation which largely marginalized the heritage of the colonized was repealed and replaced with legislation which was rooted in the democratic principles and ethos which undergirds the 1996 constitution. Legislation which provided for the recognition, nurturing and management of the heritage of the diverse people of South Africa was passed by the government. This was the National Heritage Resources Act N.o. 25 of 1999.

ivocally recognizes the pivotal importance  
of the heritage of all the diverse peoples of South Africa thus:

*Our heritage is unique and precious and cannot be renewed. It helps to define our cultural identity and therefore lies at the heart of our spiritual wellbeing and has power to build our nation. It has the potential to affirm our culture, and is so doing shape our national character (Government Gazette, 28 April 1999).*

The Act provides for the creation of national and provincial authorities tasked with the identification, assessment and management of the heritage of multi-cultural South Africa. The people of Setlaole, conscious of the vital importance of their history, heritage and tourism potential of their area approached the Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority to explore the possibilities, ways and means of managing the heritage of Setlaole Hill and the surrounding area.

The Act distinguishes clearly between, at least, three categories of heritage sites:

\*Grade1: Heritage resources with qualities so exceptional that they are of special  
national significance.

\*Grade11: Heritage resources which, although forming part of the National



considered to have special qualities which

them significant within the context of the province or region.

\*Grade III: Other heritage resources worthy of conservation.

## The Recommendations

1. Setlaole Hill and the immediate surrounding area to be declared a grade III heritage site.

Integrated into the African Ivory Route. The  
from Makgabeng plateau to the Waterberg,  
Blouberg, Soutpansberg and the Limpopo Valley.

3. Infrastructure to service the heritage site such as motorable roads, sleeping accommodation and restaurants to be built. Roads will provide easy access to the area.
4. Local communities to be employed in the construction of the above-mentioned facilities. In turn, the spin-offs will provide business opportunities for hawkers and artists.
5. The management of the site and its facilities to be conducted by trained descendants of the original inhabitants of Setlaole who own and reside in Farm Norma A.
6. Sign boards to be erected along the road from Polokwane to the heritage site.
7. Setlaole Bakone Cultural Day to be celebrated annually on a day agreed upon by the stake-holders.
8. Revenue generated from tourism to be utilized for the maintenance of the facility as well as remuneration of staff.
9. The heritage site to be marketed as an African Ivory Route package on a website to reach world-wide tourists.
10. The site to accommodate a library housing all literature relevant to the history and cultural heritage of the Bakone. These to also include praises, fables, legends and songs in audio/visual form.



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## CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

ry, Heritage and Tourism has demonstrated carrying out research on African phenomena deploying a methodology (basic assumptions, methods, theories etc) derived from the African worldview orientation of the people who are the subject of research. The research methodology was Afrocentric: the collection, analysis and interpretation of data was based on the values and ideals of the Bakone of Setlaole.

The heritage and culture of the people of Setlaole, though negatively affected by colonialism and apartheid, have survived and are largely a synthesis of the contributions of the San, Khoikhoi, and the Bantu who migrated from what today is the Nigeria-Cameroon border area. It was also discovered that this culture and heritage of the Bakone had very deep historical and temporal links with classical African civilisations such as Nubia and Kemet (Pharaonic Egypt). The significance of this for heritage studies has a Pan-African dimension. The political significance of this observation is that the preservation of the heritage of the Bakone contributes to laying the foundation for the cultural development of all Africans.

The recommendations for the management of the Setlaole heritage resources we have made are rooted in the findings of the investigation of the history and heritage of the area and promote an Afrocentric vision of the creation and development of an African identity which is liberatory and emancipatory. This vision is in line with the ethos and spirit of the National Heritage Resources Act No. 25 of 1999 which, itself, derives from the spirit and ethos of the 1996 constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

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