

FUNERAL RITES OF THE AMAXHOSA AS THERAPEUTIC
PROCEDURES COMPARED TO CRISIS INTERVENTION.

(An Anthropological - Descriptive Evaluation).

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Dedication

(written in Xhosa)

Isinikezelo

Le ncwadi ndiyinikezela kumzalikazi wam uNozwe Mbambo -
uMamZongozi intombi kaNoginqi, kaMaFanga, KaSenzela,
owafinyeza umbhingo ukuze ndifunde.

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in an attempt to investigate the analogy between the Crisis Intervention Model and the Funeral Rites of the amaXhosa. The latter group includes both traditional as well as Western Christian elements. The study was confined to the geographical area of Ciskei and more specifically the villages in and around Peddie and Ndevana near Zwelitsha, as regards traditional people, and the Black townships of Zwelitsha and Whittlesea, as regards more Westernized people.

It is, however, the contention of the study that experiences discussed here are common to Blacks in South Africa irrespective of ethnicity. The justification for this generalisation is based on anthropological commonalities as well as historical vicissitudes among Blacks in Southern Africa. For instance, ritual slaughter performed after death in propitiation with the ancestors is known among all Blacks in South Africa. Also the Politico-historical events as well as socio-economic developments in the country affect Blacks in a more or less similar manner. For example, the changing family structure among Blacks, because of changes from one type of economy to another, is a social process affecting all Blacks in Southern Africa - in particular the working class (Colin Murray, 1980).

The Funeral rites under study are postulated as possessing elements of therapeutic and practical value which result in the alleviation of grief and the encouragement of full acceptable means of mourning.

The study is chiefly descriptive and anthropological material has been used.

Recordings, were made from participant observation whenever there was a funeral in the area studied. Information about funerals is easily obtainable as these are announced over Radio Ciskei and Radio Xhosa every evening.

Mourners and interveners were interviewed. The former to elicit the needs they had felt the latter to elicit the needs they had perceived the former to have.

The Crisis Intervention Model is fairly simple to understand and uses practical theory. Therefore, it is not surprising that there should be elements of similarity between this model and the funeral rites of the amaXhosa as both deal with people in need of support. These funeral rites are rooted in a culture which has as one of its crucial aspects intimate, face-to-face interaction of its members in constant exchange as regards both emotional support and services. These "credit networks" ensure that a person is never bereft of emotional support. Moreover, temporary services are always accorded to a person in crisis.

An effort has been made to relate the Crisis Intervention Model to the South African context of Blacks (both traditional as well as Christian). By necessity this has meant looking at all cultural dimensions of Black society - historical, political, economic and cultural, in order to provide a clearer picture of the people under study. That is, human psychological experiences of grief and mourning are seen as processes related to and developing within the concrete everyday realities.

Some of the experiences described have been personally witnessed by the researcher in her personal involvement with cultural practices.

Funerals are, of necessity, sad occasions and this study, using participant observation methods sometimes brought on sad memories of the researcher's own losses of loved ones.

In the discussion a comparison was made between the traditional methods of grief work, the Crisis Intervention theory and the mourner studied and it was found that these

rites do indeed, contain therapeutic and practical elements of dealing with grief and mourning, comparable to the Crisis Intervention Model.

Finally in the conclusion a proposal for further areas of study in this field was suggested.

CHAPTER IINTRODUCTION:

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in death, grief and mourning. The phenomenon of death has always been part of humanity yet a part which is not always readily accepted. Various societies have devised ways and means of explaining and dealing with death and its concomitant problems. What seems to complicate matters even more is that death does not concern the dying person only but also "Those significant others" who, in Freud's terms, have invested libido in the dead or dying person. In trying to explain this phenomenon Freud endeavoured to trace our present day attitude to death from the view assumed by primitive man which, in Freud's terms was "extremely contradictory". In as far as primitive man recognized death as the termination of life - when this suited him, he, however could not adopt the same attitude when death occurred to his wife, his child, his friend whom he loved. Then "in his pain, he had to learn that one can indeed die oneself, an admission against which his whole being revolted, for each of these loved ones was, in very truth, a part of his own beloved self" (Freud's thoughts on Life and Death in Major Works of Sigmund Freud - William Benton 1952).

The great German philosopher, Martin Heidegger has written extensively about the concept of death - (Sein - zum - Tode) His writings influenced Christian theology. Thus there has been a particular interest in Heidegger's account of "authentic existence". To him to live "authentically" is to accept one's finitude, and thus avoid running away from one's responsibility through preoccupation with unimportant concerns. He points out that for man the world is open to manipulation - yet our responsibilities of changing the world are themselves conditioned in a manner not of our choosing. In a way, we are "thrown" into the world and the most marked examples of this "thrownness" is death itself, which in itself limits our possibilities.

Heidegger contends that once we fully and realistically accept it, then it will no longer be something which happens to us, we will no longer look upon death as a meaningless destruction of our efforts. Thus Heidegger feels that death is something that can be treated positively, - by a true acceptance of our finitude, a proper freedom and authenticity is achieved by the individual.

In contrast to existential philosophy's intellectual effort to come to terms with death, funerals form part of the oldest general customs of all ages. Civilised as well as preliterate people have observed the practice of committing their dead to the elements of nature in accordance with the practices of the times and the conception of the generation of that period. In accordance with the custom, one committed the body following a ceremony referred to as paying one's last respect. It has been pointed out by Feifel (1965) that, in fact rites performed for the dead, generally have more implication for the living rather than the dead.

In the Xhosa-speaking society elaborate rituals and customs are performed meticulously, when death has occurred. The intention is to deal with the crisis situation caused by death in such a manner that the bereaved is given ample opportunity for full expression of grief so that she is able to go on with normal life after this period.

Some, if not all, of these rites are analogous to the crisis intervention model. It is the purpose of this study to investigate this analogy, with specific references to the traditional as well as Christian funeral rites performed by the Xhosa-speaking people of Ciskei and Transkei.

Theory

Almost all of the present - day assumptions of crisis theory originate from Caplan's (1964) classic conceptualization of preventive psychiatry, which stems from ego-psychological principles. According to Caplan, people in non-crisis situations maintain a level of emotional homeostasis in which they can handle stress by problem - solving abilities. When, however, a situation is such that these abilities represent inadequate coping resources, an individual may experience a crisis reaction. A crisis state is said to occur when a person is faced with a hazardous event which for a time seems unsurmountable through the utilization of customary methods of coping and problem solving. The individual rapidly alternates coping mechanisms and as these fail him, anxiety overwhelm him, throwing him into disequilibrium. He may regress to more primitive defense mechanisms. Such a state of disequilibrium does not stretch ad infinitum and although the total length of time between the initial blow and the final resolution of the crisis may vary, the actual state of active crisis is time-limited, usually lasting up to four to six weeks (Resnik, 1974).

Three developmental sequences characterize a crisis reaction but they frequently overlap and interweave (Morrice, 1976).

These are:

(i) Impact

According to Caplan, the individuals' usual coping methods fail him and he may suffer from stress and strain. This is the initial stage during which he may experience feelings of bewilderment and confusion. He may wish the event away or ignore it as if it did not happen.

(ii) Recoil:

In the second phase, these problem-solving strategies fail to restore equilibrium, which further exacerbates the individuals' feelings of tension. His functioning may become disorganized and he may resort to trial and error attempts at coping. During this time the individual is in the grip of confusing emotions - anger, guilt and shame, and his attention is withdrawn from the concern of everyday existence. Tension is further increased and this leads to feelings of impotence as he indulges in meaningless activities. Physical signs and symptoms appears - agitation, fatigue, insomnia.

(iii) Adjustment and Adaptation:

The third stage is characterized by the generation of emergency and novel coping responses in an attempt to reduce anxiety. Such responses may include, for example, rethinking of the threatening situation or a modification of original goals. If these emergency measures fail, anxiety is further increased, the individual reaches his breaking point and there is personality breakdown. It must be understood that Caplan did not view a crisis reaction as a form of pathology, but instead, a normal response sequence produced by a hazardous external event.

Crises are part of life and growth. Erik Erikson recognized the "Identity crisis" of adolescence where the developmental crises are actually normal and necessary. Caplan (1964) believed that a crisis represented a transitional period in personality. For example growth might occur due to the learning of a new coping response and because an individual gains self esteem after mastering a difficult experience.

The crisis literature (e.g. Aguilera and Messick, 1978) also distinguishes between situational and maturational crises. Situational crisis which they describe as unexpected external events, include, for example, death of a loved one, natural disasters, rape or emergency hospitalization. The work of Lindermann (1944) depicts the generic reaction to the death of a loved one and the work of Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) describes the generic reaction to rape. It is further assumed that certain situations or problems may emerge as crises during one developmental stage while they might not, during another such stage, (Golan 1978). Thus, maturational crisis may occur, therefore, because new challenges are confronted (e.g. adolescence sexuality) and or because old coping strategies become unrealistic or ineffective (e.g. running to mother).

The history of many patients suffering from mental disorders, according to Caplan (1966), shows that during some previous crisis they seem to have dealt with their problem in a maladjustive manner and to have emerged less healthy than they had been before the crisis. All in all, resolution of a crisis can be adaptive and growth promoting.

Crisis Intervention Techniques

Parad had defined crisis intervention as the process of "entering into the life situation of an individual, family or group to alleviate the impact of a crisis - inducing stress in order to help mobilize the resources of those directly affected, as well as those who are in the "significant social orbit" (Specter, Clairborn and Cohon, 1983)

The model of crisis intervention rests on the basic format that "a little help rationally directed and purposefully directed at a strategic time is more effective than more extensive help given at a period of less emotional accessibility" (Rapaport, in Golan, 1969).

Therefore, intervention can be done by people from different backgrounds. Proponents of this model (Caplan, 1966 Golan, 1978 and Rapaport, 1969) warn that the model should not be used as medical first aid. They regard crisis intervention as a specific treatment modality.

Some writers like, Jacobson, Strickler and Morley, (1968) have classified crisis intervention into four types:

(a) environmental manipulation (b) general support
(c) generic crisis, intervention and (d) individual-tailored crisis intervention. Proponents of the generic approach are Aquilerd and Messick, (1974). Since it is the latter approach that relates to this study, it will be briefly described.

The generic approach involves the provision of service to individuals experiencing specific crises, and it presupposes a generic reaction to particular hazardous events. Underlying assumptions of the generic approach is that there are, in most crises, certain recognized patterns of behaviours.

Its focus therefore is on the specific characteristics of a particular kind of crisis, rather than on the dynamics of each individual in crisis. Specific intervention measures are designed to be effective for all members of a given group, e.g. mourners, and not to accommodate the unique differences of one individual. Inherent in this design of intervention measures is a limitation that was demonstrated in the study. This will be dealt with in the discussion.

Central to the crisis intervention model are at least two basic tenets of crisis theory:

(a) That a crisis situation is neither an illness nor a pathological experience: it reflects a realistic struggle in the individuals' current life situation.

(b) During the resolution of the crisis, the individual tends to be particularly amenable to help. The ego becomes open to outside influences and change. New ego sets may emerge and new adaptive styles learned, thus enabling the person to cope effectively in the future. However, if help is not available or inadequate then maladaptive patterns may be adopted (Goland, 1978). Caplan (1966) argues that the kind of help the individual receives during the trouble, determines his mode of coping with the crisis more than his inner strength or character.

Intervention in Bereavement

Bereavement according to Caplan (1978) can be regarded as one of the most stressful events in an individuals' life and as one of the most significant crises man has to deal with. It presents the individual with an opportunity to grow as well as increasing vulnerability to mental disorders. However, like all crises it involves the certainty of loss and the promise of gain, yet because of the extent of the loss, the aspect of gain can be negated if adequate intervention does not occur. Intervention is aimed at mobilizing the individuals' resources so that he can grow and/or profit from the experience or at least, return to his pre-crisis level of functioning.

Concern about the psychological consequences of unfinished grief work has been the object of concern since Lindermann's (1947) pioneer studies in bereavement, where he found that failure of a person to grieve appropriately or to complete the process of bereavement satisfactorily, could potentially lead to future emotional illness.

Western society's attitude towards grief and mourning has caused problems for the bereaved. After the initial period of shock most mourners have to work out their own solution and receive very little, if any, help towards personal re-organization (Spector and Clairborn, 1973).

Caplan (1966) maintains that although the most important work of overcoming the crisis is done by the person involved in the trouble, he nonetheless still needs help from those around him. Mourning and grief are interrelated components of bereavement and are the processes through which the bereaved achieve social, psychological and physiological adaptation to the loss of a significant object. Such adaptation can be facilitated by those who are around the mourners. This is basically why the breakdown of the Anglo-American cultural support system is being lamented by amongst others, Gores (1965; Feifeț (1959); Speckter and Clairborn (1973).

Some of the things done by people around the bereaved are:

- (i) Help her confront the crisis.
- (ii) Create an atmosphere that will facilitate grief work.
- (iii) Offer gifts of love.
- (iv) Counter efforts at "pseudo-independence".
- (v) Help with everyday tasks.
- (vi) Facilitate the letting-go process (from Caplan 1966; Aquitera and Messick, 1974 and Golan, 1978).

Recommended methods of intervention vary from sustainment techniques to direct influences (Mollis in Golan 1978). The former include providing emotional support, reassurance, encouragement and affecting cognitive and behavioural changes; while the latter incorporate direct intervention and advice giving when the bereaved is feeling overwhelmed. However, advice is to be given in a manner that the bereaved can reject it and not feel guilty.

The above aspects of the model and the needs they meet will be dealt with more fully in the discussions where it will be shown that the funeral rites of the amaXhosa contain therapeutic elements which alleviate grief and which are comparable to the crisis intervention model.

The study is descriptive, and anthropological material has been made use of because, although there are still areas in Transkei and Ciskei where Xhosa-speaking people live in the old traditional manner, there has, nevertheless, been many changes in their manner of behaviour.

The main aim of this study is to show that the rituals and customs observed by the Xhosa at death are therapeutic and serve the same purpose as those described for the Crisis Intervention Model. Mangayi (1973) pointed out that black clinicians who are trained in the "Western model" are often faced with the problem of integrating their Western training with the reality of the experience of their people. The reason why I tackled this subject is to describe the special experience of mourning and bereavement among the Xhosa and postulate means of dealing with it therapeutically.

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an attempt to define the area of study, dealing mainly with the Crisis Intervention Model.

A historical background of the amaXhosa is given in the second chapter to throw some light on the Xhosa group studied. A brief explanation of the Xhosa culture is also given in this chapter so as to show how these cultural expressions influence and shape the life of each individual in his society and how each individual makes a cultural contribution to his community by his participation in its life.

Funeral rites in both traditional and modern day amaXhosa is dealt with in chapter three. It must be mentioned from the start that present day amaXhosa are still in a state of flux, and sometimes there is no distinction between traditional rites and present day rites as most rites are meticulously performed even by the people who now practice Western Christianity. The belief in the ancestors is held by both traditional people as well as those who have accepted Christianity.

The concept of death and the rituals and customs associated with mourning are described in chapter four. The traditional healer being a special person in the amaXhosa society has been treated separately under special categories in mourning in this chapter, because, although this group is normally exempted from attending funerals, they may sometimes feel obliged to attend, then this calls for special mourning rituals to cleanse themselves from the impurities associated with death.

A case study of a bereaved person was done, and this is described in chapter five.

In a general discussion in chapter six, a comparison is made between the crisis intervention model and the traditional amaXhosa practices and the case studied. This was to analyse the incidences of intervention when death has occurred by the performance of rituals and customs which are intended to deal with the situation therapeutically, in the same manner as bereavement intervention. In the same chapter a brief conclusion of the study is given, with proposed areas for further research or investigation.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE AMAXHOSA.

(A) Historical background of the Xhosa-speaking people

It is generally accepted that the African-speaking tribes of Southern African migrated to the subcontinent from the North of Africa, but for a reconstruction of their probable history of origin psychologists and other disciplines have to rely on Archaeology, Linguistics and Anthropology. Linguistic research postulates that West Africa may be regarded as the possible area of origin of the African languages, while oral tradition further indicates that in the far distant past the ancestors of at least some of the Black groups of Southern Africa lived around the great lakes of East Africa. These conclusions are confirmed by similarities of language and custom among the African-speaking peoples of Southern Africa and the present inhabitants of West and East Africa.

Archaeological evidence has it that as long ago as 500 to 400 B C there were people living in West Africa and East Africa who knew how to work with iron. These iron age men are today regarded by Archaeologists as African speaking groups who later moved Southwards in slow successive waves and has, by 400 A D been living as far South as the present Transkei and Ciskei.

Among these African-speaking tribes that moved to Southern Africa were the Nguni, Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, Shona, Ovambo and Herero. The Ovambo and Herero settled in the present South West Africa Namibia and the Shona in the present Zimbabwe. The History of these other groups fall outside the scope of this study.

The Nguni - the group under study - settled further South. They were usually divided into the North Nguni of the present Natal, KwaZulu and Swaziland and the South Nguni - mainly the Xhosa speaking group of Transkei, Ciskei and Eastern Cape.

As the African-speaking group migrated they came into contact with Khoi and San who were widely dispersed over large areas of Southern Africa. These latter groups were soon forced to take refuge in the drier, more mountainous parts. By 1736 they had been driven so far South West that the Xesi/Keiskamma River was accepted as the "Boundary" between the Khoi and the Southern Nguni.

This study refers specifically to the amaXhosa of Transkei and Ciskei. By tradition it is said that the amaXhosa settled in the upper reaches of the Umzimkhulu River in or about the twelfth century. By the sixteenth century they began moving Southwards and Westwards into their present territory, then sparsely populated by Khoi and San with whom they intermingled and intermarried.

Despite confrontation and conflict between the groups there is anthropological and linguistic evidence of a long close association. The consequences of this association are apparent in the presence of Khoisan and San cultural traits, particularly in the abundance of unusual clicks and words in words of common religious significance found in the Xhosa language. Contact occurred in many ways especially through intermarriage. The Gqunukhwebe - a Xhosa tribe, originated in precisely this way.

The establishment of the mighty Zulu kingdom under Shaka, with its subsequent widespread disruption and extermination of tribes, particularly between the years 1818 to 1835 known in Nguni as Mfecane deeply affected the Southern Nguni and permanently altered their ethnic composition. Various immigrant groups from Zululand and Natal settled in Transkei. This resulted in far reaching changes occurring among these new groups. At the same time these communities were being influenced by their contact with Western life styles of the Whites to an even greater extent and with more permanent effect.

African peoples were subjected to foreign rule from Europe and for a long period they were made to forget their heritage or to despise it. This did not last, however, and Africa is now discovering the riches of its heritage. We will never be able to know the full history of Southern African peoples, but what is coming to light is interesting and important in helping us to understand the experiences and ideas of those who lived before us. Their history is important because it is the history of present day Africans.

(B) BRIEF EXPOSITION OF XHOSA CULTURE AS BACKGROUND TO STUDY.

Every people has a culture, and culture is changing all the time, whether slowly or rapidly. The word culture covers many things such as the way people live, behave, act, and their physical as well as intellectual achievements. Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music and drama, in the styles of building houses and of people's clothing, in social organization and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy; in the customs and rituals of the people, in their values

and laws and in their economic life. All these cultural expressions influence and shape the life of each individual in his society and in turn the individual makes a cultural contribution to his community through participating in its life and creative work.

Each African people has its own cultural heritage. Some aspects of our cultures are fairly similar over large areas of our continent, for instance the custom of polygamy exists in practically every African society.

The culture I am describing is familiar to me, being born into a family where traditional beliefs and customs were actively practised. Although I have made use of anthropological and historical material, it is however, important to note that as a psychologist I am aware that bare facts are not the most important information required when dealing with human beings, especially people in crisis or conflict or affliction. The decisive factors in trying to understand are to know how any individual or group experiences and interprets beliefs and events, how these affect the individual or group and what use this individual or group makes of them. I therefore collected some of my facts directly from a few senior informants and especially from Professor Gitywa, an experienced anthropologist from Fort Hare University, Mr Mjamba a retired inspector of schools in Ciskei, Mr Tena a great collector of African literature, in charge of Via Afrika and a few senior members of Ndevana Village and Peddie Village, where the traditional way of life is still upheld. Their information about customs, health, ill-health, bereavement and misfortune tallied very well with material from anthropological sources and what is commonly known in the Xhosa culture we share. If there are minor deviations, these will be due to regional and tribal differences.

It is usually accepted that the main aim of pre-literate people anywhere in the World is the survival of the group and its healthy social functioning. The importance of the individual depends largely on his service to the group and his personal achievements are secondary. Naturally this leads to considerable inter-dependence within a family as a group. This is still to a large extent, the situation in present-day Xhosa communities in the Villages where contact with the Western Industrial World has not seriously disturbed the normal running of Community life.

Stories, riddles, myths and legends are found in large numbers among the Xhosa. They have been handed down orally. They serve many purposes, for instance, some entertain, others warn, some teach morals, others stimulate the imagination of the listeners, some are told as a commentary on peoples' lives in a given period e.g. praise singing poems of important chiefs by writers like Mqhayi. Some myths explain how death came into the World.

Africans are very fond of music, therefore music, dance and singing are found in every African community - the Xhosa is no exception in this respect. Music forms an integral part of mourning and helps the individual and group to come to terms with death.

Arts and crafts are common in most African societies. The Xhosa use art for decoration in drums, cloth materials, mats, pipes, sticks and even peoples' bodies - UMVAMBO.

The main purpose of African art is to convey religious feelings and meaning. It is therefore provided in connection with religious ceremonies and rituals and some is used in the training of apprentices in various

skills and professions e.g. the use of white clay to decorate the body of an UMKHWETHA during his apprentice stage before he becomes an IGQIRA.

The Xhosa people were a very religious group. One cannot understand Xhosa culture without first understanding African religion. Through the ages religion have been for Africans the normal way of looking at the World and experiencing life itself. It is so integrated in the lives of people that most African languages do not have a word for religion as such. African religion gives its people a sense of security in life. Because it provides for them answers and direction in life, people are not willing to abandon it quickly. When Africans are converted to other religions, they often mix their traditional religion with the one to which they are converted. In short to be an African in the traditional sense, is to be truly religious.

To understand Xhosa cultural structure it is important to explain the traditional social system in a little more detail so as to provide background for viewing changes that have come into being within the contemporary setting. It is necessary to provide this background discussion of a traditional society because it gives an insight into some of the old institutional structures which once gave an all-embracing support for the rituals and customs associated with death and mourning. The discussion then take us into the following areas:-

(i) Political System of Traditional Xhosa

Traditionally before the disintegration of the Nguni people, the main body of government consisted of Kings, assisted by their paramount Chiefs. The latter, as paramount chiefs of their own states, governed the people with a council comprised of

elected representatives of the states. Similarly sub-chiefs and village chiefs served their smaller communities with the help of elected representatives from the local communities made up of the elders of each clan. In the final analysis the traditional person looks up to the elder of his lineage in cases of settlement of disputes, marriage problems, litigations, land disputes and similar cases within the traditional jurisdiction.

(ii) Kinship System

The key to understand the kinship system of the Xhosa is through the rule of the patrilineal descent. Every person is by birth, a member of his father's lineage and clan - isiduko - and a member of the chiefdom in which this lineage is located. Through marriage or migration (in terms of working in another area) members of the patrilineage still find their real home in their original chiefdom. They still retain their rights of membership in their natal home.

Authority of the head of the lineage is supported by the spiritual or religious order. Even though all the members of the patrilineage do not live together on the ancestral lands and households in the present time, yet at various points in time many do come together to their natal homes to perform funeral rites, to share funeral expenses and other rituals of such nature. After four generations or so the kinship system gets large and its branches tend to have less to do with each other in their day-to-day activities. In times of crisis and uncertainty all the members of the separate units of the lineage are consulted through their respective

elders. Leadership in the lineage usually falls to an older male member of the extended family because of his superior wisdom, personal qualities and experiences he has acquired during his lifetime. He serves as the custodian of the morals of the group and the rites are invested in his authority. For example, lobola was paid to him when one of the young girls in his care got married. Lobola was then paid over to father. Such an elder usually officiates during funerals and politically represents the group in the chief's council.

i) Marriage and Family

In traditional Xhosa society marriage is less an agreement entered into by the two individuals than a social contract between two families. The potential in-laws first investigate each other and come to an agreement to establish new obligations of mutual respect and aid between the families. Only then may the boy and girl be allowed to marry. The families of both young people are active counsellors during the courtship, and their whole-hearted endorsement is essential to the success of the marriage.

The criteria applied by the respective in-laws are for the most part familiar - What is his/her age, has he/she been married previously; why did this earlier marriage fail, does she possess the personality of a "good woman", is she educated in the normal art, will she work hard, will she be able to bear children, does she come from a good home, is the history of her family such as to give pride to anyone allied with it, is her family free from the taints of witchcraft, is she from a royal family? This investigation which has to be carried out with great care and integrity is usually the job of the older persons.

The crucial payment by the bridegroom (LOBOLA) by which a daughter is legally espoused goes to the lineage head and his concurrence is essential for marriage of any member of the lineage to be considered valid.

(iv) Economic System

Members in a given patrilineage are expected to farm on ancestral lands. Land is held for members' use but not for sale. The living receive from their ancestors the permission and right to use the land. The ancestors are believed to watch the living for the proper utilization of the land. Thus a system of norms of clear content has developed for the control of deviant conduct. Furthermore magico-religious beliefs and practices validate the social and economic order.

They live in round, thatched roofed hoes. Their main food is mealies and they are chiefly cattle farmers. Pipe-smoking of home-grown tobacco is their main recreational occupation. These are characteristic pipes called "umbeka-phesheya", which are long-handled and decorated with colourful beadwork.

(v) The concept of the Individual

In Xhosa beliefs the individual is seen as a compound of both physical and spiritual entities. The spiritual world comprises ancestors and God. The ancestors exert influence upon the lineage members who are living. They make it possible for him to come into this world, guiding him throughout life till death calls him back into the world of the spirit. Upon his death he becomes an ancestor for his descendants. In spirit

form he is able to influence the fortune of his descendants and to bring ill to them if they are not in good communication with him.

Thus we see that the individual Xhosa finds help in his faith in the hidden forces and in the personal ancestral spirits guiding the world view of the traditional social setting. The individual in such a setting is also aware of his dependence upon other members of his kin groups and upon his ancestors. He is made aware of the fact that any deviant behaviour may be subjected to sanction from the spiritual world, and death is one of the devices which may be inflicted upon the traditional deviant.

- (vi) My description of Xhosa culture would be incomplete without the mention of the use of ochre clay. This is a typical characteristic colour of decoration used on dress, blankets and on the whole body. They have been called "red blanketed" people or amaqaba because of this clay - imbola.

CHAPTER III

FUNERAL RITES OF THE AMAXHOSA

A. FUNERAL RITES IN TRADITIONAL SETTING

The size and importance of a funeral varies according to the person concerned. For children and unmarried people the funeral is usually simple and attended only by close relatives. For a chief it is a national affair which involves the suspension of normal life in order that people may pay their last respects to their dead chief or chieftain. These major funerals require a lot of preparation and a lot of wealth is spent on them.

Various rites are performed at the actual burial. These rites are intended to send off the departed peacefully, to sever his links with the living and to ensure that normal life continues among the survivors. Women wail and weep lamenting the departure of the dead person, recalling the good things he said and did, and reminding themselves that he lives on in the next world.

We therefore see that funeral rites, in traditional African life were kept minimal. No elaborate preparations were necessary as the body had to be dispensed off within 24 hours of confirmed death since there were no refrigerators to store disposable matter. Occasionally when the family suspects witchcraft and want to make sure that the person is really dead, they may keep him for three days. During this period various herbs are burned to chase away evil spirits and also to minimize the smell from a rotting corpse. During those earlier days relatives lived near each other in the same village or neighbouring villages, within walking distance. Only chiefs' daughters were married out to people living further away. Normally they did not attend the funeral of their parents or close relatives immediately but were given special opportunity to pay their respects in a ceremony called UKUKHUZA which will be explained in chapter four.

Funeral rites worth mentioning here are the shaving of hair after the body has been buried. This is done by the immediate family. Some of their normal activities are also suspended for a few weeks until all the funeral rites have been performed. The shaving of hair is a symbol of separation, showing that one of the family has been taken away from them. At the same time it is an indication of people's belief that death does not destroy life since the growth of new hair indicates that life continues to spring up.

Various rites are performed but these really depend on the family and area people live in. In some areas people smear their bodies with white clay as a sign of death and mourning. Under normal conditions the colour of clay used is ochre, white clay is only used by initiates. A widow in traditional Xhosa society, is expected to dress in white and wear a black doek. She is also not expected to smear anything on her face.

As part of funeral rites people suspend sleeping with their marriage partners for several weeks or months as a sign of mourning and respect for the dead.

During this period before burial no one is allowed to shout and children are forbidden to run around and play near the hut where the deceased is laid.

In some areas pots are broken and destroyed and certain huts are abandoned for good, as an indication that someone has died.

By doing these things people are able to come to terms with the agonies, sorrow and disruption caused by death. By ritualizing death, people dance it away, drive it away and renew their own life after it has taken among one of their members.

Feasting usually follows funeral rites. This is partly to comfort the bereaved and to bring life back to normal and partly to feed and thank those who have officiated in the funeral rites. It is common practice among Xhosa to serve cooked whole mealies immediately after the hands have been washed when the burial has been completed. The washing of hands at home is done outside the hut so that the soil used to throw into the grave is washed away, this act symbolizes complete parting with death and ensuring that no contamination with the grave takes place.

The mealies serve to "spit" away death (UKUKHAFULA UKUFA) or (Ukuchila) because the coarse husks are spit out and not swallowed after the first mouthful. This act serves to drive away death.

During this period of mourning the women are expected to observe the custom of UKUHLONIPHA (respect) by way of dress. Usually the head scarves are worn loosely such that the eyes are partially covered. The body has to be covered and to this extent they are expected to cover their breasts for a period of about two to three weeks or until all the rites have been performed.

As a rule women and children are not expected to attend the actual burial. While the burial takes place the women sit furthest away from the ubuhlanti (kraal). When everything is finished, they are called to come and lay a stone - ukubeka ilitye-on the grave. Traditional healers are also exempted from attending funerals. If they are personally involved in a funeral there are special arrangements made which shall be dealt with in detail in Chapter two.

Some people wash the body of the deceased with special herbs or with the family herbs (ubulawu). This is to ensure that evil spirits do not interfere with the body.

Pregnant women and witches are not allowed to come near the body. Contamination is feared in the former group whereas in the latter pollution with the evil magic seems to be the main fear.

The body is laid such that it faces east - from where the sun will rise and it (the dead person) is also expected to rise and go on his journey to the new land, of the hereafter.

On the day after the burial a calabash of sour milk (iselwa) is brought into the main hut where all the chief mourners are. Each one is given a sip of sour milk which is not to be swallowed but spit back into a heap of cow dough (ubulongwe). This heap, together with the spit-out sour milk is then thrown out in the kraal near the grave, serving as the final act of parting with the dead.

B. PRESENT-DAY FUNERAL RITES

In recent years several developmental changes have come into being. These changes have chiefly been in the areas of education, urbanization, economic improvement and subsequent change in standard of living and Western Religious practices. These changes have had a great effect on the traditional structure of the Xhosa people especially in the practices of funeral rites. Funeral rites have become most elaborate since both traditional and modern rites are exercised at each funeral in the urban areas.

As soon as a person takes ill he is sent to the hospital and this is where most deaths occur. At his death the hospital either contacts his minister of religion or

notifies the police. If the deceased is known to the police they normally call on the relatives or neighbours to break the news indirectly. The neighbours or friends usually call a few senior men and women together and they go and break the sad news, either in a round about manner by prayer or explicitly. The reason for calling people is that they will handle the effect of shock. Immediately after telling the news a short prayer is made, to "bandage" the wound - UKUBOPHA. God is asked to comfort the bereaved, make him accept His will and the irreversibility of the situation.

After this prayer the bereaved is put on a mattress which is placed in the main bedroom. Most of the furniture in this room and the sitting room is removed, to make room for the people who will be coming to comfort the bereaved. The main mourner is always a woman or a close female relative - if the wife of a man has died. Harriet Ngubane, (1977) explains this concept by postulating that symbolism lies in the fact that man comes to this world through a woman and therefore he leaves this world through a woman. Pictures and mirrors in the house are covered or removed - I have seen this done by the Moslem community as well.

The bereaved is dressed in a black doek such that her eyes are covered. She is encouraged to grieve as much as she wants to. Usually one of the senior women volunteers to be the chief support. She will sit with the bereaved on the mattress all the time, but not stop her from crying. Children are comforted by relatives and neighbours, but are not expected to sit on the mattress.

Young men are sent out to call the next of kin. The latter are not told what has happened. They are only told when they reach the house, so that they can be comforted by the people who will be ready to deal with this matter. Elderly men and women constantly drop in and offer prayers.

One of the neighbours or a close family friend sees to the running of the household tasks e.g. preparation of meals, bathing and dressing of the children.

During this time the bereaved covers her shoulders with a scarf or blanket and is not allowed to wear jewelery or colourful clothes.

The undertaker contacted meets the family and sees to funeral arrangements, prints collection lists and the radio announcement of the death. Monies are collected from donators. People are usually willing to donate to funeral expenses. It has now become customary to keep the body at the mortuary for two weeks. This gives ample chance for relatives to attend the funeral and be present for the major customs and funeral rites because it affects them also.

The role of the chief support is very important during this period. She sees to the bereaved's physical and emotional needs. She sits with her day and night. She listens to her fears and anxieties and also controls the grieving process.

An elderly man usually spends his whole day at the house of mourning. This is normally the work of pensioners but sometimes some kin have to take leave from work to attend to people and see to the smooth running of activities. Part of his duties is to constantly give details regarding what has happened.

Prayer meetings are held every evening till the day of the funeral. Hymns are sung to accentuate grief. Usually only men preach but women may be called upon to pray.

After each meeting black tea/coffee is served with some baked bread or scones. Members of women's street clubs see to the catering. This club also buys the groceries needed for the two weeks, that is, if the bereaved has been a regular contributor to this club.

Some friends and relatives spend the nights with the mourners. During this time revision of the deceased's life takes place. People talk about and remember his likes and dislikes, favourite sayings, traits and mannerisms. The mourner joins in this conversation and also shares whatever premonitions she feels the deceased had had. The emotional anguish are momentarily forgotten as people go through these reminiscences.

The aim of these sessions is to dispel loneliness from the mourners. Early in the morning coffee is served, and after a short prayer, those who have to go to work go home to wash and see to their children. Others remain to clean and cook. The bereaved are never left on their own during this period.

The mourner may only leave the mattress when she has to go and choose the coffin. Intensive grieving is expected to take 3 - 4 days and subside. She is then expected to be able to talk to those close to her without breaking into tears each time.

All this time friends and other visitors drop in and pray to console the mourners. Some actually tell her what problems she is going to be faced with as a widow. Others mention strengths they have noticed in her and reassure her by expressing their belief in her capabilities. They also pledge their support should she need them. Visiting the mourner during this period ensures that there will be no awkward moments when they meet her after the funeral. It is called "UKUDIBANISA AMEHLO" - to make eyes meet.

Funerals in towns are, as a rule, conducted on Saturdays. The biggest meeting is held on the last Friday night i.e. the night before the funeral. This vigil is kept through the night. This service is in preparation for the final bidding of farewell the following day. There is usually a lot of activity, baking and preparation of vegetables and puddings for the funeral meal.

Very early on Saturday morning the animal(s) are slaughtered by the male kinsmen and neighbours. Everything has to be cooked and finished eating the same day. Caterers bring their own cooking utensils and there is lots of activities.

The coffin is first brought to the house and put in the main bedroom. After it has been identified as the correct corpse it is inspected and cleaned with medicine or holy water then the family is allowed to see it. At this stage there is much weeping and soft singing. There is a short service to welcome it back home.

After the short service the coffin is put outside the house where there is more space. Relatives are seated near it. The family's church leader conducts the service. If the deceased was an active church goer the funeral proceeds to church where the main service is held. Before the minister delivers his sermon, usually three main speakers are given a chance to talk about the deceased life as a child, about his life in the neighbourhood and about his life at work. These speakers are expected to say what kind of a person he was and what contribution he has made in the community. The number of speakers at a funeral usually depends on the type of community involvement the deceased had. Wreath message may then be read.

At the graveside there is yet another service. After the coffin is launched to the ground the minister commits the body and the chief mourners are given soil to throw into the grave on the coffin to bid farewell. The rest of the congregation then bid farewell in this manner, accompanied by singing which is now more joyful. At this stage there must be no more weeping, and tears are strictly met with reprimand. A senior member of the family thanks the people on behalf of the family and invites everybody for "tea" at the home. This "tea" usually means a feast.

Everybody who has been to the graveyard must wash his hands whether soil was used or not. This washing of hands is to ensure that death is not brought back home.

Not everybody goes to the graveyard. Some, especially women, remain behind to clean the house especially the main bedroom that housed the coffin. It is scrubbed and polished and the furniture is replaced. Tables are laid for the feasting.

A short thanksgiving prayer is said and people are served after the family have been served first. No one is allowed to eat before the family has been served. The period of intense mourning is now over and people usually walk around seeing relatives and friends whom they have long missed. There is joy and laughter, donations keep coming in and after feasting the money made and funeral expenditure, announced.

When most of the people have gone the most senior relatives and neighbours call the mourners into the main bedroom, for the "UKUYALWA" ceremony. The mourners are told their expected roles and what to do in times of trouble. The kinsmen deal with the form of dress, length of mourning

period, rituals to be performed and whom to contact in eventuality. Children are counselled as to how they should treat the surviving parent.

Early the following morning the next of kin have their hair shaved. The deceased's bedding and clothes are washed, ironed and put away. Black buttons are sewn and distributed. Children under sixteen are not expected to mourn, but only have their hair shaved. Widows dress in black from head to toe.

Relatives and close friends who could not attend the funeral call at the house and are taken to the grave to "lay their stones" - "UKUBEKA ILITYE!" As a rule, during the first week after the funeral mourners are not allowed to leave the house but duty calls and the threat of losing one's job could negate these social expectations.

After a week has passed there is the ritual of "the washing of spades" where a sheep is slaughtered and eaten. It is also called the "drinking of water" by the mourners - UKUSEZWA KWAMANZI. This ceremony is regarded as the explicit expression of acceptance of what has happened.

When the Xhosa people console one another, they usually say "drink water and be consoled" - sela amanzi uxole. After this ceremony the mourners may move about freely in the community, but may not attend occasions of a frivolous nature.

Widows are expected to mourn for a whole year. Parents mourn their children for 6 months. Children mourn their parents for three months and their sibs for one month. Men only need buttons. They are not normally expected to mourn for long.

Visiting the bereaved usually continues for about six weeks after the funeral. During such visits the senior kin members observe if there are any deviations from the normal. If the mourner still shows grief such behaviour is viewed in a serious light and may be formally reprimanded. It is regarded as "Ukuhlola" - pathological behaviour that invites disaster, or misfortune.

After a year, it is the "taking off" of mourning clothes. This is a ritual that calls for the slaughter of a goat or sheep and beer is usually brewed. Members of the family and neighbours usually gather and praise the mourner for endurance and presurance during her mourning period. The mourning clothes are normally burned but if they are still in good condition they may be given to a relative who has mourned before.

The customs of Ukukhapha, and Ukubuyisa are also observed in the Urban areas. These will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

DEATH AND MOURNING AMONG THE XHOSA-SPEAKING PEOPLE

A. The Xhosa concept of death and the hereafter

This area of study is very poorly documented. Much of what will be presented here comes from the studies of John Mbiti which applies to Africans on the whole but which was collaborated by my informants whom I have mentioned earlier. None of my informants had a definitive opinion concerning the origin of death. They mostly agree that there are many myths about the origin of death but there seems to be no universally accepted myth explaining how death came about.

Even though the African people believe that death came into the world at a very early date in the history of mankind, they also believe that every time a person dies this death is "caused".

People believe that sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic cause death, therefore when someone has died, people often try to find out who used sorcery, witchcraft or magic against the dead person. Someone is often blamed for it, and in some cases the suspect may be beaten to death, burned, fined or thrown out of the district. Relatives of the deceased may also try counter magic to revenge, using methods which are less open.

In some instances spirits may be blamed. These might be spirits of people who have had a grudge against the person or whose bodies were not properly buried; or who have been neglected by their relatives for some reason or another. Deaths by the spirits are rare, since people always find a suspect, someone in the village to be the cause.

Curses, broken taboos or prolonged mourning are sometimes believed to cause death. It is sometimes believed that God may call upon old people to leave this earth. In the Xhosa society this belief is held firmly, especially for the aged but it is not accepted in the prime of life.

The Act of Dying

With Xhosa people when there is illness in the family, one of the senior members is elected to look after this ill person and the patient may be referred to as umkhuhlane kabani - so-and-so's patient. Looking after an advanced ill person is called ukonga. The ill person is never left to lie on his own. Men look after other men and women after the female patients. Usually a senior male takes over when the illness gets out of control. As soon as there is no sign of breathing and the eyes pop out the umongi (i.e. the person performing ukonga) confirms the death and closes his eyes tying them up with a black cloth - presumably signifying eternal darkness. The state of coldness of the body is assessed by touching the body from the feet to the head until the whole body is completely cold.

Many words are used concerning the actual act of dying. People refer to dying as returning home (ugodukile), going away (uhambile), going down (ushonile) as the sun goes down at sunset and rises again in the morning. In the same manner the dead are expected to rise after death and live among their relatives as ancestors. Preliterate people have a very close association with nature. All these words show the belief that death is not a complete destruction of the individual. Life goes on beyond the grave. Therefore people combine their sorrow with the belief that death is not the end and that the departed continues to live in the hereafter. We shall consider this point further in another section.

Special observance at death in Xhosa society

Death is sorrowful and it is also important. There are therefore many complex and even long rituals and ceremonies associated with death. In Xhosa society, as in many other African societies people are very sensitive to what is done when there is death in the family. Death marks a physical separation of the individual from other human beings. This is a radical change and the funeral rites and ceremonies are intended to draw attention to that permanent separation. Meticulous care is taken to fulfill the funeral rites, and to avoid causing any offence to the departed. This is not done to unknown strangers, thieves, murderers, witches and other trouble-makers in the community or for those who have died abnormal deaths. We shall therefore discuss practices at death among the Xhosa under the following headings:-

(i) Disposal of the body

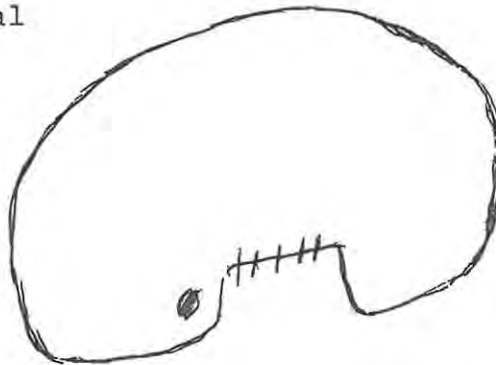
As soon as death is announced by the umongi the women make a loud isikhalo (screaming), holding their heads such that it is heard by the people in the village. Those who hear this screaming soon assume that so-and-so's patients must have passed away, and they come immediately. The dead person is then wrapped in a blanket and also in the mat he lies on (ukhuko) and placed behind the door in the hut. This place is more respectable and quiet. Somebody in the family is then sent to break the news - umphanga. This messenger breaks off a branch from the bread fruit tree called umphanga and carries it in his hand instead of the usual stick. When people see this branch they know that someone has died, and without any waste of time they follow the messenger to the house where death has occurred. Since burial takes place within 24 hours there is usually a great sense of urgency involved when there is death. A branch of

this tree is also erected at the house where death has occurred so that visitors who may pass this home should not stay long with the hope of overnighting at this place as they may not be catered for.

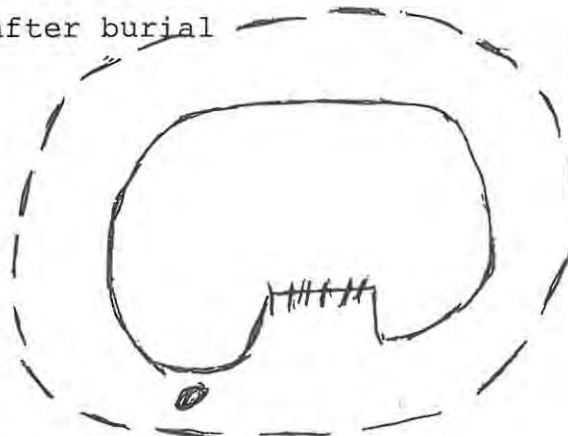
(ii) Manner of burial

In the traditional Xhosa society, men are buried in a dug-out grave. This may be shallow, where the ground is hard and digging instruments not efficient enough. Use is made of large stones to cover the grave so that wild animals do not carry away the body. The head of the family and all other males are buried inside the kraal next to the entrance; after the funeral the kraal is moved to a different position so that the grave lies just outside it.

Position of grave in kraal



Position of grave a month after burial



The whole area around the grave is respected by married women.

As a rule, in the traditional setting, the body is laid in an excavation dug out on the side of the grave, such that soil is not thrown directly on the corpse. This excavation has lately been called "ikamire".

Men are buried in an upright squatting (ukuchopha) position. Traditionally the Xhosa male always sits in this position - squatting, with his tick in the horizontal position between his hands. This is an alert position and is associated with maleness. In this position he can get ready for any emergency. Since he is believed to be going on a journey to an unknown land he is laid in this squatting position so that he is ready for any eventuality. Evidence of this type of burial was found in the fossilized body dug up in the Eastern Cape and kept at the Fort Hare museum. Women and children are buried elsewhere on the family grounds, at a further distance from the kraal.

(iii) Burial of belongings with the body

It is the practice in many parts of Africa to bury some belongings with the body, such as spears, food-stuffs, sticks, tools and domestic utensils. The belief behind this practice is that the departed needs weapons to defend himself along the way to the next world and food to eat on the journey.

In the Xhosa society, a man is buried with his stick and assegais but these are broken angabi dlongodlongo because it is believed that the journey he is now taking is a peaceful one and the breaking of these weapons symbolizes peace. He is now an ambassador of peace to his ancestors.

The belongings he is buried with are only the very intimate items like sticks, assegai, blanket, pipe and tobacco, his pipe lighter (idosha) or item to make fire with; and his personal bag made out of the skin of a goat (ingxowa yebhokhwe). Sometimes by way of request, he is buried with a few seeds of whatever is produced from the land. The idea here is that since he is going to the ancestors he is asked to plead on behalf of the people he left behind. The inclusion of the food items is to show the ancestors what types of foods are eaten by people the deceased leaves behind for instance - mealies and various harvested seeds and produce.

(iv) Beliefs in the hereafter

On the question of the hereafter the Xhosa people have many ideas. On the whole these ideas point to the fact that there is very little difference between the present and the hereafter except that the latter is invisible. One of the reasons for this belief could probably be that if the hereafter was terribly different from the present life people would find it disturbing to their imagination and would feel great resentment at death.

For the majority of people the hereafter is situated on the same earth. It has rivers, mountains, forests, homesteads, fields, cattle, sheep, goats, dogs, chickens, wild animals and all the things we find in our physical life. Although we cannot see them, the spirits who live there are able to see what we are doing.

Some Xhosa people believe the departed remain in the neighbourhood of their human homesteads. They are still part of the family. Their surviving relatives and friends feel that the departed are close to them.

Others again believe that the land of the departed is in the woods, forests, river banks or hills - somewhere in the country. Such places are therefore often avoided and people may not build homes or cultivate fields there. They do not wish to disturb the departed.

The Xhosa believe that a person is made up of body and Spirit- umoya nomzimba. Death is recognized as the point when the spirit departs from the body. Because the spirit is closely associated with breathing, people know that the spirit has gone when a person stops breathing. Even though the spirit leaves the body, it is thought in many clans among the Xhosa, that for a while it lingers around the body or the homestead. For these reasons the appropriate funeral rites (ukukhapha) must be performed to send it off to enable it to go away and join other spirits. It is also believed that the spirit does not lose the identity it had when it was a living person.

(v) The concept of the Living Dead

While surviving relatives remembers the departed, the spirit more or less leads a personal continuation of life. It has become what has now been particularly called - the living dead. People regard it as being much like a human being although it is dead. If it appears to members of the family, they will say that they saw "So and so". Up to that point it has not lost its personal name and identity. During this period which may last up to four or five generations, it is possible for something of the features, characteristics and personality of such a spirit (living dead) to be noticed in a newly born child. The people would say that "So and so" has come back. The child may then be named after the deceased person.

Other manifestations of the living dead are said to occur in dreams, visions, possessions and certain illnesses or mental disturbances. In dreams and visions, people claim to encounter the spirit of the living dead, to talk to it, and to receive certain requests from it. If the living dead makes demands which can be fulfilled, people normally meet them.

Sometimes the spirits of those who died away from their homes or those who were not properly buried, may demand ritual transfers to their home or reburial of their remains. A recent example of this was the exhumation and reburial of the remains of Chief Magoma (Senior) who was buried in prison at Robben Island but subsequently reburied at Ciskei' Ntaba-ka-Ndoda, the National burial place of Chiefs. For this reason even in present days some Xhosa who die in the cities and towns, are often taken to their original homesteads for burial.

After four to five generations the living dead are finally forgotten personally, because those who knew them while they were human beings will by then have died as well. Their spirits are consequently lost to human memory. Their identity as "so and so" is forever eclipsed as far as people are concerned, unless the spirit possesses someone and gives a full identity of itself. The spirit eventually withdraws from human activities and becomes fully a member of the spirit beings. Some of these unknown spirits may be used by witches and other individuals who wish to do harm to their neighbours. Others are used in divination and medical practices - called unomathotholo.

Some medicine men or diviners call back the spirit of the dead. Members of a clan may come together and call back the spirits of their wandering ancestors

in a ceremony called - ukubuyisa - which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

(B) The concept of rituals and customs observed at death and their significances.

Every African people has a set of beliefs and customs. In the case of the Xhosa people there seems to be a great diversity of what a ritual is and what a custom is. Among some Xhosa certain practices are believed to be customs whereas the same practices could be regarded as rituals among other Xhosa people. As indicated in chapter two, the history of the Xhosa is such that there has been a lot of intermarriage between the different tribes after the Zulu wars. There is therefore, a mixed diversity of beliefs and customs.

This state of affairs has been adequately explained to me by one of the elders in the traditional community of Ndevana - near King Williamstown when he said that the all embracing factor is the religious belief among the Xhosa. It has therefore been customary to do what is expected of one in the area he finds himself so as not to offend the ancestors. Whether you call it a custom or a ritual, does not really matter with the ancestors. If they are not satisfied, they will give the necessary guidance by appearing in dreams or visions.

Beliefs therefore seem to be an essential part of religion among the Xhosa. Although customs are not always religious, nevertheless many contain religious ideas. Religion helps to strengthen and perpetuate some of the customs, and in turn, the customs do the same to the religion of the ancestors. Beliefs and customs often go together. They cover all areas of

life. Beliefs generally deal with religious ideas; customs deal with behaviour people approve or disapprove of. These are handed down from generation to generation, sometimes with modifications.

A rite or ritual is a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. It is a means of communicating something of religious significance through word, symbol or action. Therefore a ritual - in the traditional African sense - embodies the belief. The ritual word is powerful since it is spoken in seriousness and solemnity, and it is repeated every time that ritual is done. For instance, no Xhosa person would drink traditional beer from a full container before he pours some on the ground and saying Camagu - This word, to the Xhosa is all-embracing and is recognized as a religious act and word, solemnly spoken and echoed by all present. Camagu means - let it be so - let our prayers be heard by our ancestors and let the ancestors carry on our petitions to God with whom they live. In every ceremony when an animal is slaughtered and it roars before it is dead everybody shouts Camagu - meaning that they all witness the fact that the sacrifice has been accepted by the ancestors. In most cases if the animal does not roar people will not continue the ceremony because it means it has not got the blessings or approval of the ancestors.

There are innumerable rituals and customs in the life of the Xhosa. It would be impossible to write about all. The belief in the ancestors is a living religion and is written in the lives of people. The Xhosa celebrate life - they celebrate their religion, they dance it, sing it, act it. A lot of this visible demonstration of religion occurs at death - in the rituals and customs

observed. Through these rituals and customs people not only act their religion but communiacte it to the younger generation. Rituals generate a sense of certainty and familiarity. They provide continuity and unity among those who participate and promotes experience and observance of customs. For example, the members of a clan who drink from the same calabash of sour milk the day after the funeral are bound together into a unity and each one finds his own identity within the unity of the clan. By observing this ritual, death is chased away so that the pain and sorrow is minimized as it affects each member in the clan. Through the ritual and custom, actions and words, people feel able to exercise a certain amount of control over the invisible world and the forces of nature - death included - over which they have no control.

There are many rituals and customs in the life of the Xhosa which are beyond this study. To mention a few we have: Personal rituals which begin with pregnancy and end with the living dead; Agricultural rituals and customs - to cover all means of livelihood, incorporating what people believe, the values they attach to these activities and the right procedures or behaviour required to make them run smoothly; health rituals and customs to ensure good health; healing, preventing danger to health, curing barrenness removing impurities in people and homestead and protecting people, animals and crops; homestead rituals - covering all aspects of home life, intended to strengthen social ties, bring blessings upon the homestead, defining duties and to make the life of the homestead run smoothly; professional rituals - to deal with the many activities for which a certain measure of skill and training is necessary.

However many of the rituals and customs of traditional way of life are being abandoned today. With that loss may also go the loss or weakening of the religious

consciousness which govern so much of xhosa traditional life. Be it what it may, certain things will be very hard to abandon. The very symbolic use of water to wash the hands after burial even when soil was not used is still a traditional ritual symbolizing purification and cleansing, not only of bodily but also of spiritual impurities, contracted through contamination by evil magic or curse. Used in this manner water becomes religious material.

(C) Some customs and rituals associated with death and mourning.

As stated earlier in chapter two, the Xhosa take great care to perform the rituals and customs associated with death, so as to make sure that the dead are not offended in any way. There is also the fear that if these rituals and customs are not observed, the ancestors may visit them again and another death may occur. With the Xhosa people there are a few outstanding rituals and customs that need mentioning:-

(i) Ukukhuza

As mentioned earlier in chapter two (c) the practice of Ukukhuza needs to be further explained. In older days, the chiefs' daughters were normally married out away from their home village. When death occurred in their families they were later given an opportunity to pay their last respect to their parents and relatives in a ceremony called Ukukhuza. This term means an exclamation to shock. Since there was no fast transport it took them days to reach home and by that time the funeral had already taken place. They normally arrived at sunset and at arrival a goat or sheep would be slaughtered for

catering. Before the sun goes down the elders of the people who accompany the bereaved daughter together with the elders of the family would go to the kraal - ubuhlanti - to point - ukukhomba - the cow to be slaughtered the following day. This is done so that the selected beast is not allowed to leave the kraal the following morning. The Xhosa do not like slaughtering and eating a beast which has already left the kraal and therefore has "jumped over" bad magic or medicines used by witches or people during the night - Ukutsiba imikhondo.

Before sunrise the daughter and her entourage together with the elders of the home go to the place where her father lays buried. The elder of her entourage then does the ukukhuza which may take this form:

In a loud aggressive voice and massive demonstration he would address the ancestors and say:

"We are here today at this home of the "Mankabani" Clan. We are very cross, in fact, we are angry because we are gravely hurt by this savage act. Why should you take away so-and-so. We have already gotten used to him. What do you think will happen to his wife and children? Who will now do such and such deeds in the village"? and here he will enumerate the good things the deceased did and in what manner he shall be missed. During this time there is a lot of "agreeing statements" from others who know these deeds. While he talks he usually makes expressive gestures ("ukuhesha") of chasing away death and thus addressing the ancestors both in words and gestures. The listeners join him in making these gestures.

At the end he talks to the ancestors in an appealing manner, telling them that he is not very angry at them but he now asks them not to come that often - ningaguqi; asking them (the ancestors) to leave the now living as they still want to live on a while longer. As he speaks, there can be open weeping by women while they console the daughter who is being given a chance to cry.

When all this is through, she is given a chance to lay a stone on the grave of her father or relative. After the hands are washed, there is feasting after the cow is slaughtered. The slaughtering of a cow is mainly to cater for the many people who would be attending this ceremony. Most of the people who attend have relatives who live in the village from where these visitors come and may want to know how their people are. Since the visitors will be staying for a few weeks they may want to give them gifts to take to their relatives. Part of the meat will also be used as umphako - provision for the road which is expected to last till they reach home. When the people back home come to visit them to ask about the funeral, they are given the remaining part of the meat. The reason for this ritualizing of mourning and the laying of stones is all to come to terms with death and to deal with mourning in an acceptable manner. The feasting is part of the consoling process so that the bereaved can forget what happened and go on with normal life activities.

(ii) Ukusezwa kwamanzi or ukuphuza amanzi

On the very next morning after the funeral, a goat or sheep is slaughtered at the home of the deceased. This ceremony is called ukusezwa amanzi which means

that "we are giving you water to drink". It is customary for Xhosa people to say "sela amanzi uxole" - when something has happened which makes a person sorrowful or anxious. This means - drink water and be consoled

The ceremony is chiefly done for the children of the family to console them and explain death to them and what it will mean in their everyday life from then on. They are also counselled on how they are expected to behave and what their respective roles will be from now on.

(iii) Ukukhapha

The custom of ukukhapha is also an important one in the life of the Xhosa people. It is usually done after say, a year or later. Sometimes when the family or rest of the clan members are together at the house of the deceased, they may decide to slaughter a cow to observe ukukhapha. This term means to accompany. In this context it means that the spirit of the deceased is accompanied on its journey to the hereafter. The Xhosa believe that at death, a person takes a journey to a new land of the dead. By slaughtering the cow the members of the family, clan and community symbolically accompanies the spirit of the deceased on its journey.

This meat is expected to be eaten on the same day so that the bones are burned at sunset. No one is allowed to take the meat of such an animal to another homestead. It is the meat of mourning and cannot be used for provision.

The spirit of such a person who has the ukukhapha custom done is not expected to be seen near the homestead. It is expected to live and stay in the forest till it is fetched at a later date.

(iv) Ukubuyisa

The custom of ukubuyisa is a very important one. After several years the spirit of a dead father is called back from the wandering in the forest. For this purpose a cow is slaughtered. This is regarded as the most important single ceremony concerning the dead. The spirit of the head of the family is invited back to its home so that he should keep an eye on his home and look after everything that might go wrong.

Only the head of the family has this ceremony done, that is, only men can have the Ukubuyisa ceremony done. When I asked my informants in the village of Peddie - Rural Village - why only men have ukubuyisa performed, one of the older men said that women are not really expected to wander away from home. After death, it is to be expected that mothers never leave their homestead. Men are by nature "amahilihili" - wanderers. They need to be called back as it is difficult to tie a man down. So also after death the spirit of the father of the home needs to be called back.

I happen to have attended such a ceremony in the rural village of Peddie called Rura. Before the slaughtered cow was served everybody was called to congregate in the open space between the kraal and the houses. All the older men stood near the kraal facing to the West and called out the name of the owner of the homestead saying "Zweliyazuza buya ngoku, buya mfondini; abantwana bakho bayakufuna; yiza uzokulungisa izinto ezonakeleyo - meaning "Zweliyazuza, come back now, come back man; your children need you; come and make right the things that are going wrong. As they called out, they were beckoning using their arms and hands. After this, food was served.

After this ceremony has been performed people are assured that their father or husband is back home and although he is not visible his rightful place in the family is restored. Thus the home never loses its dignity. Thus all wives are expected to observe the custom of *ukuhlonipha* - respect of dress and language because the living dead elders are everywhere in the homestead.

(v) Remembering the dead

Xhosa people believe that death is not the end of human life and that a person continues to exist in the hereafter. This continuation of life beyond death is recognized through practices of remembering the departed. This concerns mainly the living dead, that is, the spirits of those who died up to four or five generations back. Heads of families, adults and married people are remembered in this way not babies, children and the unmarried.

Normally adults pour out beer or some other beverage on the ground for the spirits of the family. The word - *camagu* - is pronounced by the one who serves the beer and all present also say Camagu after him.

Sometimes the dead or ancestors are given food which is normally in the form of seeds of all sorts of cultivated grain. This is put in a new billycan and sealed and taken to the nearby stream. It is expected to flow against the current in an upright position then sink on the other side of the river. The word *camagu* is also pronounced here when the billycan floats properly and sinks in an upright position. This ceremony is called "*umhlwayelelo*" and is usually performed to appeal to or appease the ancestors.

Another method of remembering the departed is to consult them through the igqira when a major family undertaking or decision is about to be made or when there is a major illness.

Naming the dead in prayers is another way of remembering them. These departed members of the family are believed to relay the prayers to God, since it is considered rude in traditional Xhosa life to approach an authority directly (God being the highest authority) unless it is absolutely essential.

The departed are also remembered by naming children after them, especially if their features have been inherited by these children. Married women in the family are then not expected to use this name and normally use nicknames to call children thus named.

Thus we see in traditional Xhosa life, the departed are not readily forgotten. Through rituals, dreams, visions, possession and names they are recalled and respected. The departed are considered to be still alive and people show by these practices that they recognise their presence.

The significance of this factor for this study lies in the fact that in traditional Xhosa society the prolonged need for mourning is lessened by the belief that there is life, active involvement with present-day activities by the deceased, in spirit form after death. At the same time there is a taboo attached to prolonged mourning since it may call upon the wrath of the ancestors who may get angry and come back to take yet another member of the family.

(D) Special categories in mourning(i) When igqira attends a funeral

As said in chapter II, the death of any individual is believed to have been caused. It was also mentioned that traditional healers are normally exempted from attending funerals. When an igqira has to attend a funeral of a dear neighbour or close relative, he is forced to observe certain rituals. Most of the rituals performed by igqira is to prevent death, to delay death or to ward it off. Even when it has struck, part of the funeral rites include the idea of chasing away death from the family or people who attend the funeral. For this reason most of the existing rituals for people who are not traditional healers are also observed by igqira, when death has struck.

So when an igqira is forced to attend a funeral he leaves his home having prepared cleansing medicine - ibekile yokuhlamba. The medicine normally used here is inqwebeba - which is believed to drive away all the dirt or bad luck that comes from death especially if witchcraft has been suspected. Before he enters his house, after attending a funeral, the igqira takes ibekile with the prepared medicine and washes his whole body in an area away from the homestead. This medicine - because it causes the skin to itch and burn, is believed to make the blood "lively" - "livukile igazi".

After this first wash the igqira has to wash himself with isilawu esimhlophe - special medicine which will bring back the "pure" state of being able to diagnose. An intlombe is held at this stage - ukukhulula igazi - meaning that by dancing at an intlombe the blood will be "released" from its

withdrawn state of imperfection and the person will feel fresh and able to diagnose diseases even more. This information was obtained from an eminent igqira called Mongezi Thiso.

These rituals are intended to bring blessings (icamagu) upon the individual and his homestead, and also the community he serves; to remove impurities of sickness and death and to make the life of the homestead run smoothly. These rituals observed by igqira also enhance the stature of his office and the effectiveness of his professional performance.

(ii) When an igqira has died

Apart from what has been described in chapter two and three about burial rituals pertaining to the head of the family, no special significant rituals are performed at death or burial of igqira. In the case of igqira the beast that is slaughtered, is a white goat. White is the accepted colour for purity among the Xhosa people. It is called ukusezwa amanzi.

This ceremony is not performed if it is felt that the children of this home are still tearful and sad. Usually they are given a month after the funeral to complete their mourning, and be able to be composed. Mr Thiso - my main informant on the practice of mourning for amaggira - says that the children must be given enough time - igazi lihle - so that the blood calms - so that they do not cry when the goat of mourning is slaughtered. Excessive crying may just annoy the ancestors and they may come back soon to take away yet another member of the family.

The most significant ceremony performed for the deceased if he/she was a traditional healer is the ceremony of Ukuhlanjwa kweentsimbi - the washing of the beads. This ceremony is performed after a year - or several years - after the burial of igqira - the owner of the beads.

Such a ceremony is regarded as quite important and is usually attended by all the children of the deceased igqira.

Although I have consulted with an experienced and respected traditional healer on the performance of this ceremony, for research purposes, I happen to have been involved personally in just such a ceremony which was performed for my late mother who was a qualified igqirakazi at her home in Transkei in 1983 - November. Our whole family travelled to Transkei from Cape Town to have the ritual done at my mother's natal home where she qualified as an igqirakazi in the first place.

By the time we arrived on the Friday evening, beer had been brewed but they had to wait for the daughters of the deceased to sift - ukhluza - the nearly ready beer since we had to pronounce the icamagu and talk to our ancestors on my mother's side to ask for their blessing. We were placed in the main hut and while we were gathered there my mother's brothers produced the white goat and stood it at the entrance of the hut before it was taken to the kraal for slaughter. We again talked and praised - addressing it but calling my mother and her ancestors to announce to them that we, her children are now about to wash her beads and that we ask them to bless the beads so that these have "icamagu" to us, her children in the same manner as

the beads were her tools of success in her work as igqira during her life-time. As we praise - sung our prayers to the ancestors we produced the beads which were in our keeping since she died in Cape Town in 1979 and opened them out on the freshly cleaned (with cowdung) hut.

As the goat was taken to the kraal to be slaughtered my uncles brought the billycan of cleansing medicine called ubulawu. This is a special type of medicine for cleansing mainly used by traditional healers or the head of a family. There are different kinds of ubulawu. In my mother's case we used the following three kinds together:

- (i) Izithole - This is "white" medicine called isilawu esimhlophe - and is used for the "sharpening" (ukucacisa) of the healing power.
- (ii) Impendula (the answer) - This is used to open up the mind of the person who is being diagnosed so that he has better understanding and insight into his problem.
- (iii) Isilawu somlambo - (the medicine of the river) - This medicine is called "Umvula Ndaba" (the opening of indaba). It makes the igqira able to interpret what is going on in the patient.

The above three kinds of medicine was crushed and placed in a billycan of water from a stream. My eldest sister was given the first opportunity to swirl it with the use of a two-pronged stick small enough to move freely in the can - this is called "ukuphehla". Since this billycan of medicine is meant for the cleansing of our mother's beads, we were all given the opportunity to swirl the medicine,

producing foam, and as we did this we were given the chance to talk to our mother and the ancestors about any major issue in our lives.

When the medicine was ready the beads comprising umthika, amacamagu and all other beads were placed in the billycan of medicine and this was taken to the kraal where the goat was slaughtered. Only the entrails were eaten on Friday night. The rest of the animal was taken to the main hut and placed entla the most respected area of the hut where the ancestors are believed to be. My brothers and sisters and I were given a place to sleep near the carcass, where the billycan of beads was also placed.

Early the following morning after the ubulawu was swirled - ukuphehlwa - again the beads were removed from the medicine and placed in the open area of the homestead between the houses - ebaleni - where everybody saw them. The first billycan of beer was brought to the main hut where we were and we were all given a sip after my chief uncle had a lineage - praise (ukuzithutha) calling all my mother's ancestors by name up to the 15th generation.

When the meat and whole mealies were ready, dishing up was done in the kraal. Whenever we had to enter the kraal, all my mother's daughters went bare-headed - to show that we were at home and, although we were all married and expected to observe ukuhlonipha by using head gear, were permitted to be free and show the whole community that we belong there and can enter the kraal bare-headed.

The serving of the meat started when my chief uncle gave us the umkhono - the right shoulder of the goat. We were not allowed to share this meat with anybody who was not a close family member.

After eating, the beads were collected and some pulled apart ukuqhawulwa kwentsimbi in front of the homestead. Another piece of beads was pulled apart and buried in the kraal. One other piece of beadwork was not destroyed but kept in the family so that if there were to be one of the deceased's children who has progressed in ukuthwasa, he or she be given her beads, to use as "amacamagu" (blessings).

I am happy to report that this latter piece of beads was presented to me by my family in December last year after completion of my internship at Komani Hospital.

The significance of the ceremony of the cleansing of the beads lies in the fact that nobody can ever use the beads that have not been cleansed from the impurities brought about by death. If the beads are not cleansed, they could affect the children of the deceased by making them ill or unlucky.

When the beads are destroyed in the kraal they are scattered all over the kraal. The same procedure is followed when the husks sifted from the beer intsipho are disposed of in the kraal. These are also scattered all over the kraal area. The significance of this practice has been explained by Mr Thiso as necessary so that when the children of the deceased are called upon to diagnose (ukuvumisa) diseases they be able to have an open mind and be "broad" and "wise" in their interpretation of what

they see. It is called - ziyavulwa (they are being opened").

All the bones of the goat slaughtered were collected and burned in the kraal - on the same day. This has to be done before dark, so that no bone can be carried away by a dog or witch because if this happens, the ceremony shall have to be repeated.

If the traditional healer whose beads were thus purified, happen to be the head of the family, he also has the rituals of ukukhapha and ukubuyiswa performed in his honour at a later stage. The ceremony of the cleansing of the beads is actually for the benefit of his offspring.

CHAPTER VA Case study of a bereaved person

Although several mourners were studied only one has been chosen for the research purposes. It was felt that a woman who has lost her husband through a sudden death would suit the study because "other studies had shown untimely death of a loved one gives rise to a more protracted reaction to bereavement than does a similar bereavement in old age" (Schoenberg, B et al 1975, p.120). Untimely death was defined as a sudden death or an illness of less than six (6) months. It is generally believed that in cases of prolonged illness there is a gradual letting-go process as relatives consciously prepare themselves for the loss e.g. by reiterating statements like "if the worst comes to the worst I shall . . ." (Schoenberg, B et al, 1975). The choice of female mourners only was determined by the fact that in Xhosa society, most of the rituals pertaining to death and mourning centre around women. Males are not subjected to intense mourning and are in fact, actively discouraged from showing visible grief.

A. Methods

- (i) The fact that there is no literature dealing with this area, as regards Blacks, structured the choice of the research techniques. Participant observation and unstructured focused interviews were used. In dealing with such a sensitive area, these seemed more appropriate and less threatening.

The participant observation was of the type defined by
(i) Pertti J. Pelte and Gretel M. Pelte in Handbook of Social and cultural Anthropology by John J. Monigmann, 1973
(ii) Jarvie (1969) and Sullivan M S - Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry. Psychiatry, 3, 1 - 117; 1940.

Participant observation is regarded as a twentieth-century technique which enabled field workers to get involved with and live in close contact with a research population in order to observe their daily routines, ritual and social acts and other aspects of cultural behaviour. Such ethnographic interest began particularly following the appearance in 1922 of major theoretical works by A R Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. Malinowski is often credited as being the originator or chief developer of the style of fieldwork that entails intensive and long-term immersion in the daily lives of native peoples, working through their native language and participating in their cultural activities. The field worker who lives within a research population finds himself becoming a member of a particular community (town village, or any social unit). He develops close friendships and working ties with its members.

The problems facing a researcher in the role of a "participant observer" are many. The dynamic conflict involves the seeming contradiction between the necessity for humanistic empathic "understanding" of the way of life of a people which is generated in part through the fieldworker process itself and the equally important matter of developing scientifically objective, verifiable modes of observation. This could be complicated further if one assumes Sullivan's psychiatric perspective in the role of participant observer.

The researcher faces the problem of how far he can identify with those he is observing without losing his own perspective.

The participant observer needs to be both a stranger and a friend among the people he is studying. It would seem that he needs to be both participant and observer at the same time. The conduct implication dictates that you have to be one or the other at any particular moment.

Jarvie (1969) suggests that the success of the participant observation method derives essentially from exploiting the situations created by the role clashes insider/out-sider, stranger/friend.

If the participant observer identifies himself completely with those he is studying, he may not be able to emerge from this immersion to the extent of his being able to objectify the situation. In developing loyalties, his vested interests will inevitably enter into his observations. Being an "insider" gives one a privileged point of observation, yet the observation of a pure participant is in no way a privileged one. To the extent that he shares common goals with insiders, the participant observer will be able to take up a role position amongst them. To the extent that he lives outside their interests, he will be unable to experience the effects of their living conditions on his own personal experience.

The participant observer's personal struggle, no matter where he has placed himself, will be for a livelihood with essential satisfactions like those of the other members of the group. Not only is the participant observer tied to their cultural practices, but his relationship to the outside world has to be identified as essentially similar to theirs if he is to share life with them.

As an observer, however, the participant observer's "truthfulness" needs to be "ethnocentric" as opposed to being "contextual". In the studies referred to in this thesis, being contextual in all funeral ceremonies could not have led to therapeutic insights beyond those attained by participating mourners and community members attending the funeral rites. Being ethnocentric in these funerals meant committing oneself to the relativism of an outside theoretical position by applying a preconceived theoretical model to situations involving oneself as participant and/or observer. At times one's own experience needs to be reflected upon. The constructs, guiding and stabilising one's behaviour at any given time must be open to one's own scrutiny.

The participant observer has in effect three reference groups - the one he is studying, the society from which he comes and his scientific group. Whatever the case, the participant observer has to choose how to conduct himself. In this particular study the researcher observed funeral rites while participating in them, and also drew hypotheses regarding their uses. It was easy to mix freely with the mourners and people who attended the funeral as in the Xhosa society anybody can attend a funeral without having to explain his presence. The fact that I am a woman also assisted the research as I was able to mix freely with other women who prepared tea or meals and thereby gained access to the chief mourner especially during working hours when there were fewer people around.

Notes were written down immediately afterwards. The researcher also enlisted the help of other senior women e.g. Mrs Daisy Ncaca, the wife of a minister who lead prayers and attended the funeral of the mourner under study. Mrs Ncaca collaborated with me in my observations and served as a check on me. As the wife of a prominent minister of the Anglican Church she has attended numerous funerals and was always called upon to lead in prayers

for consoling the bereaved.

(ii) Unstructured focussed interviews.

This was conducted at the house of the subject. This necessitated two visits: the first - to request the subject to participate in the study, arrange a convenient time and prepare her regarding the nature of the study - the second to conduct the interview.

Because of the size of the house the interview was done in her bedroom. This was to ensure as far as possible privacy and freedom from interruption. The interview lasted 1½ hours to 2 hours.

As it is customary among amaXhosa never to plunge into the heart of a matter especially of such a delicate nature, the first 30 minutes were spent in chatting and tea drinking.

The subject was asked to go over the incidents step by step, beginning with how the sad news of the death of her husband was conveyed to her to the termination of the present stage of mourning. The subject was encouraged to narrate in detail whatever feelings she had at the time, what she has done with these, how other people have reacted to her feelings and how she had viewed their reactions. The subject was further told to feel free to express any sad feelings that may come up during the interview when these are evoked as a result of sad memories.

All the interviews were recorded in writing. The researcher made notes and these were subsequently written out fully immediately after each interview. As far as possible notes were written verbatim but translated into English as the interview was conducted in Xhosa.

B. Case study result

My interviewee was a 72 year old woman whose husband had died on the 16th October 1983 at the age of 70. The interview took place on the 10th January 1986.

Question 1

Could you please narrate everything that happened starting on how the sad news was brought to you until now?

Answer

I shall like to start with the events of the day before so as to give an understanding of what happened before, to give a clear picture.

When we finished lunch he said he is going to Mr Nakani, his friend. His half-sister was with us in the house, she has senile dementia. She was living with our eldest son at the time my husband died but had been chased away by him during this period. When my husband left for his friend, his sister also left, saying she wanted to pay her dues at the church where her minister was.

My husband arrived back home by 5.30p.m. and found his sister still away. We were then worried because of her mental state. My husband then decided to go and look for her. He found her several streets away from our house. She was standing there with a very old man, who, when he saw him (my husband), told him he was glad to see my husband at that moment because his elderly sister has just asked him (this old strange man) to accompany her to my husband's place because she does not know where she lives.

This old man then told my husband that our eldest son did pass by when he arrived back from work, but refused to take this old lady to her brother's place, saying that he is tired. My husband then took his sister and walked her back home. He

was very upset about his son refusing to help his sister. When he told me how worried he was at what his son did to his sister I told him not to take this incident too serious as children are very irresponsible. But I saw that he was extremely worried because for the last two weeks he had been quite depressed at the manner in which his sister was chased away by our son's wife. That night he took the main prayer up himself. I could sense from the manner in which he prayed that he was hurt - wenzakele. He prayed, crying, asking God to give us strength to tolerate his sister because she is ill - mentally ill because of old age. After prayers he remained kneeling, crying in that position. The children stood up and left for their rooms. We eventually went to our bedroom. I then tried to show him how dangerous this sadness is to his health. His answer to this was that "andiwazi umtshato wabantwana wophelela phina" - I do not know where the marriage of these two children will end.

After this my younger son's baby cried for a long time in their room. I then called him to bring the child into our bedroom. My husband and I then tried to still the baby, taking turns - till it felt asleep.

When my daughter in-law came to fetch the sleeping baby I told her to leave it for a while - perhaps it has a premonition of something (mhlawumbi unento ayivayo). I asked her to leave the baby to sleep in our room for the night.

Our home routine was that my husband used to wake up very early in the morning, wash, then go to the garden to attend to it. I normally wake up later and get ready to attend church (Holy Mass) that begins at 7.30am. Strange enough that morning I got up late as I discovered that the time was already 7.40am. The baby slept right through the night and was still sleeping at that hour when I awoke. I was puzzled at the fact that my husband was still sleeping at that time. I got up, washed and got dressed - while he

was still sleeping. I called him several times but he did not answer. I then shook him several times, to get up, but in vain. He was sleeping on his side, facing the opposite direction.

I then decided to go around the bed in order to see his face. It was then that I discovered that this person has left us - usishiyile.

I got such a shock that I left the baby sleeping on the bed and run to my son's room to call him. I said "Vuyani yiza" several times, crying. My son must have been shocked because he got up and went straight to the bedroom where he found his father lying dead.

When my son discovered that his father had died he caught hold of me and held me tightly in his arms - saying nothing. "Uthe lo mntwana akundibamba ndeva ngathi ikhona le nto esukileyo apha kum,yaphela loo nto ethi mandibaleke ndikhale. Yaphela, ndehla ndasezingondweni". When this child held me I felt as though there is something that is disappearing here in me. Gone was that feeling of wanting to run away and scream. This feeling subsided. I felt calmer and my senses seem to come back once more". I had a feeling of calmness. All this time nobody said not a word to each other. Ndaqala ndacinga ngosana. When I looked at the baby, he was sleeping so sweetly with his little feet laid across his grandfather.

I can never forget that picture. It then appeared to me that, that little foot put across my husbands' neck - must have given him so much comfort at his last hour.

My son quickly took his son away from the bed, gave him back to his wife - telling her what has happened. My son then went to call people in the vicinity and then they came one by one. It is customary to inform people with whom you live when death has occurred in the family.

Question 2

I would appreciate it if you could try and remember how you felt.

Answer

The first person who came was my daughter who spent the night with her cousin. She came at the time I was under this strain of having to control myself. She came and cried out aloud. This gave me a chance to cry out aloud. By the time people came we had had an opportunity to relieve ourselves a bit. After crying I felt as if this heavy feeling in my throat was relieved.

Question 3

How did you control this strain you say you felt?

Answer

I felt that by the way, I am the older person in the house and the fact that my child saw the need to hold me tight, I had to be strong and control myself for his sake. I was telling myself I must not cry because I had to think what to do, if I cried, I would not be able to think what has to be done.

At this time, with the people coming in I was, however able to remember certain procedures, like, I thought of calling the minister and also a doctor to certify the death. One thing strange was that I could not bring myself to believe that he is really dead. I somehow hoped that the doctor would say he is in a coma - in spite of the fact that I know what a corpse is as I am a qualified nurse.

I kept recalling our last moments together - when we both pacified our grandson - not in the least knowing that such a thing was to take place.

Question 4

When did your crying stop?

Answer

It took days. Everytime my close people came I could not help crying all over again. After about 3 to 4 days I gradually stopped as I also registered what people said.

I can't say that crying ever stops altogether. I do cry secretly whenever there is anything that reminds me of him. Sometimes my tears are produced out of sheer joy when I think about the happy days we had together.

Sometimes I cry when I miss him or when the children have problems which I can't solve; than I think how he would have gone about a particular problem.

Sometimes I feel like crying when I see his neglected garden; then I'm reminded that he is no longer here to water the plants or prune the fruit trees.

Question 5

In what way were people helpful to you?

Answer

Mostly by talking to me and also by prayers. Also the manner in which so many people left their homes to come to console me every day before the funeral. Right through the day there were people coming and going. At no stage was I left alone.

Another thing that consoled me, was to see how well my children co-operated with each other preparing for the funeral of their father. This brought us very close to each other.

The prayers that were said every evening touched me very much. The preaching also revealed to me that after all this sorrow there will be rejoicing in heaven when my husband goes to his creator. I was consoled at the thought that he was now peaceful with his creator.

Question 6

Were there any particular difficult instances? If yes, which and why?

(Please do not repress your feelings).

Answer

The first difficulty was that we did not have electricity and we did not have enough light. My relatives helped and brought more lamps.

The next difficulty was that my eldest son decided that there's no money and my husband should be burried in the cheapest coffin available. This problem nearly created a quarrel amongst the children as some felt that they did not wish their father to be burried in a cheap coffin. At that period the State President Dr L L Sebe sent word that he is prepared to add to the money of a coffin we choose - to the amount of R500. This difficulty was then solved. Apart from this we did not have any other problem.

Question 7

Did you feel like talking about the deceased?

Answer

Now that I have spoken to you about these instances, I feel I am much better now. This is brought about by the fact that I am now thinking about many things. At one moment I felt like crying.

*Why?

I was just thinking now that I am made to look back - how he might have felt - dying with such a sore heart.

Question 8

Do you think that if this tiff between your husband and his son did not occur, he would have had a happier death?

Answer

I have been praying to God ever since my husband died, that God should make me not to be bitter against my son. I got the feeling that my husband would still be alive today, if my son did not treat him the way he did. My husband died of a broken heart - broken by his own son.

Question 9

How do you feel now about this issue?

Answer

I'm now much better because I can talk about it. At first I could not even narrate this. The children kept talking about their elder brother during the course of their father's death. But I tried to pacify them and scolded them pointing out that according to the bible, their father has reached umda - over which he could not go beyond. Although I tried to console them in this manner, deep within my heart I felt that I agreed with what they are saying about their brother.

Question 10

What helped and enabled you to bear your loss?

Answer

First, the children did. The children came very very close to me during this period. My dear sister - who is also deceased now - came from Port Elizabeth to live with me for a while, and this also helped to console me. My other sister who lives in Lesotho kept phoning me talking to me about other things but every time she phoned me from so far away I felt very happy and privileged. My relatives from Cape Town arranged that I come over to see them. The change in scenery also helped me to bear the loss.

Also, the fact that I'm the mother of twins and also that I am a qualified igqira helped me because I was exempted from the use of black clothes, which could further depress me.

Question 11

When did you actually start believing that he is dead?

Answer

When the doctor came he told me that he was dead. He also told me that he died in the early hours of the morning. I could also see this because ebesathambile - he was still flexible.

When the doctor thus confirmed the death - all hope disappeared. I decided to accept the fact that he has passed away. It was as if I need confirmation from outside - to convince me that what I personally saw was actually true. I refused to believe what I saw but the doctor brought me back to my own senses.

Question 12

Thinking back, were there any times when emotions other than grief were apparent? Could you share this with me?

Answer

His death was so sudden that I was shocked, more than anything else. The circumstances surrounding his death are those that made me bitter. The bitterness was, directed to my oldest son, because he was old enough to realize that quarrelling with his father in that manner could create heart problems as he knew his father was troubled by his heart.

I must say, though, that after I prayed very hard after the funeral about all this problem with my son I came to the conclusion that my husband came to the end of his life. It was all God's will and I should accept it.

Question 13

Was there any particular text quotation out of the bible that touched you during this period.

Answer

I kept on thinking about what one of the ministers read out of the bible - the Old Testament. Job 14 : 5 . . . "thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass".

Using this verse I was able to keep telling myself that to my husband his bounds were determined that night - no matter what happened.

I also tried to console the children using the same verse. They were angry with their brother for having quarrelled with their father over his half sister the night before. I tried

to show them that even if the quarrell did not take place, their father could not exceed his bounds that night.

D. Deductions from Interview

In both interviews the subject co-operated very well with the researcher. She spoke with admirable calmness about her husbands death. She even volunteered more information not asked for in the interview itself and gave more background details.

From the collected data, there appeared to be reasonable evidence in support of the researcher's proposition that the funeral rites are comparable to the crisis intervention model. For a detailed description of these rites, the reader is referred to Chapter II.

Because of the prevailing culture, that is, ideology, beliefs, norms and values of both the traditional and Christian AmaXhosa, the mourner studied, expressed more or less identical needs as the traditional group described and these needs were met in the same manner. Often the rites which helped to meet the needs as well as the needs themselves were inextricable. An attempt was made to extract the needs most felt and/or perceived and the manner in which they were met.

The dissolution of cultural support system for the bereaved in England led Gores (1965) to claim that "death and mourning are treated with the same prudery as sexual impulses were treated 100 years ago. "Today" he says, "it would seem to be believed, quite sincerely, that sensible, rational men and women can keep their mourning under complete control by strength of will or character, so that it need be given no public expression, and indulged, if at all, in private, as furtively as if it were an analogue of masturbation" (ibid p.11).

Moreover, Gorer (ibid) claims that giving away to grief is stigmatized and mourning is treated as if it were a weakness and a reprehensible bad habit. It is not regarded as a social, physiological and psychological necessity.

Although the present study was not specifically designed to tap the attitudes of the amaXhosa as regards grief and mourning, the researcher inferred these from the needs the interviewee perceived as important. The mourner in this study indicated that she was under great stress when she discovered that her husband had died in his sleep. She felt the need to give full expression to her grief, but she also felt the obligation to control her urge of wanting to run away screaming. Most prevalent was the need to express grief. The intervener on the other hand, felt the need to console, sometimes referred to as the need to strengthen or to give emotional support (ukukhunga). Her children, as she indicated that they came to her rescue, it seems, did not view grieving as a weakness but rather as a necessary and healthy process - hence her son held her tight to his body to demonstrate his acceptance of the need to grieve.

The mourner interviewed felt forced to control her urge to scream, unlike what happens in traditional setting where such an urge is spontaneously expressed. This incident shows the difference between the traditional and Western way of dealing with such physiological expression of grief. In the traditional setting women are allowed to hold their hands on their heads and cry or scream full-blast, so as to get this urge out of their system. It would seem that the more educated and westernized women feel the need to control this natural urge and weep quietly - in the same manner described by Gorer (1965) which is obtainable in England.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

INTERVENTION MEASURES - A COMPARISON WITH TRADITIONAL PRACTICE AND CASE STUDY.

The mourner in this study revealed that she has feelings which the researcher identifies as those described by Lindermann (1947) as characteristics of the first stage of bereavement : shock and disbelief. As discussed in chapter V, the mourner said she refused to believe her eyes when she saw her husband lying dead on the bed and she called a doctor - hoping that he will say her spouse was in a coma. She remembered how she was distressed, choking, with a lump in her throat, and shortness of breath as she was under great strain, trying to control her urge to run away and scream.

Intervention measures of traditional Xhosa during this first stage seems to be directed primarily to meeting this debilitating phase. When death is announced by the umongi in charge of the ill person, the women are allowed to hold their hands on their heads and scream as loud as they wish. The practice takes care of the physical reaction to shock and the natural response to cry or shout. By doing this the neighbours are given an audible alarm that something dreadful has happened so that they can come and investigate and also console the bereaved. As soon as the neighbours arrive the bereaved is immediately put on a mattress and given the opportunity to cry. In the case studied, the bereaved's son held her tight in his arms against his body. This intervention the bereaved described as having been the most important factor that gave her back her calm feeling. With the Xhosa, the chief supporter physically supports the mourner wherever she goes. She is made to experience the grief bodily and mentally.

The second stage of bereavement as described by Lindermann (1947) is usually characterized by a great deal of weeping and feelings of helplessness. In the intervention model,

this is the stage when the task of the intervener is pertinent.

The individual should be made to feel comfortable with his own deep feelings as this speeds the normal work of mourning and helps to prevent delayed reactions of unresolved grief feelings. In the traditional Xhosa setting the bereaved are encouraged to come to terms with their natural responses to grief, by making it easier and acceptable to cry. Only men are discouraged from crying since it is regarded as unmanly to do so. In this study the mourner expressed the wonderful opportunity she had for free grieving, when her daughter came back, the mourning when her husband died and broke down uncontrollably. The lump she felt in her chest because of suppression of crying was relieved by open yelling and sobbing. For the same purpose of dealing with the feelings of hopelessness, it is common practice among both traditional and urban Xhosa people to conduct prayer meetings when death has occurred. Most prayers explicitly express the bereaved's feelings of bitterness, anger, hopelessness and helplessness - in short, the state of being bewildered and being overwhelmed. These feelings are thus expressed by way of prayers and scripture readings so that the bereaved will accept them as natural responses to the shock of death. In the study the bereaved described how she also felt that the prayers provided the kind of relief she needed.

Golan (1978) stressed that interveners should reassure the bereaved that anxiety is normal in a crisis situation. It would seem that the amaXhosa do exactly this through ritual and ceremony. The bereaved is given ample chance to deal with this anxiety. During the ukukhuza ceremony described in chapter VI verbal expression is given to anxiety feelings while death is physically chased away by ukuhesha. In this study the mourner intimated that through prayers which accurately and emphatically described how she must be feeling, she was given the reassurance that her feelings were normal and acceptable.

Facilitation of grief work is regarded by Caplan (1966) as a major aspect of intervention. He postulates that the amount of grief work done is directly related to how a person will emerge at the end of the crisis or bereavement. This he bases on Lindermann's (1947) findings which indicated that the seemingly courageous people who did not weep and mourn the death of loved ones developed signs of worsening mental health, months or even years later. The rituals and elaborate preparation for the funeral indulged in by the amaXhosa seems to encourage facilitation of grief work. Usually the home of the dead is full of people, cleaning up the place, white-washing of walls and slaughtering of animals for the feasting after burial. All this activity serves to engrave in the mind of the bereaved that death has indeed occurred and it cannot be wished away. The bereaved in this study said that when she was put behind the door of the main bedroom after having been covered up, she felt that that action gave her ample opportunity for complete immersion in grief. Although this chance for indulgence in grief is given, the chief support has to always be near the mourner so as to curtail excess sorrow if it continues beyond the usual three to four days.

It is customary among the amaXhosa to console a person by saying: "Lala ngenxeba" - meaning lie on the wound. By this is meant that when a person has suffered an injury - a mental injury in this case - he must make a special effort to cause the pain to be painful - ukuthunuka - so that this wound bleeds sufficiently to form a crust that will heal. The amaXhosa make no distinction between the mental wound caused by bereavement and a physical wound. Both wounds need to be cleaned before they are bandaged. The explicit aim is to help the bereaved experience the pain and the anguish.

Ross (1976) recommends this direct confrontation and emphasized that what the bereaved need is a human being to support them

through this period. She believes that sedation only helps to deny and/or postpone matters. The need to grieve is accepted as a matter of fact among the amaXhosa. It is assumed that where there is death, there is also grieving. In the villages where the more traditional amaXhosa live, once there is loud weeping and wailing the people assume that death has occurred and they all stop what they are doing and go to that house to intervene. In this particular study the bereaved intimated that she suffered great strain because she suppressed her need to run away, screaming. This urge was however satisfied when her daughter arrived a little later and cried aloud. This gave her the chance to vent her own feelings by joining her daughter crying out aloud.

Caplan (1966) advocates actual dwelling on the crisis and helping the bereaved to confront it. Such confrontation should be in manageable doses by taking the bereaved's mind off the crisis from time to time. He should, however, be often led back to reality, since straying too far may reinforce denial. In the traditional Xhosa setting there is enough activity engaged in to force the bereaved to accept the reality of the situation and as such, denial is countered - for example, there is change in the manner of dress by avoidance of the usual ochre colours and the wearing of white clothes by the bereaved. In some cases the face is smeared with white clay - white being the colour of mourning; the sitting of the bereaved on a mat behind the door - like a newly wed - also serves to remind her of the new period of ukuhlonipha (respect for the dead in this case); the cutting of hair - serves to further emphasize the separation caused by death and finally - the sacrifice of animals whose blood unites the dead with the ancestors. In this study the bereaved was afforded the manageable doses of grief through the prayer sessions held every evening for the two weeks before burial. After each prayer meeting the gathering takes on a social tone, where light conversation takes place while tea or coffee is served. During such sessions there was a visible abatement of the grief - laden atmosphere.

Caplan (1966) warns strongly against giving meaningless comforts. He maintains that the bereaved should be encouraged to accept the fact that he is in trouble. In the Xhosa society this need for acceptance of the inevitable is clearly recognized by the ceremony of ukusezwa amanzi - where the implication is that the bereaved has to drink water and be consoled. For this ceremony a sheep is slaughtered to console the children of the home and make them accept that nothing can change the fact that death has occurred in their home.

Mollis (in Golan 1978) recommends that the bereaved be encouraged and constantly reassured. Encouragement, he says, is essential to counter-act feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Interveners need to reassure the person in crisis of their faith in him, that will be strong enough to work things out and that they will be available should he need help. The amaXhosa in the traditional setting do not hold prayer meetings, as there is urgency in the burial of the dead, since they do not have refrigerators to keep the body from rotting. Encouragement is given verbally by reminding the bereaved about their faith in the ancestors. As an ancestor it is believed that the dead are more powerful and can be of greater assistance to their families. Thus the hopes of the bereaved are raised in that their lives will improve with this added power. The phrase that is used to describe death is - "ugodukile" - he has gone home - meaning he has gone where he belongs - with the ancestors. The elders of the family assure the bereaved that they are at her serves if she should need them. Close relatives of the bereaved to whom she must turn in times of trouble are identified. In this study the bereaved was encouraged to have faith in God and certain passages in the bible were repeatedly read to her to emphasize that she should turn to God for help. For instance she intimated that Bible excerpts such as : Job : 14 : 5 "Seeing his days are determined . . . , thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass", made her realize that nothing could have prevented her husband's death and she should turn to God who will help her in the same manner as God came to Job's

rescue. She went further intimating that God already came to her assistance by making it possible for her to get financial help from the government for which her husband worked.

Caplan (ibid) emphasizes the necessity of helping with everyday tasks, and Mollis (in Golan 1978) talks about "offering gifts of love" that is "demonstrating concern beyond the call of duty". Among the amaXhosa this practice is clearly demonstrated by the supports who give up their houses and time to be with the bereaved for 24 hours a day. The bereaved is assisted with all the household chores, including washing of the children, cooking food and collection of firewood. All these activities demonstrate concern and give the bereaved some relief. In this study the bereaved enjoyed the assistance of the women in her street and also got financial assistance from the collections made at the funeral.

Most bereaved people are obsessed with the need to talk about the deceased. In Golan's study (1975) women from Western Europe relate how frustrating it was for them when well-meaning relatives changed the subject purposely each time the widows tried to talk openly about their dead husbands. This is so because people are afraid of the bereaved's tears. In the traditional Xhosa society the ukukhuza ritual described in chapter IV seems to address this need fully. The chief spokesman is given ample chance to curse death; scold the ancestors for permitting it; ask rhetorical questions as to who death thinks is now going to take the place of the deceased since the community relied on him for certain things. If, for instance, the deceased was assisting a widow in the neighbourhood of ploughing her fields after he has done so in his own home, the orator will address this need by asking the ancestors who will now take the deceased's place in assisting the widow who has learned to depend on the deceased for her food. All this oration is the permission granted to put into words

(on behalf of the bereaved) the pain, the love, the guilt, the hostility, the sorrow and the finality of death, and to review the relationship with the deceased. In this study this need was adequately met during the evening sessions with the bereaved when close friends and relatives spent nights in her bedroom next to the mattress. As is customary, during such gatherings everybody listens as the mourner goes over the last days or hours she spent with the deceased. These remembrances are in most instances flavoured with both grief and laughter. Often all those present go over the deceased's idiosyncracies, his strength and his weaknesses. The bereaved also shares certain "hints" that the deceased dropped and that seem to indicate that he had a premonition of his death. These hints are often interpreted and are used to convince the bereaved that the deceased "knew" and was therefore "ready to go". In this study the mourner related how her late husband called for his grandson and how he hinted to the effect that maybe the baby feels something forboding - unento ayivayo. This incident was interpreted by her relatives that the deceased must have sensed something in the baby's cry and this becomes another reason why the bereaved should be consoled.

Bugen (1977) warns that the belief that a death might have been prevented is the single most influential factor contributing to the prolongation of human grief. He therefore advocates intervention techniques which must focus on moving the bereaved person from this belief. The intervener for example, must understand the cognitive structure supporting the belief and must employ every conceivable strategy to dissuade the mourner. Such a belief usually results in scapegoating and a tendency to engage in endless attributes of guilt. In the Xhosa traditional society, although the general belief when death has occurred is that it has been "caused" by witchcraft or evil magic it is however accepted that the ancestors of the deceased, his Supreme protectors, permitted the death - therefore nobody could have prevented it. It is for this reason that the chief spokesman during

the ukukhuza ceremony reprimands the ancestors for withdrawing their protection and therefore causing the death to occur. In trying to appease the ancestors the orator goes on to say - "it is not that we do not want you to fetch us home, but we ask you to leave us to live a little longer; we therefore ask you not to come again soon - nigaguqi".

Successful completion of grief work is regarded as essential for coping with the last stage - resolving the loss (Lindermann 1947). During this stage the image of the lost object is emancipated and the process of re-organization commends.

In the very traditional Xhosa society the bereaved woman usually sets alight the hut she shared with her late husband, the night after the burial. She is also expected to throw into this fire, the clothes she used when her husband died. This is usually the skirt made of a cow hide. A few months after the funeral an ox is slaughtered for the custom of ukukhapha. The hide of this animal is given to the widow so that she makes herself a new skirt. This ceremony seems to contribute to the coming to terms with death, as the last stage in resolving the loss. Since she burned the hut she has to build a new one and it therefore signifies a new beginning of a life without her husband. The image of her lost husband is finally removed in the burning of the hut they shared. Early the following morning the funeral members of the family are given sour milk which should be taken from the same calabash. This sour milk is used to rinse the mouth - ukuxukuxa - and is then spit out on one heap of dry cowdung, which is then thrown out into the kraal where the deceased is buried. This ritual clearly marks the final act of "spitting-out" death and "throwing it away" as the last ceremony of "letting-go". The cutting of hair which follows is a physical demonstration of "giving-off" something of your own to show sadness at the loss.

The cleansing and re-organisation of the house; the feasting and the ritual of "washing of spades" and also the ukusezwa amanzi ceremonies - all are meant to facilitate the "letting-go" process. During these ceremonies the mourners are actually told to forget the deceased - wasuseni amehlo enu kuye.

In the present study this "letting-go" process seemed to have been the main occupation of the intervening persons. During the funeral service several speakers traced the life of the deceased; his growing-up period; his contribution to the community, even reading some of his writings in the press and also mentioning that the deceased named one of the new industrial areas in Ciskei, namely Dimbaza. These speeches were made to touch the mourner's feelings as they stir up a lot of memories, but most were to develop feelings of pride. These speeches intended to show the mourner that she was not alone in her grief and that her husband lived a worthwhile life.

Volkan (in Schoenberg, et al 1975) describes what he calls re-grief therapy. This is a programme designed "to help the mourners some time after death bring his memories of the lost one back, to test them against reality and to free himself from excessive bondage to the dead", (p.334). This freedom is important if the mourner is to engage in the forward motion of his own life. In the case of traditional Xhosa, relatives stay on a few weeks after the funeral. Those relatives who could not attend the funeral come home and visit the grave for the ukubeka ilitye ritual - which is actually to pay their last respect by laying a stone on the grave of their relative. These impromptu visits that carry on for about two months after the funeral, are, it seems more or less what Schoenberg (1975) refers to when she talks about "social aftercare". It is during such visits that prolonged grief reactions are detected and dealt with by the elders of the clan. Usually the mourner is strongly reprimanded if there is still visible sadness because such behaviour could anger the ancestors and bring on their wrath

on the rest of the clan. Grieving after a few weeks of burial is regarded as pathological. In the case studied the minister of religion visited the mourner regularly for three weeks after the funeral, to pray and see if all is well in the home. She was also visited by the Mothers Union of her church, who held their usual Thursday prayer meetings at her home on two occasions. In the first visit they brought her what they call - isepha - soap to wash the handkerchiefs she used to wipe her tears with. This "soap" was in the form of money. The second visit was a more informal one where there was tea and scones served.

Volkan (ibid)'s re-grief therapy is further demonstrated in what one can call reconstructive work done by the amaXhosa after death. Such reconstruction activities are well provided for in both the traditional as well as Westernized societies of the amaXhosa. There is a formal stopping of mourning ritual called the ukukhululwa kwezila, which is observed a year after the funeral. The mourner is formally freed from the bondage of the wearing of black clothes; and the abstinence from the enjoyment of social activities. These black clothes are burned or given to relatives who have themselves gone through the period of mourning. The widow is dressed in new clothes and is told to feel free, to move about in the community. At this ceremony the deceased's belongings are distributed among relatives. In this particular study the mourner was exempted from the practice of wearing black clothes because she is the mother of twins. She only wore a black button which was burned at this formal ceremony.

Reconstruction work among the amaXhosa is further enhanced by the final custom of ukubuyiswa, when, after several years, the spirit of the deceased is called back to come and watch

over his family. This custom is only observed in the case of the head of the family. Since the amaXhosa believe in the power of the ancestors, the family's hopes are not shattered completely by death. This ceremony serves to bring back renewed hope and re-assurance that the head of the family is once more with them - this time in spirit form and therefore, more powerful. Feelings of fears and emptiness created by death are now done away with, as the protector and guardian of the home is once more brought back to them. Also the dignity of the home is restored and the members of the family and community respect the home as so-and-so's house - calling the deceased by name. This last rite, it would appear is an illustration of Walker's (1977) recommendation - that the supportive social networks be used to sanction the necessary letting-go process, and to encourage a meaningful reconstruction process. In this study the mourner indicated that this custom has not been observed but it was her intention that it be done in two years' time.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the generic approach has its own limitations. What is effective for one individual may not necessarily be so for another.

In this study the mourner intimated that much as she was grateful for the assistance given by all these supporting systems, she would have preferred to run away and do most of the mourning by herself.

Conclusion

It was not the intention of this study to relate everything that can possibly be said about the amaXhosa behaviour in grief and mourning. The aim of the study was to investigate the proposal that the funeral rites of amaXhosa contain elements of therapeutic value which are comparable to the crisis intervention model.

Participant observation material obtained, together with the interviewee's responses seemed to show evidence in support of this proposal.

This study was undertaken to stimulate interest in this area of study and thereby generate more research in this area. The area of bereavement therapy in the Xhosa-speaking society could perhaps be an interesting subject for study, that is, if there is still prolonged mourning after all the rituals and ceremonies have been performed.

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