Law, Religion and the Family in Africa

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3 THE IMPACT OF WESTERN CULTURE ON THE BASOTHO FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THE EROSION OF AFRICAN VALUES IN LESOTHO

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INTRODUCTION

Communities all over the world have developed their own notions regarding the institution of family. Often such notions derive from numerous forms of thinking and communication that symbolise distinctive human creativity and resourcefulness. These notions are rooted in mythological accounts, philosophies, religious traditions and many other intelligent talents. This chapter reviews literature regarding the African family structure to retrace some of the values and systems which have sustained the foundations of families; it further investigates how the erosion of these values due to Westernisation has affected the African family and its survival with particular focus on the Basotho family structure and the *Ubuntu* ethic as context.

Values refer to fundamental aspects or philosophies, typically unique in nature, which are practised by a person or group of persons over a period of time; they encompass a set of beliefs about appropriate ways of behaving¹ in other words, the dos and don'ts dictated by those values to persons who subscribe to them. This chapter presents *Ubuntu* as the foundation of the African family traditions and practices.

Africans generally subscribe to the principle of *Ubuntu* and the maxims that have come to define it. The Basotho simply put it as "*motho ke motho ka batho*", while the Amazulu put it as "*untu ngumuntu ngabantu*!" Both simply translate to "a person is a person through other people."² A similar definition was adopted by justices of the Constitutional Court of South Africa in denouncing the death penalty in the case of *S v Makwanyane*, in which the court stated: "An outstanding feature of ubuntu in a community sense is the value it puts on life and human dignity. The dominant theme of the culture is that the life of another is at least as valuable as one's own."³

The emphases of *Ubuntu* are therefore communal and interdependent living, an understanding that every life is important, sharing and sacrifice. Cultural researcher Barbara Nussbaum captures the relationship between *Ubuntu* and African culture as follows: "Ubuntu is not a concept easily distilled into a methodological procedure.

1 Mafumbate R. 2010. "The Undiluted African Community: Values, the Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa", *Information and Knowledge Management* 9(8):7.

2 Louw D. 2001 "Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *Quest* XV (1-2):16.

3 *S v Makwanyane*, CCT 3/94, 262.

It is rather bedrock of a specific lifestyle or culture that seeks to honour human relationships as primary in any social, communal or corporate activity."⁴ This emphasises that African culture was founded on *Ubuntu*. Amongst these cultures, Nussbaum recognises the culture of welcoming a newly married couple by lending them a cow and a bull, which would then bear offspring, which would then belong to the newly-weds.⁵ The lenders were not remunerated for the cattle, but rather did this solely out of the kindness of their hearts. This goes to show the existence of *Ubuntu* in trying to uplift another without there being expectations of anything in return.

The *Ubuntu* concept is not foreign to Basotho as a people; it is in fact the very foundation of the Basotho nation. The Basotho nation grown diverse over the course of its history, with its main language birthed from a combination of languages of various African tribes and languages from other tribes also spoken in some regions of the country.⁶ The founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I, united numerous tribes without discrimination and servitude to make them into one nation.⁷ People of all kinds came from all corners to find shelter under Moshoeshoe due to his accepting nature, including even a group of cannibals who ate his grandfather Peete. Moshoeshoe forgave cannibals and lent them cattle in order to turn them from their ways instead of punishing them.⁸ Moshoeshoe has long been and major point of ethical reference for Basotho and has in this way become an influence in families and communities throughout the Basotho nation. Moshoeshoe's ways were a true example of *Ubuntu* – he did not discriminate against other clans and he did not believe in death as a form of punishment, thus showing his value for the lives of others. So, having a king this accepting and kind, even with regard to the cannibals who ate his grandfather, kindness became a trait dissolved into the growing nation and its institution of the family.

As this chapter goes on, it will become clear how the Basotho family was structured under King Moshoeshoe's leadership and how it relates to the rest of the surrounding community. The chapter will also explain the hierarchy that begins with the nuclear family and its relation to the extended family, its related clan and, finally, to the community as a whole. Above all, the chapter will examine the effects on Basotho family structure of its encounter with Western values and the concomitant erosion of African family values in Lesotho. Racheal Mafumbate, a professor, researcher and academic consultant in counselling and psychology, identifies a number of values as being characteristic of the traditional African family in a key article on comparative African family traditions. In this chapter, I examine these traditions

4 Nussbaum B. 2003. "African Culture and Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America", *World Business Academy Perspectives* 17(1):3.

5 Nussbaum, "African Culture and Ubuntu", 3.

6 Shillington K. 1987. *The History of Southern Africa*, Edinburgh: Longman, 44.

7 Rakotsoana R. 1996. *Religion of the Ancient Basotho with Special Reference to "Water Snake"*, Master's thesis, University of Cape Town, 12.

8 Shillington K. 1987. *The History of Southern Africa*, Edinburgh: Longman, 44.

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as practised by the traditional Basotho family, including hospitality and conflict management, which I elaborate on further in the chapter.

THE AFRICAN FAMILY AND WESTERNISATION

Lesotho, like all other African countries, went through its colonial times, which brought along Westernisation, which persists to date. Westernisation refers to the replacement of the lifestyle of the African people with the Western one through the introduction of Western laws, religion, values, technology and systems.⁹ The introduction of the Western way of life to the Basotho people changed their lives and made many of their practices henceforth impractical. This was due to colonial laws that penalised individuals and groups for these practices, industrialisation which separated families and other Western influences, all of which generally focused more on the prosperity of the individual than that of the collective. Over time, many traditions were lost, with many finding it hard to retrace them, as they are no longer practised daily and taught in schools.

The Western way of life ended up being entrenched in new education systems that were completely different from the traditional education to which the Basotho children were previously introduced. This meant that the passing down of these teachings from generation to generation was steadily reduced, until for many the Western way of life became the norm and the African way was lost.¹⁰ Basotho learnt their traditions through their daily activities, but as the Western occupiers dominated the region, many of these traditions were lost, as their daily lives changed. Many of these Western practices contradicted the African traditions founded on *Ubuntu*.

Due to industrialisation in the West, the Western family changed between the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The average family moved from a multi-generational to a nuclear family arrangement, as more and more children migrated to industrialised areas because they were enticed by the added financial freedom.¹¹ Being away from the extended family meant that social control, which came from the family and the community, was diminished, as people in the cities had no relations. This led to families focusing more on the nuclear family and the individual developing an identity outside the extended family, which further led to the individual focusing more on themselves and their nuclear family than the community around them.¹² This is clearly the opposite of what would be

9 Sibani C. 2018. "Impact of Western culture on traditional African society: problems and prospects", *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 10(1):59.

10 Mats'ela ZA. 2014. *The Indigenous Education of the Basotho and its Implications for Educational Development in Lesotho*, PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 30-32.

11 Magezi V. 2018. "Changing family patterns from rural to urban and living in the in-between: A public practical theological responsive ministerial approach in Africa", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(1):3.

12 Magezi V. 2018. "Changing family patterns from rural to urban and living", 3.

expected from a society that is guided by *Ubuntu*. With the West also bringing industrialisation and other Western practices to Africa, the African family was also bound to the same fate as the Western one.

UBUNTU AND AFRICAN COMMUNAL VALUES

There are many African traditions or values that are founded on *Ubuntu*, and its various dimensions and aspects. Amongst the notable persons who invoked the values of *Ubuntu* was Nelson Mandela. Mandela told a story of a stranger, who travelled across villages and was offered food and water without asking. According to Mandela, that sense of a community to care for and encompass individuals in the concept of *Ubuntu*.¹³ Desmond Tutu also described the person with *Ubuntu* as one who is open and available to others and who appreciates that harmony, friendliness and community are great goods.¹⁴ In African societies, senses of community, hospitality, generosity, and peaceful and humane conflict resolution are traceable characteristics of *Ubuntu*. As noted earlier, researcher Racheal Mafumbate has maintained that many African traditions are founded on these elements of *Ubuntu*, including traditions related to the family.

In the African traditional family, the community is the guardian of the individual; hence, the individual has to go where the community goes. As the common African proverb states, expressing this African communal sense, “it takes a village to raise a child”. This implies that the African idea of refuge and its value depended on personal identification with and within the community. In the traditional family, harmony was regarded as the most important value for all family members.¹⁵ The spirit of *Ubuntu* guides this form of communal living as members of the family recognise the need for one another and the importance of one another. Without the community the person is destitute and without belonging; this is even more so because fields, wells and other means of survival were owned communally.¹⁶ This way of life and the acceptance of *Ubuntu* as a key guiding principle leave no room for homelessness, unjust wealth gaps between people and poverty.

In the Basotho culture, King Moshoeshoe introduced the *matsema* and *mafisa* systems as ways to build a communal nation. In the former, the community engaged in work groups to tackle labour intensive responsibilities such as harvesting crops, threading roofing, and ploughing land to name a few.¹⁷ It is here where we can draw out a sense of oneness amongst Basotho during *matsema*, a sense of obligation

13 Odari M. 2020. “The Role of Value Creating Education and Ubuntu Philosophy in Fostering Humanism in Kenya”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education* 9(1):61.

14 Odari, “The Role of Value Creating Education and Ubuntu Philosophy”, 61.

15 Mafumbate, “The Undiluted African Community”, 8.

16 Columbus O. 2014. “African Cultural Values and Inter-communal Relations: The Case with Nigeria, Developing Country Studies”, *Developing Country Studies* 4(24):209.

17 Ts’iu WM. 2008. *Basotho Oral Poetry at the beginning of the 21st century*, PhD thesis, University of South Africa, 68.

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towards one another and even the spirit of *Ubuntu*. In the *mafisa* system, conversely, Moshoeshe was able to incorporate many people to increase his nation by accepting and lending out *mafisa* cattle.¹⁸ In this way, he was able to bind his people together and to himself as their king by lending them cattle. By this arrangement, thousands of impoverished commoners and chiefs during the turmoil and forced migration of *Lifaqane* benefitted sizeably.¹⁹

In the rural areas of Lesotho, the aforementioned systems are still very much practised, as opposed to the practices that now characterise Westernised urban areas. In other words, beliefs in these practices still persist, and there is a strong spirit of collaboration from family units, clans and at the village level. There still exists a hierarchy in the relations of the Basotho, starting from the surrounding community, clans, extended family and then the nuclear family. In Basotho culture, one always has a primary obligation towards their nuclear family, but also a role to play in the extended family according to custom and tradition.²⁰ Where the nuclear family was unable to provide for an individual or solve a crisis, the extended family would be obligated to assist the individual or their family, and the obligation would then fall to the clan and ultimately to the community, if not solved within the immediate family. This system was not only responsible for guardianship of the individual, but it was also meant to keep individuals accountable. This will be clearer when looking at the conflict resolution methods of Basotho. The Basotho family practised this way of life primarily in the pre-colonial period, but as the Western influence crept in, changes came about, and practices were lost in most parts of Lesotho in the twenty-first century. These changes will be explored later in this chapter.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES

As previously stated, African traditions are traceable to *Ubuntu*, including practices of hospitality, peaceful conflict management or resolution and sense of community. In each of these values, the legacy of *Ubuntu* is traceable. This section explores these traditions and values more closely.

Hospitality

Amongst the most paramount of African traditional values, building on the value of the community described in the previous section, is hospitality. African hospitality may be defined as an extension of generosity, given at will and without strings

18 Mofuoa KV. 2015. "The Exemplary Ethical Leadership of King Moshoeshe of Basotho of Lesotho in the Nineteenth Century Southern Africa", *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 5(3):26.

19 Mofuoa, "The Exemplary Ethical Leadership of King Moshoeshe of Basotho", 26. The *Lifaqane*, as it was known in the Sotho language, was a period of forced migration due to wars in Central and Southern Africa from 1820 to 1834. It had a devastating effect on families and communities in these regions. See Mensah ET. 2016. *The Mfecane and Its Effects*. Munich: GRIN.

20 Mats'ela, *The Indigenous Education of the Basotho*, 99-102.

attached.²¹ African hospitality is a dynamic aspect of existence in Africa in general, and it is one of the few features of ancient African culture that is still intact and strongly practised today by most Africans.

A sense of hospitality has long been characteristic of African values. As noted earlier, King Moshoeshoe of the Basotho nation welcomed into his land commoners who fled from their tribes, he fed and kept them safe, and those people ended up settling permanently in his land.²² The heads of the extended family also welcomed orphans into their families. This action was meant to strengthen the African idea that orphans were not foreigners in a community; hence, the African community put emphasis on the value of giving and sharing with others outside their own immediate families. This value is reflected in the Zimbabwe Shona's philosophy "*Chaibva chaora*", meaning that "food which has been cooked cannot be kept for a longer time for future use, it is already finished".²³ Instead of keeping the food for future use, it is seen as best to give the food those who need it within the community. This shows the emphasis not on selfish hoarding, but on being hospitable to others.

In Lesotho, a similar saying, "*sejo-senyane ha se fete molomo*", is common. It translates to "little food is not bigger than the mouth." The idea behind the saying is that people cannot refuse to share because they deem what they have to be little, and that the little that is available is also needed by the next person as much as the owner and should be shared accordingly. This shows an obligation to be hospitable even under difficult circumstances, as the next person is just as important as one's own self, as dictated by *Ubuntu*. It is the same sense of obligation in the abovementioned story told by Nelson Mandela, and it perfectly illustrates the nature of hospitality that is expected of an African. There is an expectation to feed and shelter strangers without there being any remuneration tied to the hospitality.²⁴

Conflict management and resolution

Nigerian historians Adeyinka Ajayi and Oluwafemi Buhari describe conflict as a circumstance in which a recognisable group of individuals – whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural or otherwise – is in conscious opposition to one or another recognisable group because of the pursuit of incompatible goals.²⁵ They add that conflict rises from the interaction of individuals who have partly incompatible ends, in which the ability of one individual to gain their end depends to a certain degree on the choice or decisions that other parties will make, which be resolvable, insolvable or even lead to violence under various circumstances.

21 Shillington K. 1987. *The History of Southern Africa*, Edinburgh: Longman, 44.

22 Mofuoa, "The Exemplary Ethical Leadership of King Moshoeshoe of Basotho", 27.

23 Mofuoa, "The Exemplary Ethical Leadership of King Moshoeshoe of Basotho", 26.

24 Mats'ela, *The Indigenous Education of the Basotho*, 30-32.

25 Ajayi AT and Buhari LO. 2014. "Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society", *African Research Review* 8(33):138-157.

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In the pre-colonial days, there were countless principles guiding conflict resolution in traditional African societies. Disputants who wanted their conflicts resolved had confidence in the tribunal that would resolve the dispute, and they willingly submitted themselves to the constituted authorities, a category that included elders, chiefs, priests and other community leaders. The conflicts could be interpersonal conflicts or inter-communal conflicts between communities and nations.²⁶ Methods of conflict resolution in traditional African communities, from the family to village level, included mediation, adjudication, negotiation and reconciliation.

Mediation is an old method of conflict management surrounded by confidentiality. It involves the non-coercive involvement of a mediator or mediators to reduce, overcome or bring a conflict to peaceful settlement. Mediators are sought from within the communities of the parties concerned. Elders are respected as trustworthy mediators all over Africa, because of their accumulated experiences and wisdom over the years of their lives. Their roles depend on traditions, circumstances and personalities. While in conversation with all parties, constituted authorities would then facilitate the process of adjudication of the case.²⁷ After the disputants had been convinced to terminate the dispute, peace was then restored. Conflict resolution provided an opportunity to intermingle with the parties concerned, with the hope of at least reducing the scope, intensity and effects of the conflict.

Nigerian social and education researchers Lawal Rasaki and Orunbon Olalekan note that in many African societies, people live in “two worlds”. They constantly try to live their traditional way of life, while at the same time being subjected to Western worldviews which have become far more dominant than their traditional worldviews. This is mostly attributable to colonialism, as it allowed the West to introduce their systems and ways of life to indigenous societies.²⁸ Most of these systems were widespread in the colonial days and have since lost ground with the advent of Westernisation, though some communities do continue to practise them to an extent.

In the Basotho nation, from the time of King Moshoeshe to this day, disputes have been reported to the village chiefs at *khotla* (chief’s court) to intervene and subsequently resolve. However, in the family, whether nuclear or extended, the head of the family is one who leads the intervention in order to come up with solutions. At *khotla*, members of the community all have a say and are allowed to actively participate in the proceedings using their common sense. Even a passer-by is welcome to join in and take part in the proceedings, as all people are seen as valuable enough to take part. The victim is also able to take part in the proceedings and air their frustrations in order for them to be heard, and the system is not so complex as to not be open to the average person.²⁹ The Basotho have a saying,

26 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 141.

27 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 140.

28 Rasaki L and Olalekan O. 2020. “Resolving Conflict in African Traditional Society”, *African Journal of History and Archaeology* 4(1):4.1

29 Pheko L. 2019, “Why the khotla system of justice is superior”, *The Post*, 10 December.

coined from the earliest days of *khotla*, “*moaa khotla ha a tsekisoe*”, which means every opinion is allowed before court. The system was aimed at restoring peace, while also being fair to the victim, which is one of the hallmarks of *Ubuntu*. It was intended not to vilify a person for their transgressions, but to try and preserve their dignity despite their transgressions. This is clearly indicative of the Basotho resolve to preserve *Ubuntu* in dispute resolution.

This same attitude can be observed in African societies in resolving family disputes. When a dispute arises within a family, the head of that family is the reference point for the resolution of that dispute.³⁰ African societies recognise that peace can only reign within the society if it is present within all families, in other words, that peaceful relations in the family must first exist in order for the members to be able to extend that same peace to the surrounding community.³¹ The heads of the families were the eldest members of the extended family, and they were responsible for dealing with disputes between wives, children, brothers and property or inheritance issues. While so doing, they were still bound by the founding principles of conflict resolution, particularly the need to protect relations and fairness.³²

STRUCTURES OF THE AFRICAN FAMILY

A typical African family used to be a large and extended one.³³ Marriage was taken as a good and serious vow, in that it is a covenant between two extended families and their villages. Values of “living together” and the sense of “community of brothers and sisters” are the foundation and expression of the extended family system in Africa. This setting assures social security for the poor, old, widowed and orphaned, and this socio-economic arrangement is reflective of deeply held values in the traditional African cultures. This aspect does not exist in the Western perspective, which is characterised by individualism and the nuclear family structure.

The term “family” is used by many Western sociologists and psychologists as synonymous with “nuclear family”, that is, mother, father and children. This definition reflects cultural values of the family in Western societies. The traditional African system, which encompasses grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, including family members from both sides of parents and even unrelated persons, is a much broader notion of “family”.³⁴ Mafumbate holds that a family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction.³⁵ The family structure plays a principal role in the development of a child, as children do

30 Mafumbate, “The Undiluted African Community”, 46.

31 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 141.

32 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 141.

33 Kanu GA. (2010). “The Indispensability of the Basic Social Values in African Tradition: A philosophical appraisal”, *African Health Sciences Journal* 7(5):125-138.

34 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 141.

35 Kanu, “The Indispensability of the Basic Social Values in African Tradition”.

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not develop into capable adults through family socialisation and not just through the development of their genetic makeup.

In Lesotho, where the Basotho are the dominant group, one may find that in a typical family there are biological children of the parents, one or two children from deceased relatives and a grandmother or grandfather, all of whom are being provided for by the head of the household, who is a man. In most African communities, a man has an obligation to care for the widow and orphans of his deceased relatives. Failure to do so would earn him strong public condemnation, and as a result, it was difficult to find someone in the community without help in traditional Basotho communities. In principle and often in practice, the extended family is an instrument for continued stability and support for the family and community at large. In traditional African culture, Mafumbate says that there were “no orphans”, because parentless children were cared for within the kin system.³⁶ The practice continues today, as more than 90% of orphaned children in the sub-Saharan Africa, Lesotho included, are cared for by relatives within the extended family unit.³⁷

As much as the idea of an extended family in African tradition used to work for all those involved, especially children, the system is currently crumbling because of factors such as HIV and AIDS, which often lead to the death of main breadwinners and extreme poverty for their families. As a result of the economic meltdown in Africa, few can afford to support extra children.³⁸ Those who take in orphans and other extra heads face increasing challenges leading to worsening poverty and failure to meet basic needs.³⁹

IMPACT OF WESTERN CIVILISATION ON AFRICA

As Nigerian political scientist Dare Arowolo has observed, “The historical background of Westernization in Africa is the contact with Europe through Atlantic slave trade, missionary and colonisation. The compulsory acculturation of the black populations in the New World, in full swing by the mid-eighteenth century, represents the first continual incorporation of Western culture by Africans. It is significant to note the contribution that blacks were later to make to the course of Westernization in Africa, particularly through their role in Christian evangelization and education.”⁴⁰ Arowolo further argues, “With Africa subdued and dominated, Western culture and the European approach of civilisation began to flourish and outgrow African cultural heritage. Traditional African cultural practices paved the way toward the foreign way of doing things, as Africans became fully ‘westernised’

36 Mafumbate, “The Undiluted African Community”, 9.

37 Mafumbate, “The Undiluted African Community”, 8.

38 UNICEF. 2006. *Africa's orphaned and vulnerable generations: Children Affected by AIDS*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2.

39 UNICEF, *Africa's orphaned and vulnerable generations*, 29.

40 Arowolo D. 2010. “The Effects of Western Civilisation and Culture on Sciences”, *Journal of Social Sciences* 1(1):1-9.

... African ways of doing things could then be seen as primitive, outdated and regrettably unacceptable in the public realm.”⁴¹ As Arowolo further observes, this resulted in material cultures being “lost or abandoned”, such as the traditional clothing of the *thethana* and *ts’ee* in Basotho. Wearing these as a Mosotho male or female became “indecent” for showing too much skin.⁴² Within families, elders now had to revise how members of all ages dressed. Colonial societies also lost power and a sense of cultural permanence, such that it became basically impossible to recover the ability to make every effort for cultural growth on their own terms.

The structure of family has greatly changed from the extended family to the nuclear family because of Westernisation. European colonisers resorted to the use of firearms to their advantage, resulting in Africans being exposed to Western values that are characterised by individual interests, with people regarded as nothing but a means to achieve individual ends.⁴³ In other words, the values of elders being the ones entrusted with solving small or big conflicts were no longer being practised, at least not on a large scale. As a consequence, Africans have become estranged from their culture, with the result that the values of community solidarity are not in practice.

With the achievement of independence, many African nations pursued with dynamism the policy of strengthening formal education of their citizens. This pursuit is exemplified by the push for urbanisation and industrialisation, resulting in the occurrence of great evacuation of youth to the cities.⁴⁴ As a result, there was a growing fragmentation of the extended African family. Education regarding social values came to be acquired by children from schools and interaction with their peers rather than through traditional instruments, which has lessened the ability of older people to employ social control over younger generations.⁴⁵ In this way, some traditional roles of the extended family have been altered, while others have almost been diminished.

In a better light, in Lesotho, there are some old values which are still very much in practice or service. We have the *matsema* system of King Moshoeshoe to reinforce the spirit of communalism and oneness, and there is still reliance on village chiefs at *khotla* to solve disputes prior to seeking the courts of law, a practice that remains

41 Arowolo, “The Effects of Western Civilisation and Culture on Sciences”.

42 The *ts’ee* is a garment made from sheep skin, cut out in a triangular shape and worn around the abdominal area, so as to cover genitals, while *thethana* is made from a leather band beaded and attached to shredded fibres of the indigenous gazania plant. The two clothing items only cover genitals and leave out the upper body, including breasts for girls.

43 See Khoza R. 1994. “The need for an Afrocentric approach to management – A South African based management approach”, in Christie P, Lessem R and Mbigi L (eds). *African Management: Philosophies, Concepts and Applications*. Pretoria: Sigma Press; UNICEF, *Africa’s orphaned and vulnerable generations*, 29.

44 Nwoye A. 2006. “A narrative approach to child and family therapy in Africa”, *Contemporary Family Therapy Journal* 28(1):1-23.

45 Ajayi and Buhari, “Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society”, 141.

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very effective, particularly at village level. The spirit of *Ubuntu* still lingers as well amongst the Basotho, who still take in parentless children, despite the current economic climate, and raise them accordingly into responsible adults.

CONCLUSION

From colonisation to the new independence era in Africa, *Ubuntu* has been eroded in the African family, with more emphasis on the preservation and promotion of the nuclear family and a lesser emphasis on the extended family. The hoarding of resources that came with the advent of industrialisation has caused divisions between communities and families and lessened an emphasis on *Ubuntu*; hence, the existence of the ultra-rich and the homeless in many African societies.

The average African is no longer heavily reliant on the extended family and is able to exist without them. While, for the individual who is self-sufficient financially this may be seen as an advantage, as it reduces their burden on extended family and society, this is not the case for others who faces life's hardships, such as little to no education, disability or unemployment. While Africa is becoming more and more Westernised, not everyone has been accommodated by the advantages of Westernisation. This means that such individuals are unable to depend on their family for support and are left to face these hardships on their own, as the sense of community and belonging has been lost.

As emphasis is no longer on the collective but instead on the individual, and not everyone feels the need to be hospitable to members of their extended family, as they likely have no relationship other than sharing blood. This is increasingly the case, because families no longer live in close proximity to one another and people have generally learnt to be less hospitable. It is no longer uncommon in Lesotho, and Africa as a whole, to find members of a family embroiled in disputes before courts of law. The courts are not eager to preserve or rescue familial relationships, but instead issue judgment in accordance with the law, irrespective of the harm that this may do. The elders are no longer the arbiters of family disputes in some cases.

Inasmuch as it introduced to Africans the advantages of modern technology, formalised education, and "decent" ways of dressing, Westernisation also dissolved the African traditional ways of doing things. While it is true that not every Mosotho or African has abandoned *Ubuntu* or the traditions that flow from it, it is unlikely that persons who subscribe to that mode of life will exist for long, as Westernisation further engulfs Africa and the traditions that Africans once commonly practised are only found in history books.