

Project name: Alternative History Project
Date of interview: 2008-02-25
Location of interview: Maandagshoek, Limpopo
Language of interview: Sotho
Name of Interviewer/s: Dale McKinley & Ahmed Veriava
Name of Interviewee/s: Joyce Kgwete
Name of translator: Emmanuel Mokgoga
Name of transcriber: Moses Moremi
Audio file name: AHP_MAA_KgweteJoyce_20080225

SECOND INTERVIEW WITH JOYCE KGWETE

Dale McKinley (DM): Joyce thank you once again for talking with us today. We want to continue from our last discussion with you and we want to talk more about certain things that you mentioned in the last discussion. Please just feel free ... it's like a conversation.

Joyce Kgwete (JK): Thank you.

DM: The first thing we want to know and please just tell us whatever it is ... in the previous discussion you mentioned a small portion about your family and your childhood. What we want to know is a little bit more about that. So, like for example, one question would be what was it like to live in, grow up in, a royal family? Was it different from the other kids when you were a child?

JK: No it was not difficult.

DM: Ok, what was it like? Tell us something a little bit more what it was like?

JK: Hum...

DM: Anything that you want to say ... it doesn't matter.

JK: It was not difficult for me because we were just attending the school like other children. The difference was that when people are having ceremonies they had to come to my family and report it. They were coming to invite us formally and tell us what they are going to do.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): Joyce, where was your father from, which area?

JK: He was from Manganeng in Skirnoord, just next to Jane Furse.

AV: And your mum?

JK: She was from Ga-Maphopha in Skirnoord.

AV: And do you know how your mum and dad came together? Did they meet or was it arranged for them?

JK: They have arranged so that they can meet.

AV: They have arranged?

JK: Yes.

AV: Was your mum also from a royal family?

JK: No ... just because my father was not the one who was supposed to marry the woman for the community.

AV: Can you tell us a little bit about your relationship with your parents?

JK: Yes they are my parents and they gave birth to me.

AV: How many kids were you?

JK: We were 7 and then 2 passed away.

AV: And then of the 7, how many were girls?

JK: Four.

AV: And were are you in the order of the 7 children? Are you the first born or last born?

JK: From this 7?

EM: Yes.

JK: I am number 4.

AV: And your brothers and sisters, where are they now?

JK: They are available.

AV: Are they also .. like, would your brother be a Kgosi somewhere or your sisters?

JK: No.

DM: Are they working normal jobs or are they living in a town like Joburg or other places?

JK: My sister is in Gauteng and my brother is at home.

AV: At home you mean?

JK: At Manganeng.

AV: And was your father a Kgosi?

JK: No, my father's brother was.

AV: And you know why I was asking about your relationship with your parents, did you get along well with your parents?

JK: Yes, I stayed with them until I came hear in Maandagshoek.

AV: But were you closer to your mum or your dad, who were you closer to?

JK: I was close to my mother because my father was working in Gauteng.

AV: What did your father do?

JK: He was working at ISCOR but I don't know what he was doing.

AV: At ESCOR, what did he do there?

JK: I don't know.

AV: And your mum was at home?

JK: Yes.

AV: When you were a child what did your parents say is going to happen to you when you grow up? Did they tell you ... did you already know that you would marry to become a Kgosi?

JK: No they didn't tell me.

AV: So what did you think for yourself?

JK: For been a Kgosi?

AV: No, when you were a child is there something that you thought ... ok, when I grow up this is what I'm going to be?

JK: I thought I was going to attend school like others and get the job and work.

DM: One of the other things that we want to know is what were you taught about your family's history? What kinds of stories did your parents tell you?

JK: I was only told that I'm from the tribe family and we are close to the chief.

DM: I'm sure that your family probably your mother or your father told you stories about your family and things that happened, do you remember any of those stories? Can you tell us one ... about some relative in the past who was a leader somewhere, you know?

JK: What kinds of stories?

EM: Whether if your relatives have ever been to war or they have been chiefs somewhere?

JK: No, I don't know anything.

AV: In your family, who would be the person who would be thought of as the greatest man or the greatest woman in your family?

JK: It was Kgosi Phaswana.

AV: And why would he be thought of as the greatest person in your family?

JK: Just because that when he was born everybody knew that he was going to be a leader.

AV: Ok it was by birth?

EM: Ja.

AV: And what did that mean, that he was going to be a leader? Why was he seen differently to the community?

JK: When a son is born and he is living in the rural area he will get respect from the community. Normally they will take him to somewhere where he will attend and finish

school (not with others in the community), then he will return when he will be introduced to the people as a leader.

DM: When you talked to us last Joyce you mentioned one brother that was involved in the liberation struggle. Were there any others of your brothers and sisters that were involved?

JK: Yes, they had been arrested.

DM: Can you tell us an example or any particular story about that?

JK: When my brothers were arrested it was in 1986 but I was still young and they were toyi-toying, demanding the release of comrade Nelson Mandela. They were fighting against the apartheid regime to replace it with the ANC.

AV: And what did your parents think of this?

JK: I don't know because they never explained to me.

AV: And yourself ... what did you think?

JK: By that time I was still young, I just saw soldiers running up and down, so I can't remember anything.

AV: And you don't remember what your thought was happening?

JK: I can't remember but I thought they were fighting for the release of Comrade Ntate Mandela.

AV: Were you afraid?

JK: I was only afraid of the soldiers.

DM: Joyce how do you remember .. I mean this was the struggle ... how do you remember the relationship between the royal family that was there and the apartheid authorities ... was it a very, in other words not just your brother or someone in your family - was there a good relationship or a bad one?

EM: Can you come again?

DM: I want to find out that what was the relationship between the royal family and the apartheid authorities at that time?

JK: In most cases there were no good communication even if I can't remember well.

AV: And with the Homeland government?

EM: And?

AV: Homeland government, Bantustan?

JK: There was no good relationship because the secretary of the Moshate, they were not getting paid and also Moshate were buying books for themselves; so, they were not getting any assistance from anyone.

DM: Some others have told, we have talked with couple of people here in Maandagshoek, they have told us that the old days, the pre-1994 days, were better for the

Bapedi in terms of respect, in terms of the culture and everything else. Do you agree with that, what do you think as opposed to after 1994?

JK: Then, it was good because there were none of these mines that there are oppressing people.

AV: Do you think that the culture of the Bapedi was respected (at that time)?

JK: Yes.

AV: And now?

JK: No, now they are not respecting the culture of the Bapedi because of the rights. (All Laughing)

AV: Explain?

JK: By that time Kgosi was not going to the community ... the messengers were the ones who go to the community and hear their needs and bring the messages to the Kgosi and Kgosi responded. So now, Kgosi goes to the community and then people ask him straight questions.

DM: Maybe you can tell us a little bit more about your arranged marriage, you said that maybe that was not such a good thing at that time because you wanted to go to school and you wanted to become, have a career. So, how is it that you see for yourself, did you think that you had a duty to do these things or would you rather have done something else as opposed to being a Kgosi?

JK: I didn't like to be a Chief, but I was told.

AV: When you are saying you were told, who told you?

JK: When I was growing up, I was still in standard 7 and my father went to Maandagshoek and when he came back he said the chief of the Maandagshoek wants to marry a wife for the people of Maandagshoek and then chief Phaswana (related to Joyce) told my father that just because you are next to the chief is better for your daughter to marry the chief.

AV: And did you say anything to your father?

JK: Yes.

AV: What did you say?

JK: When he arrived to tell me that there are people in Maandagshoek who are looking for a wife, I asked him why are they looking for a wife so far and then he told me that they are from the royal family and you know that you are also from the royal family and I was speaking to your uncle Phaswana and he said you should go there because even the first wife was from here in Manganeng.

AV: We want to come back to this, but at that time what kinds of things were you interested in?

EM: You mean?

AV: Like she was saying she was in standard 7, what kind of things was she doing, was she interested in boys or was she interested in playing with friends?

JK: I was interested in playing.

AV: What kinds of things did you do with your friends?

JK: I liked to play netball but when at school there was athletics I was also running, I did different things at school.

AV: Do you remember who your best friend was at that time?

JK: Yes.

AV: Who was she or he?

JK: Tiny Makwana.

AV: Are you still friends?

JK: Yes. (Laughing).

AV: At that time what did you tell Tiny what was happening?

EM: By the time?

AV: When she was told that she must come to Maandagshoek to marry, what did she tell her friend?

JK: I told her that my friend I have been told that I have a man in Maandagshoek.

DM: How did you feel about ... you were saying you didn't, maybe you didn't want to, how did you feel about what you wanted to do at that time as a young girl?

JK: I told Tiny about the whole situation so that maybe together we can come up with the plan.

AV: Did you come up with the plan?

JK: She just told me to respect and obey what my parents are telling me.

AV: And then were you sad about what was happening?

EM: She was...?

AV: Sad or depressed?

JK: After they told me I cried.

AV: On the day that you actually got married how did you feel?

JK: I was already accepting and feeling free and I told myself that there is nothing that I can do.

AV: Did they come and fetch you from your home and bring you to Maandagshoek or did your family bring you?

JK: They came to fetch me and then my family accompanied us.

DM: So Joyce this story of yours of being married and arranged marriage, this is part of the culture?

JK: Yes.

DM: Now you were saying no, as a young child you wanted maybe to do something else, maybe go back to school and become a teacher, a nurse or something else. So how does that make you feel about the domain of culture on your own personal desires?

JK: I was thinking of going to school, but after marriage I thought that it was going to be useless because the community was not going to allow me to work. For my side I wanted to become a nurse or a teacher, as one of my brothers is a teacher.

AV: Do you have children?

JK: Yes I have only one.

AV: A girl?

JK: Ja.

AV: And then if someday the Kgosi comes to you and says your daughter needs to go and marry to another village, what will you say?

JK: These things are difficult. I really can't agree because my daughter cannot lead the people, she can't open the initiations school for the community, even myself it is difficult for me.

AV: What makes it difficult, what did you find that makes it difficult?

JK: To lead the people is difficult.

AV: Sorry, what I mean is...what does it mean to lead the community? What aspects of it does she find difficult?

JK: To be a leader needs a strong heart, you will get insult from the others. When you are doing this they will tell you that what you are doing is wrong whereas you thought you were going at the right direction, so really it is difficult to lead the community.

AV: And yourself, do you have a strong heart?

JK: Yes I believe that I have a strong heart because since from 1997 and I'm still struggling.

AV: And who are those people in the community that have supported you the most here as a leader in this difficult task?

JK: What kind of community?

EM: You mean?

AV: Have you felt supported by the community in what you are doing?

JK: Yes, the parents are supporting me.

AV: The parents?

EM: Yes.

AV: Is there anyone who is not supporting you, where you believe that these people, they just want to see you fail?

JK: Yes, there are.

AV: And then what kinds of things do they do?

JK: They are insulting me.

AV: When you are saying insulting you ... like how?

JK: They are saying I'm not here in Maandagshoek to lead the community, I'm just a lady and I'm nothing.

AV: Do you feel that because you are a lady Kgosi is sometimes ... do you think it's more difficult for a lady Kgosi than a man?

EM: To be?

AV: To be a leader?

JK: Yes it is difficult when you are a lady and it's better if you are with your husband.

DM: So did you find it easier when you first came here to marry with Ralph right, and then you are now separated and you are on your own ... did you find it easier before or...

JK: It was the same because he was not respecting me.

DM: And how do you think generally ... as a traditional authority like yourself from where you are coming from and some people support you but other people don't ... how do you think people here look at the traditional authority in the new South Africa?

JK: They look at it with respect.

DM: Generally people are respecting tribal authorities?

EM: Yes.

DM: Do you think Joyce that in this democracy, you know we fought ... that democracy and modern traditional authority can go together?

JK: Yes, they go together.

DM: And why? Can you just explain why are you saying that?

JK: Like now when the mines are coming here they can't just go and start to dig, they will first approach the chief.

AV: In the work that you do, in leading the community do you feel supported by government? Do you think government respects the traditional leaders of this area?

JK: Yes, they respect and support us the traditional leaders.

AV: And what kinds of supports do you get from the government?

JK: They are supporting because other traditional leaders who are recognised get paid and they get books from the government.

DM: In the previous interview you mentioned that there were a divide between Contralesa and Sediba Sa Bokgosi?

JK: Yes.

DM: How does that tension, that conflict between those two play out with government relations?

JK: Sediba Sa Bokgosi is not recognised and Contralesa is being recognised and they are getting money, cars and books from the government. Sediba Sa Bokgosi they are not recognised and they are still waiting for the commission.

AV: And yourself, what are you hoping to come out of that commission?

EM: You mean to Joyce straight or generally?

AV: No I just mean generally in terms of what she is doing in this community by leading the people?

JK: I believe that the outcome of the commission will be those traditional leaders that were oppressed by the government, they would be recognised as traditional leaders, because those who are recognised now they are there because of the Raleshai commission.

AV: When you are saying commission of Raleshai, explain to us about that commission?

JK: The commission of Raleshai was not straight to everybody; they were not coming to the chiefs so when you make applications and then they take your applications and then they gave you a seat, so it was not straight.

AV: When was this?

JK: I can't remember but it was in the 80s.

AV: But it was under the old government?

JK: Yes.

AV: And then when you are saying that those who have been recognised are those that had seats and those who are unrecognised are those who were oppressed by the government ... hen you are saying the apartheid government oppressed the traditional leaders what do you mean?

JK: Let me give an example of Kgosi Mamphahlane. They were fighting for their farms against the white people, the white people were occupying their land, so that's why I'm saying we were oppressed by the government.

DM: Joyce what do you think about most other chiefs in this area, do you have good relationships with the other chiefs?

JK: In Maandagshoek?

EM: Do you mean in Maandagshoek?

DM: No just in the area?

JK: Yes, there are some that we are working together.

DM: Do you think most of the traditional leaders are good people or do you think they are just what we call maybe bad leaders?

JK: Those that I'm working with them they are good but maybe it's because the government has not recognised us and we only meet at the meetings. So you can't know someone better like that, we are just believing that maybe they are just good people.

AV: And you know you are saying there are certain traditional leaders that you work with ... are there certain traditional leaders that you are in conflict with as well?

JK: No I don't have any tension with anyone.

AV: Not specifically to you but more generally, do you think that because there are two different unions of traditional leaders that are in conflict in Limpopo?

JK: I don't know anything because here we don't have a problem with anyone and we are working together.

AV: I want to take you more a little bit back; it might be a difficult question and if you don't want to speak about it we understand. Yourself and Ralph got married ... what happened, what was the reason that led to you guys splitting up? And how long were you together before you split up?

JK: I stayed with Ralph from 1997 until 2002. At that time I was not already married, I was married in 1998. I stayed with Ralph in his family; there was no good relationship between us. He was always threatening to kill and I didn't know what I have done to him. Then the family members of the Kgwete then said if your man does not respect you we have the right to take you out because he is not the Kgosi, he is the one who was supposed to respect you because you are the one who is going to give birth to the Kgosi because his family is not from the royal family.

AV: Then after you spoke to Kgwete is that when you moved?

JK: I moved out and I went back home.

AV: And then you went back home?

JK: Yes.

AV: And then when did you come back to Maandagshoek?

JK: In 2004.

AV: And how come you came back from home?

JK: The community came to fetch me.

AV: What did the community say when they came to fetch you?

JK: The community told me that I must come back and they will build a house for me ... because they married me and Ralph does not mean he has the right to threaten me because he did not marry me.

AV: What was the reason why the community said they want you back ... why did they say they want you back?

JK: The first reason is that the community wants to see itself having a leader and the second reason was that the community did not want to marry a woman that they are not staying with them, so they wanted to see me here because they have married me.

AV: And how did you feel about it?

JK: I felt that the community of Maandagshoek cares about me and they didn't want to lose their money so that's why they wanted me to come back.

AV: In terms of, because now Ralph is also a Kgosi right, he was considered as Kgosi?

JK: The community was calling him Kgosi because at that time there was no leader.

AV: What is the relationship between yourself and Ralph; do people still take Ralph as a Kgosi?

JK: Yes.

AV: What is the relationship now because the two of you are split and you are Kgosi and he is?

JK: Relationship with whom?

EM: Do you mean relationship with the community or with Ralph?

AV: With Ralph.

JK: We are no longer working together.

AV: We have seen when first we came here that many people saw Ralph working with the mines and yourself working with the community, is that correct?

JK: Yes, it is still in that way.

AV: Did that create conflict?

JK: Yes.

AV: Give us an example?

JK: Those people who are still behind him are following him because they just want money from the mine; they know that Ralph is no longer a chief, so they follow him because they just want to sell the community.

DM: Joyce ... you have talked about the things you mentioned in the previous conversation the kinds of things that you have to do as a Kgosi. Describe the average day for you, you know when I'm saying an average day I mean when you wake up in the morning ... what kinds of things do you do during the day?

JK: I wake up and be around here waiting for anyone who would come looking for help.

DM: So you wait for the people to come to you?

JK: Yes.

AV: Outside of the stuff that you do as Kgosi, what do you do ... just describe a normal day for your self Joyce?

EM: What?

AV: Like for instance with me, in the morning I get up, I make breakfast and then I go switch on my computer, work on it and then I will do something else, I mean like that?

JK: When I wake up I just do women's job, I take the broom and sweep the floor and do the cleaning.

AV: So when you get up the first thing you do is you clean and then after that?

JK: I make tea and drink it.

DM: So describe the day but not just one, all the way to the end?

JK: Laughing. They are the same and I just do one thing everyday.

DM: Joyce what kinds of other things do you enjoy doing during your time, I mean that you are Kgosi you are here ... do you have any hobbies, do you have anything that you do for yourself and with other women here, other things that you do?

JK: I go to the society and also I attend the church also.

AV: What society?

JK: Burial society.

AV: And how often do they meet?

JK: Once a month.

AV: And you go to church also?

JK: Friday/Sunday and Wednesday.

AV: So three times a week?

JK: Yes.

AV: Is there a lot of activities as part of the church here?

JK: Yes.

AV: Describe some of those activities?

JK: Laughing. There are a lot of activities, there is a church on Friday, then on Wednesday is for the women and then on Sunday is a full service.

DM: What church did you go to?

JK: St. Engenas (ZCC).

AV: In church, because you are out of Maandagshoek where you are a traditional leader, is there the kind of place for the traditional leader in the church?

JK: Yes.

AV: Can you explain to us?

JK: When we are in Moria City, leaders don't mix with the rest of the church members, there is a special place for them, where they bath with hot water, they cook food for them, and they sleep on bed.

AV: Earlier you mentioned that one of the things you are worried that your daughter won't be able to do ... would be to open the initiations school. Tell us about whatever you can what those are about, that aspect of traditional life in Maandagshoek is about?

JK: Now we have stopped them because of the tension that is going on here but the ancestors want them.

AV: You stopped the initiation schools?

EM: Yes.

AV: What was the conflict?

JK: We decided to stop that because you can't take the children and put them on the mountains when people are fighting and it can happen that those children can get killed then I will take the responsibility of that, so I felt is better to stop those initiation schools.

AV: And now people are fighting?

JK: Yes, they are fighting because of the mines.

AV: Do you mean fighting against each other some people supporting the mines and others are not?

JK: They are fighting because others are supporting the mines and others are not and when you take children to the circumcision they will just come to do bad things with them with the intention to make you talk or do something.

DM: Just few more questions. Now who are your favourite people in South Africa, who do you think about, who do you look up to?

JK: My daughter.

DM: Is there anyone outside your family, anyone who you think this is a good person, I like them, they are good leaders or they are doing good things?

JK: As a leader I think it is better not to choose ... so it is better to love all the people.

DM: Is there anyone outside this community that you think you don't like very much?

JK: Laughing. I don't divide people maybe they don't like me but I love them all.

DM: Joyce what do you think about what happened in Polokwane in the ANC and the changes there ... what do you think about this in the last 7 months, the change in the leadership.

JK: I don't know politics issues.

DM: Ok one thing is that, this is just a conversation; many people in this community will think of you as a politician because you are a traditional leader, and maybe you are a

politician and maybe a lot of people are not sure how to say it ok let's leave it. The other question I have Joyce is do you see your future as a Kgosi or if not would you like to change and do other things?

JK: It can't be possible for me to change and do other things; I will always remain as Kgosi.

AV: In terms of your daughter, your favourite person in the world, what do you want for her?

JK: I want to see her attending school and educated and after that having a better life.

AV: When you are saying a better life, we hear that often ... you know people say we want a better life. For someone living in Maandagshoek what does a better life look like?

JK: The one who went to school, working for himself, the one who don't demand anything from anyone.

AV: And for a girl would it be important if she gets married?

JK: No that is not important.

AV: What's more important than that?

JK: The important thing is to go to school, work and do everything that she wants.

AV: Just an honest question right, we know sometimes people, let's say for a girl, for men they must go out and get a job and earn a living you know, for girl she must find a good man and raise children. What do you think of that view of the differences between men and women?

JK: I'm not against the idea of having children that she can decide on herself. What I'm saying is that she must go to school.

Thank you

Minutes 79:42

