

An Anthropological Investigation of Sotho Worldviews, Myths and Stereotypes Attached to Immigrants in Lesotho, Southern Africa

Emeka E. Obioha¹ and Nete Khoanyane²

¹*Department of Safety and Security Management, Tshwane University of Technology,
Private Bag X680 Pretoria 0001, South Africa
E-mail: eeobioha@yahoo.com*

²*Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, National University of Lesotho,
P.O. Roma 180, Lesotho*

KEYWORDS Migration. Immigrants. Local Perceptions. Sotho. Southern Africa

ABSTRACT It is universal for different societies of the world to attach myths and stereotypes towards strangers and people of other cultures. It should be noted that some of these myths are as a result of the historical experiences and encounters. The main assumption of this study is that generally, there are myths and stereotypes that are associated with foreigners in all human societies, in which case the Sotho of Southern Africa are no exception. However, the curiosity to know and document the extent to which this inclination really holds in daily interaction between foreigners and local population in Lesotho motivated this study. The population of this study consists of residents of *Hata-Butle* in Roma valley, near the National University of Lesotho. It is mainly characterized of homogeneous attribute 'local residents', from where a representative sample of twenty individuals which cuts across social categories was purposively selected. A combination of indepth and key informant interview methods was used as the efficient technique of collecting the required data. The study found mixed feelings of responses from the interviewees, which range from negative to positive notions. However, most of the negative notions were held comparably stronger than the positive ones. Immigrants have been described in various ways, including being labeled as "*makoerekoere*" and perceived as interlopers, opportunists, undesirable, witches, cheats, women snatchers among others. In addition, specific notions and stereotypes about different nationals, such as Zimbabweans, Nigerians, Chinese, Indians and the Whites were revealed. The conclusion suggests a need to strengthen the positive notions about these immigrants in Lesotho, owing to their highly quantifiable contributions to the economy of the country and that of Southern Africa in general.