

**Just as European Courtroom Lawyers Use Previous Cases,
Participants in Northern Sotho Argue with Proverbs Intended
to Serve as Past Precedents for Present Actions**

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ABSTRACT The paper discusses the value and relevance of proverbs in terms of reaching a convincing decision on judicial matters among the Northern Sotho people of South Africa. The paper argues that the proverbs are indispensable in settling differences among the Northern Sotho people. The advent of modern judicial systems has not negatively affected the effectiveness of proverbs in this regard. Proverbs explain some important aspects of social systems as far as Northern Sotho is concerned. They build and legitimize a particular kind of social order. The paper argues that what is true of a society's values is also true of its political symbols, images, ceremonies and collective self-understanding. The paper also shows that proverbs give the members of a society a sense of rootedness, existential stability and a feeling of belonging.