

Harriet Sibisi Ngubane is South Africa's first Black

Woman anthropologist.

1. Harriet had a Christian upbringing and education at the Marion Hill Mission near Durban. She had later to rediscover the traditional beliefs of her people the Zulu's and their attitude to misfortune and disease in particular. She had to overcome some negative ideas about traditional customs and way of life before she could make valuable anthropological studies about her people. *She was born in 1926* Harriet taught *at Inchanga* for a number of years at Marionhill before registering for a BA at the University of Natal with Social Anthropology as one of her subjects. Her interest in the subject grew when she played the role of interpreter for her professor Eileen Krige who was doing research among the Zulu people of the Valley of a Thousand Hills near Durban. *She graduated in 1958*
2. *Cartoon Harriet interpreting for Eileen Krige in the Valley (graduated in 1961)* Harriet was the first black woman to take a honours degree in Social Anthropology in South Africa. She was not allowed to do further post-graduate study because of her race and as no post was available for her in Anthropology she had to return to teaching at Marion Hill but she continued to do field work amongst the Zulus of the Valley of a Thousand Hills in the field of the treatment of disease and misfortune. She had to observe many ceremonial rites and people seeking advice from the isangoma (diviner). During this time she had also to attend to her husband and seven children.

cartoon - Harriet watching the isangoma interview his clients.

3. Fortunately for Harriet she was able to pursue her career because a visiting lecturer from Cambridge Meyer Fortes was impressed by her work and invited her to become a Doctoral Student at Cambridge University in 1970. This was a tremendous break for Harriet and she completed her thesis 'A study of health and disease in Nyaswa-Zulu thought and practice' in 1972. She returned to South Africa in 1973 to take up a fellowship for research in the Institute of Social Research at Natal University (now CAS). A year later she was invited by Selly-Oak colleges in Birmingham to take up a temporary post as lecturer in Zulu religion. This was followed by a fellowship entitling her to do her own work at Oxford University. In 1976 she held another temporary lecturing post at the University of Edinburgh and last year she was granted a research post at the School of Oriental and African Studies London to conduct Anthropological research in South Africa for two years. Harriet who was described by her former professor *Eileen Krige* as 'charming', impressive, confident but also humble and patient has made through her field work studies amongst the Zulu a considerable contribution to understanding of the traditional concepts of misfortune and disease, helped of course by her fluency to speak the language and the rapid acceptance of her by the communities she worked with.
- 3 Harriet lecturing at *one of the most highly qualified women in SA.* the University of Edinburgh.