

**SEPEDI ORAL POETRY WITH REFERENCE TO KIBA TRADITIONAL
DANCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

by

TEBOGO DAVID MAAHLAMELA

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR RUSSELL H. KASCHULA

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR NTOMBOMZI R. MAZWI

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Introductory

Declaration:

I declare that “**Sepedi Oral Poetry with reference to Kiba Traditional dance of South Africa**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Signature

TEBOGO DAVID MAAHLAMELA

19/03/2018

Date

Acknowledgements

I chiefly thank the God of ThabaSione, the mighty God of Engenas, Edward, and Barnabas Lekganyane whom I am enormously indebted for all I deem accomplishment. I thank my three special guardian angels.

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My warm gratitude is extended to my former colleague, Lesiba Ledwaba, who inspired my interest in *kiba* artform; the same goes to my supportive family and relatives. *Ke a leboga*.

Dedication

In memory of my elder sister, Matšie Lydia Maahlamela,
Mmanoko Lorrain Semenya and Matshediso Aletta Motimele

*As a means of revealing collective identity, art should be considered
an article of prime necessity, not a luxury.*

Eduardo Galeano

*Don't only practise your art, but force your way into its secrets
for it and knowledge can raise men to the Divine.*

Ludwig van Beethoven

*I have a dream [...] of a day when children of our land will be taught
the true history of their forefathers and the true
history of the Zion Christian Church.*

Barnabas Edward Lekganyane

*Consider now, for the LORD has chosen
you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work.*

1 Chronicles 28:10, NIV

*Call to me, and I will answer you; I will tell you
wonderful and marvellous things that you know nothing about.*

Jeremiah 33:3, NIV

*Write, therefore, what you have seen, what
is now and what will take place later.*

Revelation 1:19, NIV

*Certain people, events, and books come to you
when they must, at their precise moment in history.*

Sandra Cisneros

Abstract

Previous studies show that contrary to other African languages of fewer speakers, written poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa's transition from oral to written did not only lag behind, its development was also slow, with less intense treatment. However, this scarcity is not of the actual oral material, but rather its documented version. Vast untreated material at various repositories such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) library and the International Library of African Music (ILAM) are facing a risk of being lost due to limited resources and resourcefulness to digitalise them. Investigation of written poetry from 1906 to 2006 attests to the fact that in its written form, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry is still underdeveloped, dominated by "microwaved" collections aiming at nothing beyond meeting school prescription criteria.

Calls have been made from the dominant South African poetry narrative that there are no innovative studies in the field of African languages, especially Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. Musicological studies show that contemporary jazz artists have adopted and adapted *kiba* poetry into jazz music, which resulted into classics of all times. Intensive studies were conducted on such poetic *kiba*-influenced jazz, but the primary source remains a grey area.

The analysis of selected *kiba* poems shows that *kiba* poetry is the richest poetic form in the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa with its creative and artistic merit exceeds all other genres. The study further reveals that *kiba* poetry is the heart of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa spirituality, a heart without which some faith institutions will remain incomplete. Furthermore, *kiba* poetry embodies, among others, poetic genres rarely explored in the South African poetry milieu such as "sound poetry" and poetry of special metrical schemes, of dramatic and devotional essence. Scholarly attention is, therefore, recommended on this repertoire to explore the field beyond this preliminary study, so as to save as many *kiba* poems as possible, which will enrich the dwindling written poetry milieu. Literary excellence of the treated poems attests to the fact that the artistic wealth of *kiba* poetry is worthy of attention, and it has potential to transform not only the face of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, but of the entire South African poetry landscape.

Kakaretšo

Dinyakišišo tša baahlaahli ba bangwe di laetša gore ge go bapetšwa le maleme a mangwe a go bolelwa ke batho ba mmalwa, phetolelo ya thetopolelo go ya go thetongwalwa ya segagešo ga ya diega fela, eupša le tšwelopele ya yona e a nanya, ebile ditshekatsheko tša go tsenelela ke tše mmalwa. Le ge go le bjalo, ga se thetopolelo yeo e hlaelelago, ke fela phetolelo ya yona go thetongwalwa. Mekgobokgobo ya digatišwa tšeo di bego bokgobammino bja Lekgotlakgašo la Afrika Borwa (SABC) le Bokgobammino bja Bodišhabatšhaba la Mmino wa SeAfrika (ILAM) di lebane le tlhotlo ya go ka lobwa ka lebaka la hlokego ya dilotadigatišo tša sebjale le bafetoledi. Nyakišišo ya thetongwalwa ya magareng ga 1906 le 2006 e a hlatsela gore tlhabollogo ya thetongwalwa e sa hlaelela, ebile e tletše ka dika-puku-theto tšeo di šeditšego fela go fihlelela dinyakwa tša bohlaola-puku-tša-sekolo.

Thuto ya thutelammmino e laetša gore borammmino ba tšese ya sebjale ba thopile le go hlamaleswa thetokiba go ba mmmino wa tšese woo o feditšego o le mminomamoratwa wa mohlakamotala. Dinyakišišo tše tseneletšego di dirilwe ka tšese yeo ya go hlohleletšwa ke thetokiba, efela ga go thuto ye e dirilwego ka pulamadibogo ye, kibatheto. Tshekatsheko ya diretokiba tšeo di kgethilwego e laetša gore thetokiba ke theto ye humilego ya boleng le bokgabo bjo lokelwago ke go bitšwa theto-komang-ka-nna lelemeng la Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa.

Nyakišišo ye e buša e tšweletša gore thetokiba ke motheo wa semoya go Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, motheo woo ntle le wona ditumelo tše dingwe di ka se felelele. Go feta fao, thetokiba e na le mehutatheto yeo e sa atago thetong ya Afrika Borwa bjalo ka thetomodumo le theto ya dinokwana tša go ikgetha, theto ya seterama ya thapelo. Go hlohleletšwa dinyakišišo legorong le la thuto go tsenelela go feta nyakišišo ye ya makgoraditsela, gore go phološwe diretokiba ka bontši ka fao go kgonegago, tšeo di tlilego go nontšha thetongwalwa ye e fokolago. Bokgwari bja direkto tše di sekasekilwego bo hlatsela gore boleng bja thetokiba bo swanelwa ke šedi ya go ikgetha, ka ge e ka kgona go fetola sebopego sa theto ya Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, le theto ya Afrika Borwa ka bophara.

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Abbreviations

AIC	African initiated church
AOC	African originated church
APB	Afrikaanse Per Boekhandel
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AU	African Union
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BACUM	Bapedi Culture and Music
BMS	Berliner Mission Society
CRL	Culture, Religion, and Language Commission
Dk.	Dinaka
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
EdD	Doctor of Education
EMI	Electric and Music Industries (Records)
EQ	Emotional Intelligence
FM	Frequency Modulation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFP	Inkata Freedom Party
ILAM	International Library of African Music
IQ	Cognitive Intelligence
LEBADI	Lekgotla la Bangwadi ba Dipuku
LP	Long Play
Med	The first Physician degree
Msc	Master of Science
NAC	National Arts Council
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Naspers	Nasionale Pers

NHC	National Heritage Council
NKJV	New King James Version
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADE	Southern African Developed Countries
SALA	South African Literary Awards
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SL	Source Language
SQ	Spiritual Intelligence
TV	Television
TL	Target Language
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WSD	World Sustainable Development
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

Chapters

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

1.1. Introduction

Oral poetry, the highest and richest artform, is the heart of oral tradition in various parts of southern Africa. Recent studies identify the somewhat fading artform of *kiba* as a poetic wealth through which Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa of the northern part of South Africa express their various religions. The unmatched function of poetry in socio-politics is self-evident, but its special and crucial role in spirituality seem unclear. Notably, in addition to cultural, historic, and socio-political significance, there is insufficient evidence in studies demonstrating artistic and creative merit that attests to the need to preserve traditional oral poetry such as *kiba* poetry. Most of the “returning to self” type of studies turn to substitute literary merit with cultural or socio-political relevance as if the two on their own constitute strong literature. To reclaim that which is lost, or to guard that which is under threat, one has to, firstly know, evaluate and calculate its worth. This chapter explores challenges facing *kiba* poetry, poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, and the language itself, especially their development, or lack thereof.

1.2. Hypothesis

At the beginning of the 19th century, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa language, literature, and literary criticism were deemed unexplored, if not undeveloped. Languages of lesser speakers such as Sesotho and Setswana seemed to have done well such that they produced wordsmiths such as Sol Plaatje and Thomas Mofolo who attracted literary critique even beyond these languages. Some missionary scholars who had limited access to Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa went to the extent of describing such language and literature as lacking in artistic and creative quality. The language on the other hand, in addition to its slow pace of development, remained trapped in an unresolved naming dispute. Although other Sotho languages benefited tremendously from the missionary literary heritage, the Berlin missionaries at Botšhabelo concerned themselves more with power dynamics, and less with interest in artistic, cultural or anthropological aspects of their converts.

Unlike the Hermannsburg missionaries, and in pursuit of their particular vision of evangelisation, the Berlin missionaries were mainly interested in outstanding religious individuals, and in creating culturally homogenous groups and communities-in-the-making – rather than in territory. The greatest expectations revolved around the Christianisation of the Pedi Kingdom, as it seemed to hold out the possibility of creating a politically and culturally united nation or ethnic Pedi church and site (Rüther, 2012:378).

It was in 1933 that a call was made to urge custodians of the language to play a lead role in the process of collecting oral artforms. This resulted in the 1935 pioneering of both the first poetry collection and biography. Since then, the growth seemed to be slower, thus in 1946 Jabavu said, “we may sum up by saying this literature is in its infancy” (Jabavu, 1943:5). Such assessment has to, however, emphasise that this only refers to the written form, not the oral. It is self-evident that the distinction between oral and written artforms, especially poetry, is often exaggerated. In most instances, there is just no further distinction beyond the self-descriptive verbal and text. It is, therefore, important to assess poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa holistically.

Kiba artform, the heart and soul of oral tradition of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, has received considerable anthropological and musicological attention, yet its literary aspects remain an uncultivated field. Significant studies were conducted in the field, exploring aspects of dance, songs, drama, and music. These studies reveal that the fifth element of the artform is poetry, yet due to scope limitations, none of the studies has given exhaustive scrutiny to the *kiba* poetic element. *Kiba*, as a traditional dance that incorporates several other artforms, forms part of irreplaceable Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa practices for, among others, rituals and recreation.

Eminent scholars such as R.I. Makena (1987), Willem Pretorius (1988), Rebecca Petje (1998), Deborah James (1999), Sello Galane (2009), Annekie Joubert (2004), Lesibana Rafapa (2013; 2016), Geoff Mapaya (2013; 2014), are some of those who explored the four aforementioned aspects of *kiba*. Although many have argued that African artforms are worth mainstreaming,

only a few have fruitfully demonstrated their merit beyond cultural significance. In his doctoral dissertation, Galane (2009) reveals that a prominent jazz maestro, Philip Tabane confessed to having adopted and adapted *kiba* poetry into complementary jazz songs.

Kiba poetry is poetry associated with, or enthused by, the *kiba* artform of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa. This poetry comes in multiple forms and genres, from songs to chants, with and without musical supplement, as solo, duet, or ensemble, and in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa or any other language; the heart remains rooted in this ancient artform. Popular musicians such as Philip Tabane, Tlokwe Sehume, Geoff Mapaya, Selaelo Selota, Caiphus Semenya, Vusi Mahlasela and Sello Galane featured various elements of *kiba* in their contemporary jazz. The latter is praiseworthy as the foremost promoter of the artform, be it through his scholarly contribution or his musical project, *Free Kiba*. Most performer, however, are generally unpopular and rural-based, scattered in the rural hinterlands of Limpopo. Johannes Mohlala, Johannes Mokgwadi, Ernest Rammutla, and Petrus Molelemanane are some of the pioneer *kiba* poets whose impact is still experienced today.

Although recordings of *kiba* poetry are readily available in various repositories across the country, some in public archives, no effort has been made to translate them, let alone to transcribe them. Among others, the intensity of language in this poetry is arguably the greatest impediment. As Krige and Krige put it, the richness of oral poetry is sometimes untranslatable (Krige & Krige, 1943). In her attempt to contextualise this impediment, Joubert (2004:388) writes:

The richness in poetic language and the use of archaic and lofty language is often beyond the capacity of the ordinary listener, [...]. Despite my own fluency as well as that of Profs Gobler and Louwrens in Northern Sotho, we had to rely heavily on the knowledge of the performers and community members with regard to the translation of the praise poems.

In South Africa, a country with eleven official languages, English poetry receives most media coverage. Many assume that this is evidence of the non-existence of poetry in African languages. Some use this status quo to safeguard their hypothesis that publishing “realities”

in South Africa and the rest of the African continent demands contributions in English. Exclusivity of oral poetry in analysis of literary critique reveals how many are still trapped in the fallacy that depicts the written word as superior over the spoken word (Ong, 2002; Kaschula, 2002). Of course, there has been a rapid drop in poetry books published in indigenous languages, but in contrast, oral poetry has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade. Without overstating the case, one needs to emphasize that spoken word is nothing that a written word is not. As argued about the written word, spoken word is inscribable on the mental pages of memory – a God given book one cannot easily steal, if they can at all. As Sole puts:

While spoken word poetry is flourishing, the relative doldrums that have becalmed published poetry can be seen in the decline of anthologies and individual collections produced, as well as the cramped space now given to discussion about poetry issues in the popular cultural media at book fairs and in university curricula (Sole, 2014:56).

Oral poetry receives extensive scholarship in numerous southern African languages such as isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, chiShona, and so forth, yet it will be misleading to conclude that these studies represent oral tradition in all southern African languages, or that what is true for one is true for all. Exploring authoritative studies such as Ruth Finnegan's (2012) *Oral Tradition in Africa*, it becomes clear that almost nothing is documented about Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, revealing the scarcity of preliminary studies, if not blatant omission. There is a pressing need for documenting Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, a call that echoes Jaccotte's (1906) plea, after deeming folklore in the language, "terra incognita." Subsequent scholars accurately emphasised that language development is mainly the responsibility of the native speaker (Doke, 1933:20). The question is how far have both the language and its written poetry developed since then? This thesis attempts to answer this question.

Several studies assert how poetics are lyrics of *kiba* songs, yet the poetic value embedded in these songs remains a grey area. Interrogating existing studies in the field of *kiba*, one further notes how the artform is depicted imprecisely as a line of delineation between *bakriste/majakane* (Christians) and *baheitene/baditšhaba* (heathens), an artform practiced only by non-Christians. Recent studies, however, demonstrate that African initiated churches,

the Zion Christian Church in particular, have always been active observatories of African indigenous artforms such as *kiba* poetry, and *kiba* artform in general (Mapaya, 2013; Rafapa, 2011; 2016). The role of *kiba* poetry as a spiritual means of communication within the African initiated church still calls for scholarly investigation. Findings of the study will serve as a preliminary entry point into various types of *kiba* poetry, knowledge that will enrich the overall outlook of the South African poetic landscape.

The development of African languages into written form, despite its noble aims, has cost Africa much loss in politics, religion, identity and culture. Literacy came at an enormous price that created segregation between languages and between groups of people. One language was often developed to the detriment of others (Prah, 2009). Certain variants and dialects have been favoured and, in some instances, new language hierarchies emerged, resulting in unending linguistic disputes, which often translated into and reinforced tribalism. “Through the random selection of African languages to be standardized, dialects that had been standardized had their status unnecessarily elevated at the expenses of others. Thus, different nations were created out of people who otherwise spoke more or less the same language” (Banda, 2002:2).

Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is the third largest spoken black language in South Africa, after isiZulu and isiXhosa (Statistics South Africa, 2002; 2012). Poet Rashaka Ratshitanga (1985) refers to the Anglo-Boer war as “two dogs fighting over a piece of stolen meat,” a metaphor that precisely describes the on-going “Sepedi” versus “Sotho sa Leboa” dispute for the “autoglottonymic” position, that is, the official language status. The current constitutional dispute is rooted in what is deemed a translational error of 1994 whereby the Interim Constitution had named “Sesotho sa Leboa” as an official language, but “Sepedi” was the word used to refer to this language in isiZulu and in English. The latter version was the one singled by the then president, Nelson Mandela, and therefore regarded as the final Constitution, with “Sepedi” deemed as an official language (The Constitution, 1996:4). The issue was brought to parliament’s attention around 2007, which led to public hearings held in 2010 and 2011 before the Constitutional Review Committee (PMG, 2011). Since then no tangible progress was achieved, instead the matter seems to be neglected, without realisation that it detrimentally affects the growth and development of the language.

The language Bill which “seeks to promote equitable use of official languages of South Africa” (Section 6(2) of the Constitution, 1996), recognising “the diminished historic use of indigenous languages” (African Languages Bill, 2011:7) ironically states that “[t]he English text is the official text of the Bill” (African Languages Bill, 2011:1). This says that the Bill itself, though claiming to favour indigenous languages, promotes the hegemony of English. By virtue of the English text being the official text of the Bill, English is elevated above other languages.

The “Sepedi” vs “Sesotho sa Leboa” debate is not only an error of fact but rather also an error of law. The misinterpretation between the Interim Constitution and the final Constitution only exposed a challenge, with its roots traceable as far back as the colonial era. If one looks at deliberations by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), academics and traditional leaders during the last public hearing (PMG, 2011), one would notice how arguments were narrowed and reduced to biased, tribal self-complimentary praises whereby speakers were acting as sheer spokespersons: safe guarding their respective mother tongue(s) and tribal kingdoms. Those from the southern parts of Polokwane were all arguing in favour of “Sepedi” and the rest, against it. Historically and realistically speaking, none of the two names is more legitimate than the other, therefore the discourse should put a greater emphasis on the future of the language and what is best for both its present and future speakers, as opposed to settling historic, cultural, tribal or academic scores – as is the case with the current discourse. Perhaps, as a point of departure, one needs to elaborate how the two names resemble Ratshitanga’s point of view regarding “two dogs fighting over a piece of stolen meat.”

The term, “Sesotho sa Leboa,” which literally means Northern Sotho, comes from Bleek’s geographical classification which resulted in three types of “Sotho” languages, that is, “Northern Sotho,” “Southern Sotho,” and “Eastern Sotho.” Bleek, a German linguist, did not only narrow down African languages spoken in regions such as central Africa, southeast Africa and southern Africa to be “Bantu languages,” but he further classified certain South African languages he regarded to be “mutually intelligible.” Bleek’s classification was widely accepted among missionary scholars as the most credible and reputable one. The Swiss linguist, Jacottet (1927:vi-vii) asserts:

So far no scientific classification of numerous Bantu languages has been achieved, with the exception of a classification by Bleek, based only on Geography, and a most fanciful one by Torrend.

Due to missionary activities of Morija in Lesotho, and of Mahikeng in what came to be known as Bophuthatswana during the Bantustan/Apartheid era, Sesotho and Setswana were intensively developed as compared to Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. During the first leg of the decolonisation process, “Southern Sotho” and “Eastern Sotho” adopted names of neighbouring countries in which they are dominantly spoken, thus *Sesotho* (derived from *Lesotho*) and *Setswana* (derived from *Botswana*). Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa then experienced a naming crisis since it was only predominant in South Africa, therefore it had no other country to align with, or benefit from, in terms of language development.

During his 1943 address at Fort Hare (Lovedale) entitled *The Influence of English on Bantu Literature*, Jabavu, the former lecturer of among others, Nelson Mandela, said, “[t]he people who use this language do not call it Northern Sotho, (a term belonging to classrooms of linguistics).” He, however, incorrectly concluded that its authentic name is, “SePedi, that is the language of the Pedi people, BaPedi” (Jabavu, 1943:5). The people in question encompass a range of tribes apart from “BaPedi” as per Jabavu’s validation. Despite the inaccuracy of the last part, Jabavu’s statement reveals how far back this naming conflict goes, and it remains unresolved.

The term “Sepedi” is instead, a dialect – that is if the concept of *semmotwana* (dialects) is not a borrowed one to African culture. “The first publications,” as Lombard *et al* (1985:7) perceptively puts it, “appeared in the dialect spoken to the south of Pietersburg [Polokwane] and the Bible was later translated into Pedi (Sepedi) which has resulted in Sepedi still being used as the equivalent for Northern Sotho in certain circles even till today.” Although missionary scholars often misinterpreted the African anthropology, they seem to have easily grasped this particular distinction, as attested to by Jacottet’s (1927:vii-xi) earlier observation:

Northern Sesuto is spoken in the Transvaal. It comprises a very large number of dialects which are in some cases very different from each other [...] The most important is the Sepeli which possesses a translation of the Bible, and is represented by grammatical works.

This, then, says the Sekhukhune “Sepedi” dialect benefited from the geographical position of the Berlin Mission Society (B.M.S.) at the Bochabelo Mission Station near Middelburg who viewed the dialect as a representation of all languages spoken by the “Northern Transvaal Sutos”. Among those who argue for “Sepedi,” there is, of course, a misled and misleading assumption that the chieftaincy of Sekhukhune is supreme among the “Basotho ba Leboa,” as such the dialect name deserves the official status since it translates the monarchical order. Monareng (2011) puts it that:

Basotho ba Leboa’s conception of *Bogoši* (chieftaincy) should not be confused with kingship/monarchy. The two terms might be of the similar semantic field but they do not mean the same, in structure, operation and execution. The qualifier *paramount* as in Paramount chiefs/kings, for instance, do not define the essence of *Bogoši* bja Basotho ba Leboa as it would in Zululand, Swazi[land] or even in Western Nations. Domination and subjugation of one *Kgoši* by the other is an alien practice discouraged and not be lived by Basotho ba Leboa.

One has to, however, clarify that Monareng’s claim is only valid as an inclusive remark, since the *Bogoši* of Sekhukhune is a special case among the rest of the Basotho ba Leboa. Apart from genealogical and kinship relations with other marginal chiefs who somewhat depended, and still do, on the Sekhukhune chieftaincy; there was a concept of *maširaphefo/mathibadifate* (“wind-blinders”, which means diplomatic relations). In the *maširaphefo/mathibadifate* process, a chief of a military vulnerable chieftaincy would hand his daughter or sister as a wife-gift to the Sekhukhune chief, which would automatically reserve him military-backup favours from the mighty Maroteng (Sekhukhune) rulership, and the opposite was true. Delius (1984:55) states that:

The paramount also delegated and designated rank and legitimacy through dispensing wives to subordinate chiefs. These were mainly the sisters and daughters of the paramount and became the principal wives of the chiefs to whom they were married and thus potentially mothers to the successors to the chiefship. [...] As a result the chief wife had the special titles of *Setima-mello* (extinguisher of fires) or *Lebone* (candle, or lantern).

In this way, the Maroteng hegemony acted as paramount to those “subordinate” chieftaincies that gave away their independence through entering into the *maširaphefo/mathibadifate* relations, thus expansion of the ruling lineage cluster, which included, among others, the Nchabeleng, Masemola, Mphahlele, Matlala and Kgatla. Native literary and academic pioneers such as Serote, Phala, Ramaila, Mamogobo, Matsepe and Maserumule, to mention a few, hail from, and were educated in, the Sekhukhune area, meaning they wrote mainly in the Sekhukhune “Sepedi” dialect. Their influential literature taught in schools, developed the dialect in such a way that it claimed unprecedented authority over the rest as a “dialect of the educated”. “Sepedi” dialect then became—to other “Basotho ba Leboa” dialects—what English is to the rest of the South African languages.

Although one might regard the dispute as a colonial legacy, there is a sub-layer of tribalism to it, attesting to the fact that it is in essence beyond a naming dispute. Under the black majority government of post-1994, a need to redress language imbalance resulted in the formation of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), an entity mainly to develop indigenous languages spoken in South Africa. However, such structures seem to have equally contributed to the deterioration of some of the languages in question. About the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa Language Boards, Mojela (2010:706) alludes to the fact that:

The majority of the scholars and intellectuals who dominated the membership of the Language Boards came from the few dialects spoken in the areas of GaSekhukhune, Maleuskop and the areas around Polokwane, Mokopane and Waterberg. These were the first to have missionary activities, mostly German missionaries, who converted Sesotho sa Leboa (especially Sepedi) into written form.

Tribalism manifested in Language Boards somewhat polluted the great initiative meant to democratically elevate the previously marginalized and politically deprived languages. This is more vivid with Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa as the language with the largest number of dialects which are spread over a wider geographic range. On the other hand, despite good things said in favour of indigenous languages in the Constitution and Language Frameworks, hegemony of English is clearly uncompromised, which sets most of the efforts to promote these languages up for failure. Native speakers themselves repeated exclusion of other dialects previously practiced by the colonial missionaries during the development of the language into a written form. Mojela (2010, *Ibid*) states that:

Those who served on the Language Boards standardized Sesotho sa Leboa according to their own dialects and neglected most of the dialects in the Lowveld regions, the Northern and the North Western parts of the former Transvaal. These neglected dialects include those like Sepulana, Selobedu, Setlokwa and Seroka, i.e. those spoken by the majority of the people who were still poorly educated, owing to a lack of missionary activities in these regions.

The two main German Lutheran mission societies who settled in the then Transvaal were the Hermannsburg and the B.M.S. missionaries. We learn that, “Hermannsburg missionaries showed little interest in recording the history of [Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa] people and their settlements” (Rüther, 2012:372). Inhumane denigration of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa is self-evident in documented history accounts which were designated to the periphery of historic margins, referred to only when viewed to be a hindrance to colonial order (Setumo, 2001:113). Apart from translating the Bible, the B.M.S. missionaries showed less commitment in terms of literary or anthropological study. A greater part of their limited accounts were falling under what one might call, “an idealized, systematized and normative picture of Pedi culture stripped from the context of time and place and of relationships through which Pedi are administered” (Delijs, 1984:4).

In 2011, the Constitutional Review Committee admitted to the sensitivity and crucial nature of the dispute, cautioning that it should be handled with great thoughtfulness. Custodians of the language were patient enough since then, but it downplayed the significance of the

language, hence no one would like, or be proud, to have or to speak a “nameless” language. A political expedient decision has been reached for an *ad hoc* term “Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa” or “Sesotho sa Leboa/Sepedi” in referral to the language in the interim, an interim which lasted for over six years. The prolonging of this dispute is not only resulting in further confusion for the speakers who do not understand the dispute’s root cause, particularly the youth, but it also adds to the deterioration of the language in favour of the hegemony of English. The length of this term results in an uncalculated challenge since no government document offers a 23-word space for a language name.

On the other hand, to those who are not abreast of the dispute they translate the *ad hoc* term with uncertainty, as if the speaker is not sure which of the two “languages” is his/her mother tongue. If it is accurate to say that language is one’s second skin (Derrida, 2009:89), then Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa’s second skin remains undressed. Lotz (1968:14) rightfully argues that, “[i]f one is ashamed of one’s own language, one certainly lacks that minimum of self-respect,” but how easy it is not to be ashamed of a “nameless” language? “If the young people of a society,” as argued by Lotz (1968, *Ibid*), “come to despise their father’s language [mother tongue], the chances are that at the same time they will reject their father’s wisdom which is expressed in it.”

1.3. Goals

The study focuses on the following questions:

- How far is the development, or lack thereof, of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa written poetry, and the language itself?
- Is there artistic and creative merit in *kiba* poetry, which make it noteworthy beyond cultural significance?
- To what extent is *kiba* poetry’s spiritual function within Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa?

With these questions, the researcher hopes to achieve the following:

- Evaluate literary merit of *kiba* poetry.

- Evaluate progress in the development of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry and the language itself; identify gaps that *kiba* poetry can bridge with its creative and intellectual wealth, particularly in confronting ungrounded marginalisation of indigenous artforms in the entire southern Africa oral tradition repertoire.
- Explore religious role of *kiba* poetry in the African initiated churches, with reference to the Zion Christian Church.
- Create critical knowledge and understanding of *kiba* poetry infused in the Zion Christian Church performative-prayers, knowledge that will result in meaningful contribution toward cultural mapping, the AU's African Aspirations for 2063 and the UN's 2030 SDGs on cultural identity and common heritage.

1.4. Scope

The study investigates a selection of *kiba* oral poetry by men and women in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. As a point of departure, the development of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa written poetry between 1906 and 2006 will be probed, underlining a selection of significant wordsmiths and their notable poetic contributions. For one to contextualise *kiba* poetry into the current Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry ambience, background of written poetry in the language will be indispensable. This background will encompass the first poems published in a written form, in particular, Abraham Serote's poem, "*Sello sa Thaba-ntho*" and his 1893 account. A noteworthy evolution in women poets in the languages was observed only between 2005 and 2014, thus in this area the examined epoch is from 1906 to 2015. Language is the mother of literature. An attempt to exhaustively explore the unending naming dispute between "Sepedi" and "Sesotho sa Leboa" is undertaken, concentrating on evidence dating from the missionary era to the present day. The rest of the study focuses on *kiba* poetry from within and outside the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

There are two sister churches under the ZCC, namely the ZCC under the headship of Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane; and St. Engenas ZCC, under Bishop Joseph Engenas Lekganyane. Both their Headquarters are in Morija. Apart from resemblances in names, the Lekganyane sister churches have no relations with the Zionist movements or the ZCC in Guinea, South Carolina; or any other similar church initiated by earlier adherents. This study is, however, narrowed down to the Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane ZCC, commonly

identified with a star badge. *Kiba* poetry is observed from several branches of the ZCC in South Africa, in the SADC region, and beyond the African borders.

A lot has been written on African initiated churches (AICs), the ZCC in particular, but one notes that most studies hardly utilise or verify their “facts” with internal publications, resulting into somewhat an ungrounded tourist view, if not a bizarre set of misconceptions. The argument has been that “the ZCC has not yet published any book” (de Visser, 2001:105). In an attempt to introduce an internal narrative, the study relies profoundly on the official publications within the ZCC, the *ZCC Family Bible*, *The Messenger*, the bishop’s sermons, and other church presentations and documents as the main sources. In addition, an unpublished historic account on the church written by A.S. Mopeli-Paulus (1972) forms part of the primary sources. The ZCC vinyl of 1970s that feature the poetry of Petrus Moleleman and Motšha Motimele is part of the main source in exploring *kiba* poetry within the ZCC.

Spirituality is often associated with miracles, which according to McPherson, are things “done without recourse to the ordinary means of production” (Berkhof, 1938:176). A scientific study is bound to experience limitations in the field of spirituality, thus the study focuses mostly on areas that can be somewhat tested through scientific measures such as geographic and neuroscientific material, or areas penetrable from the non-spiritual point of view. Commentary on the realm of spirituality will however be cited from various ecclesiastical publications.

Kiba from outside the ZCC is accessed from various *kiba* archival depositories; from commercial audio albums; and from personal recordings. In contextualising such a widely spread and diverse genre, one cannot avoid overlapping and cross-referencing. This study is not exhaustive - it is merely an introduction to a much broader and untapped field of study, *kiba* poetry. The scope of the study is limited to selected aspects and poets, not the entire milieu of *kiba* poetry. Given that every region practices it differently, this study does not intensively dwell on a particular region but it focusses only on significant entry-level aspects randomly selected from any region. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is not only the language with the largest dialects in South African, but its dialects are sometimes very different such that

even the cultural practices differ (Jaccotte, 1927; Lombard, *et al*, 1985). This means that what is true for one region, might not always be true for the next.

1.5. Methodology and approach

Defining poetry has proven to be a daunting and nearly impossible task to the academe, unlike prose. In fact, the best of definitions are more metaphoric, inscribed of course by poets themselves. Bukowski refers to poetry as, “what happens when nothing else can” (Bukowski, 2010). Pound, conversely, regards it as, “news that stays news” (Pound, 2004). In the context of *kiba* poetry, both these definitions might not hold since *kiba* poetry is in fact the beginning of almost everything; and it is more of an experience than of news.

Miscarriage of literary research methodologies lies in their failure to admit that there is no, and will never be, a one-size-fit-all approach to be true for all poems. Poems have innumerable footings, thus it becomes meaningless evaluating anything outside a poem’s individual footing. The most honest of critics have admitted that, “there can be no formula for a successful criticism” and that “critical ability grows from awareness coupled with fluency” (Heese & Lawton, 1968:vii). Evaluating poetry on predetermined standards is not only simplistic, but also problematic in the sense that it drags a poem from its right brain expression into the mechanical left-brain. Horn (1995:40) calls the latter teaching poetry “like it was punishment.”

Judging a poem [based on] its message or theme perfectly exposes the judge’s lack of poetic backbone. Poetry is not limited to words or message. At his best the poet is a jazzman, he makes wordless sound carry and convey dense feelings no raw language could. But still, not all poems are, or should be purely perceptible forms that embody some sort of feeling. Poetry, at its best, proves that if a picture tells a million words, then a poem portrays a million pictures. A rounded poet treats words [as if] they were melody, colour, shape and movement, which they are, if you think poetically (Maahlamela, *Ibid*).

“[T]he only way to enhance the standard of the literature of a language,” as Makwela (1977:2) rightfully states, “is to give objective and constructive criticisms by pointing out that which is inferior and commending that which is worthwhile.” It is imperative to contextualise that in the study “that which is inferior” will not mean according to the critic’s rigid and crude monolithic checklist, but rather according to the poem’s footing. If, for instance, its footing is on the structure, such structure will be evaluated in its totality if it enhances or weakens the heart of the poem. “Poetry does not [...] have to be an intellectual pursuit, albeit it shapes intellectuality. Sometimes good poetry can be a masterpiece of nonsense, such that in its topsy-turvy world the craziest things might seem ordinary, and the most common thing might seem out of place” (Maahlamela, *Ibid*).

[P]oetry—like all the arts—involves this kind of experiential knowledge, we miss the value of poetry if we think of its characteristic knowledge as consisting of “message,” statements, snippets of doctrine (Brooks & Warren, 1960:xii).

In an interrelated field of study such as the *kiba* artform, an interception of among others oral and written, African and European, culture and religion, overlapping is inevitable if one aims to see the wider canvass. The same holds for data interpretation and analysis approaches. The study employs an interchange of approaches, mainly qualitative, varying from text- to author-orientated analysis. Data collection explores all three main qualitative research methods as stipulated by Mertens and McLaughlin (1995:50), namely participant observation, interview, and record/data review. Each presented data serves towards the realization of the research aim. Kunene reminds us that, “[g]ood criticism must include the ability to understand the circumstances that give rise to the literature under study. The isolation of literary product from prevailing conditions never gives a true picture of the works that are being studied” (Kunene, 1965:10).

Although qualitative data analysis entails synthesis of narrative non-numeric data, where statistics are imperative, the analysis occasionally employs aspects of quantitative approaches. Data interpretation and analysis primarily focuses on the poem and not the poet. When evaluating a poem’s artistic and creative merit, the approach is solely text-orientated. Where, for instance, text-based techniques such as poetic musicality, diction, eloquent use of

language, form, and figures of speech protrude above the rest; an applicable text-analysis theory applies. Merit of a poem is evaluated on what it is, as opposed to what it stands for, meaning artistic beauty is prioritised over theme. It is then important to accept that “[a] text does not have one correct, fixed meaning waiting to be discovered; its meaning is to be found in the interaction of the reader with the text” (Heese & Lawton, 1992:12-3).

Author-oriented approaches such as historical-biographical, moral-philosophic, or impressionistic approaches apply only when evaluating a poem’s significance, so to link the poem with social context, be it what informs it or what it represents. As one of the leading practitioners in the field of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, my interpretation of data results relies much on vast knowledge, experience and tested literary taste. I unapologetically apply impressionistic approaches where necessary. One requires a variety of practical exposure, an intense and far-ranging appetite, a sense of judgement and discernment to employ an impressionistic approach since it relies mainly on the critic’s personal response (Swanepoel, 1990:9). As an academically unrefined genre, one cannot easily predetermine *kiba* poetry’s prerequisites and precincts. It will not be appropriate to put emphasis on “blanket theories which have a sounding exotic appeal but which are incapable of giving us an insight into the fundamental creative spirit that brought such art to be” (Okpewho, 1976:1).

Sole (2014:59) laments, “One awaits the day when poetry critics and reviewers are conversant with a number of languages, and can start to make meaningful comparative comments.” This is not a comparative study, but it continuously benchmarks to achieve feasible contextualization of *kiba* poetry into the entire South African poetry ambience.

In some cases, the metaphor used has a wide enough application to be recognisable and in this case, the composer’s intention may be clear. In other cases, the metaphor may depend for its full effect on some inside knowledge that, once lost, renders the metaphor less meaningful (Gunner, 1979:240).

In data analysis, we strive for quality assurance before processing source data so as to attain possible accuracy. Where necessary and possible, the researcher interviews composers/reciters of *kiba* poetry. In other instances such as in the case of deceased or

unreachable composers, we explore literary texts for what they are. Data collection encompasses events such as public seminars whereby open discourses between *kiba* practitioners, traditional leaders and cultural experts are followed and analysed. Furthermore, as part of the fieldwork, the researcher visited selected *kiba* groups during their respective regional competitions and individual rehearsals for further interviews and recording of *kiba* poems used as sources for this study. Attention was given to both the male version (*dinaka*), as well as the female version (*koša*, *leboa*, *makgakgasa*, etc.) as they both infuse *kiba* poetry differently.

One of the attributes to methodological weaknesses in the field of translation is “languages of limited diffusion without established translation tradition” (Kruger & Wallmach, 1997:120). Given that translation studies in South Africa is merely half-a-century old, one understands that the lack of useful synthesis of theoretical and analytical frameworks, especially in relation to African languages such as Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, is a reality.

Where translation is required, reliance is on oblique techniques such as adaptation and equivalence. Equivalence is bound to encounter limitation when translating an African language into a European language; the opposite is true. When text obliges, direct techniques such as loan words (borrowing), calque and literal (word-for-word) apply. This means, where the syntax and semantic genre of the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL) share the same grammatical family and culture, direct translation is a priority, and where they are not, oblique translation is effected. Loose translation is the last option.

When all is said and done, it is important to note that poetry “rationalises the irrational, proving that scientists and philosophers have their own limitations. Moreover, that language is technically incapable to break down abstract emotions [...]. Most importantly, it publicly strips rules, exposes their incapability to rule themselves” (Maahlamela, *Ibid*).

1.6. Organisation

The study's organisational structure will be as follows:

- Chapter 1: Setting the scene by outlining the aims, scope, methodology and approach of the study.
- Chapter 2: A critical review of the historic background of written poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa from 1906 to 2006.
- Chapter 3: Secular *kiba* poetry.
- Chapter 4: *Kiba* poetry ensembles in the ZCC.

Chapter 2: A Century of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa Poetry: (1906-2006)

2.1. Introduction

Whether chanted, recited, or spoken, poetry has been the leading precolonial artform that defined various ethnicities of Africa people, the unmatched indigenous repository of culture, tradition and memory of collectives and individuals across all societies. The beginning of the 19th century was the transitional climax of oral poetry into its written form, at least in the context of African languages of South Africa. Pathfinders such Samuel E.K. Mqhayi (isiXhosa) and Thomas Mofolo (Sesotho) were among the first to engrave an African fingerprint on the rock of knowledge production and preservation. At that time, missionaries in most languages already prepared preliminary work in terms of written language development, and literary preservation. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, however, seemed behind, especially in contrast with the rest of the Sotho languages. Thus, its first remarkable poetic contribution was only in 1935 when its counterparts were already celebrating success of, say, Zakea D. Mangoane's 1921-published *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho* and David Cranmer Theko Bereng's 1931-published *Lithothokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling*. This chapter probes the history and development of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry in the past century and the role played by supporting structures such as the missionaries, academia, the public broadcaster, and various governmental bodies. More so, the artistic and creative quality of written poetry is the language.

2.2. The age of written words

In 1906, Jacottet, a European missionary, referred to Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa folklore as a *terra incognita*, an unexplored field. Only in the 1930s did Doke, a British missionary, make a call for the "BaSotho themselves [to] play a greater part in collecting and preparing such material" (Doke, 1933:20). In 1932, Lestrade, the Dutch missionary, and the then head of Bantu Studies at the University of Pretoria, proposed a better method of "burying" this language. "I am against the full development of Transvaal Sotho...", he recommended, "[a]t the very least, it should continue to exist as an auxiliary language, for the less mature, and for simple or more intimate needs, in home, the church, the lower classes of the schools, etc." (Doke, 1933:18). Lestrade suggested this, in his favour for the unification/harmonisation of

all the three Sotho languages; an ambitious concept that was later made popular by Jacob Nhlapo and Neville Alexander. His view was that “if the Sotho languages are to have a worthy future, some unified form of them must be evolved, and gradually take the place of the present variants, which should in due course disappear from the literary language, and will no doubt disappear in time from the spoken ones” (Doke, *Ibid.*).

In 1943, Jabavu said literature in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa was still “in its infancy” and that “the books are small that none can be ranked as a classic” (Jabavu, 1943:5). In 1977, over thirty years after Jabavu’s assessment, Makwela (1977:2) said it was “still very young.” He argued, “[t]he lack of proper assessment of the Northern Sotho works has led to the conclusion that the Northern Sotho literature is of an inferior quality – a remark which is more relevant to quantity than to quality.”

Jacottet raised a concern that out of the three “Ba-Suto” languages, the “Ba-Pedi” or “Northern Ba-Suto” folklore is the only genre that remains unstudied. He acknowledged the role that his fellow missionaries played, particularly Alexander Merensky, in the development of this language, though he still regarded it as “*terra incognita*.” He then urged “the scientific societies of Pretoria and Johannesburg” to “encourage or undertake the work of collecting them before it is too late” (Jacotter, 1906:xx-xxi). This did not refer to scarcity of literary works, but rather transcription of existing oral literature in written form.

2.3. The first book: Serote (1893)

No author is credited on the 1893-published *Puku ē xo kopantšoe xo eona ditaba tša me’huta-’huta* (an anthology of various writings), yet speculations have identified Abraham Serote as the only possible author. Serote is the only African who was involved in the process of translating the “Sepedi” Bible, alongside Carl Knothe, Gustav Trümpelmann, H. Kuschke, and Gustav Eiselen, only published in 1904. Perspective and diction employed in the book are self-evident that an African authored it, and the only capable speaker at that time was Serote. For instance, he writes, “*dithaba tša Mphame, tša Phoken, makxoa a re ke Maḡaliesberg*,” (Serote, 1893:60), meaning Mphame Mountains of Phokeng which are known as the Magaliesburg among white people. Essays in this account give anthropological accounts on

various parts of the then Transvaal, exploring etymologies of geographical names, most importantly, admiring black innovation and excellence in various sectors such as mining:

Re a tlabya xe re bona meepo e epiloeo me'lenj ke baaxi ba pele ba naxa e mo ba nthšitšexo mefiri. Xona ka xo kxotsa re botšiša xo re: Betšoana ba kxonne bya' xo phula mobu o thata oa mafzika ka dikepo tša bona tše e bexo e se tša selo (Serote, 1893:63-4).

[Pits previously mined by ancient citizens who extracted minerals astonish us. Surprisingly, we question how Batswana people successfully drill such a rock-filled ground using their inferior mining equipment.]

It remains unclear and untraceable if omission of the author's name was a deliberate stance or an innocent error. Notably, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is referred to as "Sesotho" (Serote, 1893:71) in the book, not "Sepedi" nor "Sesotho sa Leboa."

2.4. The first published poem: "Sello sa Thaba-nthso"

In a 1935-published biographical account, *Tša Bophelô bya Moruti Abraham Serote*, Ephrafras Mogababise Ramaila included a dirge written by Serote about the massacre of 10 May 1864 where the missionaries teamed up with the amaSwazi, and murdered hundreds of Bakopa and Matebele a Mapogo. This incident happened a year before the establishment of the Botšhabelo Mission Station. Serote's poem, "Sello sa Thaba-nthso" (Black Mountain Dirge) is the first written poem in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. Serote, who travelled to "Toithši" (Deutschland, meaning Germany) in 1902, had a writing style that was neither traditional nor exotic. According to Ramaila the distinction between the two is based on rhyme scheme, which characterises the "*direto tša Sekxowa*" (European/western poetry). His view is that in terms of rhythm the two are more or less the same (Ramaila, 1935:52). Below is the first written poem in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa:

1. *Thaba-nthso 'na O re hlomola*
2. *Dipelo ba re xo Xo bonang*
3. *Xa O sa etsa mohla wola*

4. *O lliša ba ba Xo tsebang*
5. *O byalo ka Mohlaloxadi*
6. *Mo mošaleng a fifetseng*
7. *U ituletse xar'a madi*
8. *Tlang hle'me Le mo homotseng*
9. *U xanela'ng xe O homotswa*
10. *Thaba-nthso, joo, O xanela'ng?*
11. *A O re bana ba ka buša*
12. *Ba dirwa xape ba phelang? [...]* (Ramaila, 1935:7)

1. Black Mountain, why do you melt
2. our hearts, us who are gazing at you?
3. You no longer resembles bygone days
4. when you used to enflame cries of your acquaintances,
5. you are now like a widower
6. in a dusky unilluminated roundavel,
7. sitting in a pool of gore.
8. Please come and comfort her.
9. Why do you reject our comfort?
10. Black Mountain, oh, why do you reject?
11. Do you think they might reiterate sorrow
12. to the remnants, your alive children?

In line 1, the poem commences with an apostrophe, a place (Thaba-nthso), is addressed as if it is a human being. In the same line, enjambment is employed, a poetic technique in which the content sense of a poetic line is incomplete at the end of that line, but is completed in the next. Enjambment is a rarely used technique in the language due to grammatical policing of purist linguistics who view enjambment as a technique with the potential to distract the attention of the reader through scattering the idea. When enjambment is perfectly applied, it creates a semantic-oriented or structural ambiguity. For instance, when line 1 is read alone, “*hlomola*” will denote “unplug,” then the meaning changes when “*dipelo*” in line 2 is added, turning “*hlomola dipelo*” into an idiom equivalent to “melting one’s heart.” Apostrophe-

created personification is seen throughout the poem, such as in “xo” in line 4, “u” in line 7, and “mo” in line 8. In line 5, a simile is applied to compare the place with a widow. The vivid and striking imagery in line 6 and the metaphor in line 7 adds further layers of meaning. The twist in the parallelism of line 9 and 10 that contradicts with line 8, results in a soft paradox, adding life into the poem. In terms of meaning, line 11 and 12 reveal hidden uncertainty that black inhabitants of Botšhabelo were grappling with since they were expected to trust the same missionaries whose hands were scarlet with the blood of these black inhabitants’ families and relatives. Indeed, the relationship between God and Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa was complex. As Makwela (1977) pointed out, the challenge was indeed “not quality but rather quantity”.

2.5. The first poetry compendium: Phala (1935)

In 1935, Daniel Mamphse Phala’s *Kxomo ’a thswa: maina a dikxosi le a bakxōma* (A cow spits!/The cow’s udder is burning: names of chiefs and headsmen), the first Sepedi poetry collection was published. The account predominantly consists of *thetotumišo* employing introductory formula of “*Kgomo e a tshwa...*” which was mistaken to be the definitive description of the traditional Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry. The closest English equivalent of *thetotumiši* would be “praise poetry,” *seretotumišo* (pl. *diretotumišo*) as “praise poem,” and then *seretitumišo* (pl. *diretitumišo*) for “praise poet.” The formula, however, is but one of many existing traditional introductory approaches of oral poetry in the language. In the bigger scheme of things, most poems which use a particular introductory formula are the ones composed and taught at the initiate school, such as *Matšha-matšha-matšha!*, *Mo le moo!*, and other personal *diretotumišo*. Although not transcribed into written versions, most clan *diretotumišo* start with an introductory formula that introduces the totem or praise name (or both), such as, “*Agee Kgomo! Agee Monareng!*” or “*Agee Moraswe, Agee Noko!...*” Phala’s rare poetic gem deserves to be reproduced under the National Library’s Indigenous Classical reprints.

2.6. Lekgothoane’s “animal poems” (1938)

The second poetic compendium in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa was compiled by Shika Kgomedi Lekgothoane, published in the University of Witwatersrand’s academic journal, *Bantu Studies* in 1938. Many critics who regarded poems in Lekgothoane’s collection as “praises for

animals” or “animal poems” reduced their rich metaphoric essence. These were poems about people, with animal metaphors employed to connote individual’s character, clan totem or chieftaincy veneration. The urge to classify, therefore, downplays the artistic wealth of these poems. At least, the following suggests that van Warmelo seems to have understood this distinction: “It is interesting to observe how much intentional ambiguity (in references both to animals and to persons alluded to)” (van Warmelo, 1938:190). Names of animals are employed in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa to symbolise names of people, surnames, metaphors, clan totems, or symbols. Below is an extract from the poem, Nkwe, praising the aging Chief Machaka of the Batlokwa:

1. *Mankwê a Botlôkwa*
2. *Wa nkwe Bolea*
3. *Phaxa mangana maxolo*
4. *Phala re ja kxomo*
5. *O hwile Botlôkwa*
6. *Botlôkwa xa Mmathšhaka Maimane*
7. *Botlôkwa xa bo-mora-Mokotupi a Thšaka [...]*
8. *Le xo loma xa e sa loma e šetse e ba thula ka phatla fela.* (Lekgothoane, 1938:192-3)

1. [Mankwe of Botlokwa
2. of the Bolea leopard,
3. the wild cat with a broad face,
4. “the only impala buck we eat is a cow,”
5. he who died in Botlokwa
6. Botlokwa of Machaka Maimane
7. Botlokwa of Mokotupi ’Chaka’s son [...]
8. He can no longer bite, still, he butts with his forehead.]

In her study on the poetry of Samson Machaka, Tladi writes, “the praise name Nkwe, is a specific totem for the Batlokwa” (Tladi, 1996:1). The same holds for many other poems in Lentsoane’s collection, such as Kwena, for Bakwena: “*Kwena ke Morôka meetse a pula,/ [...] Kwena e nthso ya ba-Modiane a Tau,/ Ba xa Moxopa a dira/ [...] mošita-metsi a*

Mmamolemane,/Kwena moila letlhaka,/Xôna e tswaletšwe lethlakeng” (Lekgothoane, 1938:197-8). It therefore becomes a misnomer to classify them as “animal poems.” If classification is anything to go by, then emphasis should be on what that poetry represents, as opposed to how. Classification of Pablo Neruda’s poetry, for instance, would be *love poetry* or *war poems*. Not *flower poems* nor *blood poems*. One could rather regard them as “totemic poems,” that way one will be admitting that the heart of the poem is about a people. Since totems are general animal, then the animals’ emphasis will still echo in “totemic poems.” As accurately put by Mojalefa (2010b), Lekgothoane:

does not just praise nature per se. He praises the importance of creatures in the lives of people. He focuses on nature in relation to his people’s culture and traditions. The Creature he recites about determines the importance of the relation ascribed to people’s totemic behaviour.

Describing the power of performance, particularly Sepedi oral *thetotumišo*, Lekgothoane (1938:191.) says, “[a] man whilst praising or being praised can walk over thorns, which cannot pierce his flesh which has become impenetrable.” This literary or performance trance is similar to what the Spanish poet, Lorca came to interpret as *duende*, the most powerful force in art. This force is able to transcend a poet to another mystical world. Lorca (1933) says “[t]he duende [...] will not approach at all if he does not see the possibility of death.” According to Lekgothoane, once the *seretitumišo* (praise poet) is in this *duende* state, he can walk over thorns without being impaled. Perhaps the spirituality Lekgothoane is referring to is beyond *duende*, since he further asserts that if poets who operate in this realm “were to praise God and the ancestral spirits, the rain would fall and the sick be healed” (Lekgothoane, 1938:193).

As we are the first generation to experience the impact of global warming, Lekgothoane’s collection is more relevant today than ever before - to remind the poet that the environment is a poet’s third eye. Global warming awareness is, therefore, more of a poet’s business than it is an environmentalist’s business. It is the poet’s third eye to see that climate change is threatening to burn the earth. For a poet to ignore this call is like refusing to release the snare that is likely to catch one’s own foot. Lekgothoane’s collection reminds us of what nature once meant to poetry production, more so, the loss that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry

experiences as a result of the rise of climate temperature, which partly led to scarcity of some of these animals encompassed in this collection. A loss of an animal from human sight is a loss of a poem. As Kaschula (2002:37) notes, “there has been a decline in the use of animal metaphor, probably partly due to the fact that animals no longer roam freely, as they did long ago, and are therefore less useful as poetic metaphor.” Deterioration of nature is tantamount to debility of poetic wealth. Moreover, poems are written on “trees” (paper) before they could be transferred to computers.

2.7. Quality and creativity of pioneering written poetry

Most of what we term as folklore poetry was in fact, composed by identifiable poets who were deprived recognition by the collector. When the poet’s identity is undisclosed, the collector is the one who is, deliberately or intuitively, given credit as if they are the author. It is somewhat difficult to tell which of the pioneering poets’ accounts were self-composed, and which were composed by their fellow oral poets. However, creativity and quality of this poetry, as argued by Makwela (1977:2) is mostly richer than what is regarded as the classics in English. The major challenge, though, has been poor translation, which led to misled conclusions. Jabavu (1943:17) puts it into perspective that, “our Englishman attempted to translate before mastering the foreign language.” That said, one acknowledges the fact that some poems are just untranslatable. About translation of poetry, a renowned Bangla poet, Dev-Sen (2004:iii) eloquently asserts:

However, just as translation can work wonders in opening up a completely new world in front of us, it can also play tricks. Especially with poetry. Sometimes the nature of the target language demands a few changes.

Instead, some compilers have, in their editing, confessed to having distorted the recorded poems to “suit [their] own convenience” and that “translations are as literal as possible” (Cook 1931:184), which is later misleadingly interpreted as “nothing poetic” by subsequent scholars. Literal translation, then, saps the depth of oral literature’s creative richness, resulting in people questioning whether the poetry has any richness at all.

Introducing Lekgothoane's compilation, van Warmelo writes, "[w]hat at first sight appears to be so much incoherent nonsense then becomes, upon closer examination, intricate and subtle humour and allusion" (van Warmelo, 1938:189). Three years after the release of Lekgothoane's collection, van Zyl published a selection of poems written by "his students" from the Lemana Training Institution in Elim. In his intense analytic commentary, he also argued that, "[i]t is sometimes said that these [...] cannot be considered poetry, and that the difference between Sotho prose and praise-poetry is so insignificant that it proves to be extremely difficult to distinguish one from the other. On closer consideration such opinions seem to be based on a somewhat limited conception of what we really have in praises" (van Zyl, 1941:120).

The use of "upon closer examination" and "on a closer consideration" on the above remarks might give a wrong impression: that quality and creativity of both Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa written and oral poetry requires justification – which is not the case. Critics who advocate for Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry also fell into the trap of depicting it as poetry of lesser merit, as if it is not poetry enough at first sight. Van Warmelo continues to say, "[n]eedless to say, the meaning is often obscure to everyone except the initiated and the reciter himself, and even they are occasionally at a loss [...] But these are things that must be explained to be appreciated" (van Warmelo, *Ibid.*). This illustrates how those who have the best intentions, as Achebe (2002:2) puts it, "sometimes commit the worst crimes." Nevertheless, van Warmelo and van Zyl remain the most pivotal promoters of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry.

2.8. Collecting, preserving and disseminating oral poetry: Ramaila (1953)

Shortly after publishing his anthropological account on the lion-venerating nation, *Setlogô sa Batau*, Ephrafras Mogababise Ramaila published his collection of *thetotumišo*, *Seriti sa Thabantsho*. Ramaila's adulation for Serote was not limited to the writing of his biography, the title of this poetry anthology is inspired by Serote's poem, *Sello sa Thaba-nthso*. One can further note that mid-1900s was the paradigm shift of orthography in the language, "*ths*" replaced with "*tsh*". Although the book has no date, in his foreword Ramaila reports to have started compiling it since 1931, and for which he received the 1953 First Prize for the Union-wide Bantu Literary Competition organised by the Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel (APB). It is then speculated that it was published the subsequent year, that is, 1954. Ramaila, unlike the rest

of the compilers of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa *thetotumišo*, declared the methodology used in recording and transcribing his collection. In addition to sourcing *diretotumišo* from individuals he specially consulted, Ramaila transcribed many *diretotumišo* from social gatherings such as wedding ceremonies (Ramaila, (n.d.):i-ii).

Ramaila's anthology consists of *thetotumišo* from a fair geographical representation that covers most parts of the then Transvaal, including the Setswana speaking areas. The anthology encompasses, among others, *diretotumišo* of different magoši (chiefs) and ordinary villagers of the Bapedi, Batau, Bapulana, Bakopa, Bahwaduba, Batlokwa, Bakgatla, Bahananwa, Bakhudu, Baphiring, Bakone ba ga Matlala, ba Matlala' Thaba, Kolobe tša ga Mamabolo, ba ga Dikgale, ba ga Letswalo, ba Moletši, ba ga Mašašane, ba Tisana, etc. His initial aim was to cover all regions but he, probably due to financial constraints, published it with a minimal exclusion such as the Bolobedu polity. One important poem in this compendium is the elephant-venerating Maša people (of Lydenburg but originally from Bolobedu), which has the following abstract:

1. *A o boditšwe ke mang a re re Bapedi?*
2. *Ge e le Bopedi re filo iša sereto.*
3. *Lephata mašemong a go Mogašwa*
4. *Mamane a Mmakopa a mereleba mankgalelaga.*
5. *Re boa Letšing, re Baroka ba Mmefefera' Letsoalo*
6. *Re belegwa ke Phatane morwa Mamene,*
7. *Re ba Maša a Gosebo 'a Modipa,*
8. *Tšhaba kgomo o tšhabele mogabaneng,*
9. *BaMphagohle 'a Letuba la Mmangata'a marumo*
10. *Ke ba segobagoba molokwane*
11. *Mola Bapedi ba o lebetše*
12. *Kua mašemong a bo Mogašwa* (Ramaila, (n.d):24-5).

1. [Who told you we are the Bapedi?
2. We only go to Bopedi to submit praises

3. A pole fencing Mogašwa's farm
4. Mmakopa's aunt, a slime-smelling workaholic.

5. We hail from Letšing, we are the Baroka of Letsoalo's Mmefefera
6. Birthed by Phatane, Mamene's son
7. We are of the Maša of Modipa's Gosebo
8. Flee, cow, flee to the cave
9. Of Mphagohle of Letuba, the iron bundler
10. Those who gather the clan
11. While Bapedi forgot their clan
12. At Mogašwa's farm.]

The above abstract sheds light regarding the fact that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa *diretotumišo* have "an ethnological significance in tracing kinship relating relationship and genealogy" (Vilakazi, 1938:106), they also position the subject in the precise dialectic or ethnic group, elaborating the type of relationship the group in question has with others. With regard to this, line 3 tells us that this particular Bakopa clan has with Bapedi a "*lephata-mašemong*" (pole fencing the farm) type of relations, a metaphor that implies the *maširaphefo/mathibadifate* diplomatic relations, meaning, one chief has offered his daughter or sister to the other as a "wife-gift." A short line of condensed words creates onion-skin layers of meaning without turning the poem into prose.

Notably, the idea of compiling *Seriti sa Thabantsho* came from a place of despair if not frustration or anger. As he revealed in his forward, sitting at a mountain adjacent to a place used as a battlefield he reminisced on many of his people massacred during the battle, he then decided to compile the compendium. This is the same place described in Serote's poem. If this reveals anything at all, it is that the title *Seriti sa Thabantsho*, which denotes, "Dignity of Mount Black," connotes "Dignity of a black unmovable people."

Subsequent to Ramaila's *thetotumišo* collection, Ramokgopa published *Mofelletši* (The Concluder), and as the title suggests, it did not rise to compete with neither Ramaila's *Seriti sa Thabantsho* nor Phala's *Kgomo'a thswa*, but instead it was wrapping up what the two

started. Nonetheless, it remains one of the important accounts in this milieu. Exploring these three compendiums, one is bound to agree with Okpewho (1976:27) that:

In an examination of the art surviving from the past, we have no artist's signatures to guide us in making the right distinction between independent creations and those inspired by a "school" of creative thinking.

We only learn that apart from his collection of *diretotumišo*, Ramaila wrote only one poem that qualifies his personal attribution. Rampolokeng (1992:32) sarcastically remarks, "you just have to chant two lines and you're a poet in this country." Are collectors and compilers of oral poetry, poets? Are Phala, Ramaila and Ramokgopa poets? Surely, being a transcriber of oral poetry does not make one a poet. Was their role limited to transcription? These are questions which if correctly answered; the face of history is likely to change. My take is that they are not, yet they deserve to be granted an honorary poet status since in the process of transcription during the epoch of no technological advantage, one would imagine the improvisation they had to incorporate. Considering his technological disadvantage in contrast with ethnomusicologists such as Hugh Tracey, Percival Kirby, or John Blacking; Ramaila is, in my opinion, one of the finest South African anthropologists of all times. He, indeed, did the most with the least.

2.9. Generic book production: editing and publishing

Poetry of pioneering poets and collectors have been deemed "superficial, [...] not delv[ing] into intricate problems of life" (Makwela, 1977:2). This accusation, however, was unfair without contextualising that they operated between four strong opposing forces, that is, colonial, apartheid, economic politics and personal preference. The latter was in most cases overpowered by the rest. School prescription has always been the main player, used by each publisher of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa as the ultimate evaluating tool in determining what is "publishable." For whatsoever reason, failure to get the Department of (Basic) Education's commitment to prescribe the manuscript as a school textbook meant the miscarriage of the book: turning noteworthy manuscripts into a literary stillborn.

By virtue of owning the book production, colonial masters had complete control on what was worth publishing. Many noteworthy manuscripts of great wordsmiths such Samuel Mqhayi, Silas Molema and Herbert Dhlomo were unreasonably rejected on the basis of political or personal factors. Though the initial emphasis of missionary publishing houses was on religious writings, the relationship between colonial publishing companies and critical African writers subsequently improved over time, leading to the publication of some of the politically unapologetic literary works. In his study on the early relationship between the Lovedale Missionary Press and Dhlomo, Midgley (1993:106) writes:

The Lovedale Press did not make any real effort to promote the artistic freedom of African writers. Political expediency and Shepherd's personal ambitions were the overriding factors that determined which manuscript eventually got published, and which ones didn't.

Robert H.W. Shepherd was the Director of the Lovedale Missionary Press, and of course, the principal of the Lovedale Institution. Admittedly, these missionary presses, the Morija Sesuto Book Depot and Lovedale Missionary Press in particular, have equally played an unmatched role in the promotion of the written word in African languages.

Parallel to the missionary presses, in the 1930s, were the Afrikaner presses that also accepted manuscripts in African languages. This stance, one might speculate, was part of the Afrikaners' strategy in gaining ultimate supremacy, a strategy that bred the subsequent apartheid regime. Due to the geographical position of the likes of Lovedale and Morija, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa early writers who had no reputable publishing house at the Botšhabelo Missionary Station and the entire "Northern Transvaal," settled for these Afrikaner publishing houses, in particular the Afrikaanse Per Boekhandel and the Eerste Fabriek (Noord-Sotho Boekdepot). Even after missionary presses reduced their censorship and editorial interferences, the Afrikaner presses remained rigid and political, using indirect primary censorship, which led to many Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa writers flooding to the newly found Pretoria-based J.L. van Schaik.

The publishing industry was a notable site for intellectual battles and political interference characterised by lack of freedom of expression. Only particular presses enjoyed government's preferential treatment when coming to book prescription for the school curriculum. With the introduction of Bantu Education came the Afrikaner presses such as Nasionale Pers (Naspers), Perskor, and HAUM De-Jager; for which some of the top Nationalist government officials such as D.F. Malan, B.J. Vorster, and H.F. Verwoerd served as Editor-in-Chief(s), if not as their board of directors (Davis, 2011; Mpe & Seeber, 2000).

Authority and mentors also played their part in subscribing content for Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa writers to an extent that those who rebelled faced harsh consequences. Writing about Lekgothoane's unpublished manuscript, *Moratetšo a Badimo* (Adoration of the Ancestors), Mojalefa (2010b:2) says: "[u]nfortunately, he was unsuccessful in publishing the manuscript; the main printing presses were all owned and run by missionaries at the time and this work was regarded as being anti-Christ." Makwela adds, "[a]nything tribal and traditionally orientated was bound to clash with the precepts of the white missionaries and their black converted community as it would be regarded as tainted with heathenism" (Makwela, 1977:150). We learn that the above-mentioned manuscript, led to Lekgothoane's detainment, and that it disappeared unpublished shortly after Lekgothoane's death in 1947.

Such rejection was not limited to works outside the realm of Christian belief. Particular biblical teachings that promote or symbolise emancipation were undesirable. Makwela reveals from a letter dated 20 August 1938 that Schwellnus, Ramaila's "mentor," discouraged him not to publish his Christian manuscript on the book of Moses, the reason being that "it would have been too big, too expensive and too difficult for the pupils who were by then not yet avid readers" (Makwela, 1977:154). The story of Moses is but the story of an ordinary man who became a liberator. One can then speculate that Schwellnus' reluctance could have also been much about what such literature could have instigated politically. Literary independence in this epoch remains questionable. Makwela warns, "the reader should not underrate the influence which [...] Schwellnus and the other German missionaries had on Ramaila" (1977:149).

“An African languages writer,” as Chapman (1984:183) concludes, “has had almost no option but to adopt a moderate and even an apolitical attitude towards his concern with the loss of heritage.” “His viewpoint,” he adds, was “partly dictated by the fact that he [was] reliant on white commercial publishers who, in turn, [were] financially dependent on his book prescribed for school – the only sizeable market for literature in the vernacular” (Chapman, *Ibid*). Evaluation of their works outside this context would be disingenuous.

2.10. Generic impediments of literary criticism and scholarship

Several sociolinguistic, anthropological and historic studies conducted on the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa have penetratingly explored various forms of oral traditions but not poetry. Critics expressed a range of challenges and impediments towards treating oral poetry in the languages, some negative and some positive. These include, among others, the researcher’s limited grasp in employed poetic techniques or context. Notably, in the field of oral artform the researcher’s prejudice towards traditional artforms seem to be another common hindrance. Of course, sometime in-translatability and use of rarely used language factor in, but sometimes a poet’s delivery is blamed. In their account, *The Realm of a Rain-Queen*, Krige and Krige (1943:95) write, “the exquisite poetry of these praise-names cannot easily be rendered in English.” Nevertheless, they included a couple of praise lines such as “*Mujaji mushava ndoni, Khifidula-maru-a-Daja* (Modjadji, huckster in her hut, transformer of [Daja] Clouds).”

Critics depicted oral poetry depressingly, perpetuating innumerable ungrounded fallacies around it (Mashabela, 1973:1). Joubert (2004:388) admits that at times limitations are contextual thus, “difficult to decode and understand within a certain framed context, and often in need of interpretation.” Lestrade (1932:296) rightfully argues that praise poems, for instance, are “highly figurative and allusive nature of words and expressions used, which require a considerable amount of extensive and intensive historical as well as ethnographical knowledge for their understanding.” More so, some metaphors are regional, cultural or sector-based. Unreasonable remarks are often made, exposing critic’s lack of reasoning backbone, as if the poet should distort his culture to accommodate the critic’s needs. Van Zyl (1941:125), for instance, says:

The traditional way of delivering a praise is to start and proceed with the greatest speed possible, saying it rather softly and pronouncing the words most indistinctly. Due to this method a European, who has a perfect speaking knowledge of the language, may not be able to understand anything of what is said.

Then one wonders if the problem is with the poet who recites swiftly or the listener who listens slowly. In fact, oral poetry is not limited to performer-audience functionality. It is, therefore, self-evident that at times the critic's shortcomings were blamed on the poet, if not his performance. Admittedly, archaic, dialects, and other regional variations occasionally feature, yet at times, claims of such syntactic impediments were but sheer justification of a critic's failure to grasp linguistic or poetic intensity of a poem.

Those who complain about clichés in the realm of *thetotumišo* often refer to communal and unnegotiable identity embodied in praises. Praises, as defined by Opland (1971:170), "are short, personal sentences or phrases commemorative of notable action and event." Praises also define the genealogical lineage of a person and their totem. Meaning, families and relatives are likely to share particular praise lines of their personal *diretotumišo*, which is not due to uncreativity but rather a generic positioning of an individual within a clan, place, or chiefdom. As Eliot eloquently puts it, a poet cannot choose the world into which he is born thus, he must make his poetry out of the world that he is given (Eliot, 1980). Over and above this, in the context of *thetotumišo*, the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poet draws first from factual inspiration, yet he creatively goes beyond realism.

It is emphasised that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry, or African poetry in general, is an entity on its own as opposed to an extension of European poetry. Advocates of this view, however, fail to articulate attributes of African poetry that make it distinct from poetic forms elsewhere. No matter how accurate it is that essence of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is not Eurocentric, the argument should not be misused to lower analytic standards when treating poetry in the language. As noted by Nwoga (1973:11), "African writers themselves resented a tendency to lower standards when assessing their writings." This is one of many hindrances towards ensuring quality and impactful criticism.

2.11. Performance poetry: Matlala (1953)

In his speech delivered during the poetry evening event that was held at the White House, former US president, Obama said, “we’ve turned to poetry when we can’t find quite the right words to express what we were feeling” (Obama, 2011). Many people view a *seretitumišo* (“praise poet”) as the well-informed mouthpiece, the bearer of a community’s senses. *Seretitumišo*, therefore, possesses more than “quite the right words to express” feelings, they are also the think tank of the society. In addition to feeling, we turn to them for knowledge. Thus, the societal expectation is for a *seretitumišo* to compose poetry spontaneously on anything and everything.

On 2 June 1953, the Coronation Committee in Pietersburg tasked the poet, Elias Koena Kgatishi Matlala to compose a *seretotumišo* for England’s Queen Elizabeth II. Such a task is not new to the South African poetic milieu, in 1925, Samuel Mqhayi was also tasked to compose an *umbongo* (isiXhosa “praise poem”) for England’s Prince of Wales on his visit to South Africa. Due to limited knowledge on this crown prince of England, Mqhayi resorted to composing a generic *umbongo* about the arrival of the missionaries with bibles and guns. What stands out about Matlala’s composition is his deep understanding of international affairs, which enabled him to easily “manipulate tradition and its values, giving them fresh relevance, fresh meaning, fresh being” (Okpewho, 1976:35) to create a cross-culture composition.

Willem Jacobus Pretorius (1989:6) in the book, *Aspects of Northern Sotho Poetry*, reminds us, “[i]n Northern Sotho poetry, compounds instead of wordy descriptions are often effectively used to imitate or to express a specific idea;” and that “[n]ames play an important role in the expression of particular thoughts and ideas, especially in traditional poetry” (Pretorius, 1989:51). This is not to suggest that *diretotumišo* “are largely built up of a series of praise names and praise verses” (Finnegan, 2012:126). The names Pretorius is referring to are not necessarily people’s concrete names but rather antonomasia (another name), onomatopoeia (a made up name), metonymy (altered name), synecdoche (a symbolic name) or any other trope that depicts, connotes, or derivatives from, a particular action or context. Elaborating the context of his poem for Queen Elizabeth, “Seemole a Engelane,” Matlala (1953:4) says:

Mohumagadi Edisabetha wa Bobedi o biditšwe “Seemole,” gobane ka Sesotho mosetsana yo a reng a yo wela ya ba rragwe o tlhokagetše, ge a boya o bitšwa “Seemole” la kwela. Bjale Mohumagadi Edisabetha wa Bobedi o beilwe bogoši rragwe a tlhokagetše. Ngwanabo kgošanagadi Margaret o biditšwe “Ramasela” gobane ke phejane ka gabo.

[“Seemole,” a name referring to Queen Elizabeth II, is because in Sesotho a girl who attends initiation school after the decease of her father is upon her return renamed “Seemole.” Queen Elizabeth II, therefore, was inaugurated after the death of her father. Her sister, Princess Margaret, “Ramasela” because she is the last-born].

Immediately after his performance of the poem, the then mayor of Pietersburg, D.H. Hartmann stood up and jumped to the stage to request Matlala to translate the poem, a request seconded by *Komosasa* (Judge) P.C. Tweedie (Matlala, 1953:5), and this translation was included in Matlala’s poetry compendium, *Manase*. Apart from being the author of the first essays-only collection in the language, he authored plays such as *Tshukudu*, *Serogole II*, *Tshaka I*, and *Tshaka II*. The latter and the penultimate matched works such as Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka* and Mazisi Kunene’s *Emperor Shaka the Great*. Matlala is the true genesis of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa literature, the first acknowledged *seretitumišo* (“praise poem”), proving that *thetotumišo* (“praise poetry”) is composed by nameable individuals.

There is little documented evidence of Matlala’s poetic legacy, yet he is one of the first to, exquisitely explore subjects outside his cultural context. His ability to sustain a high level of quality and creativity even when dealing with foreign concepts or affairs remain unmatched. Furthermore, he remains a unique contemporary poet who fused various influences within the realm of traditional *thetotumišo*. Form, pattern and approach of his *thetotumišo* challenged poetic purism, paving a path that inspired a great number of experimentalist poets. His epoch-making writings gave Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa an intellectual and literary presence.

2.12. Internationalization through translation: Mamogobo (1959)

SehloDIMELA, Ramokgopa, Machaka, Mamogobo, Lephaka and Khaas went with the trend set by Matlala, supplanting oral poetry collectors with other unique poetic approaches. The 1926-born Phorolo Matheas Mamogobo's poetry volume, *Leduleputswa* (1959) is applauded to be part of the path-pavers of the mushrooming experimental poetry in the language. Similar to early Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa writers, was Nebo-born Mamogobo who studied at Arkon and completed his matric in Botšhabelo Missionary Station, in Middelburg. Inspired by the oral poetry, Mamogobo advanced it to a new order, exploring contemporary issues. He studied towards BA degree at Fort Hare University, and completed a Master's degree in Theology at Hamburg University in Germany. He taught at Lydenburg High (Mashishing), and lectured at Woyenthan Mission School (Heidelberg), Botšhabelo Education College (Middelburg), and Maphumulo Seminary College (Natal). Writing about Mamogobo's poetry, Mamabolo (1995:18) states that:

His poetry is a baffling lyricism, a display of language usage in which rhythm, sound and meaning are moulded together to exalt and to stir the emotion.

His poem, "*Sello sa Pheladi*" was later translated into Afrikaans by Matime Nchabeleng, Murray Louw, P.S. Groenewald, Annemie Joubert and Antjie Krog, and appeared in *Met Woorde soon met Kerse*. Its English version appeared in Antjie Krog's *Skinned*. Most recently, Michèle Metail translated it into French, *Éloge de Pheladi*, and it appeared in the French anthology of South African poetry edited by Denis Hirson, *Pas de blessure, pas d'histoire*. This is the first Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poem to be translated to a language spoken outside of South Africa. A stanza in his poem, "*Afrika, Nagasello*," reads:

1. *Afrika nagamašotošoto, o le ramalwetši bohloko o kwa kae?*
2. *Namane 'e bohloko go baba kae, o lla sa mogolodi nonyanamahlomola*
3. *O gatilwe ke maswena dira matlakgothopa*
4. *Mabala a tšerwe o tšenetšwe ke phehli o fatolotšwa mala*
5. *O pherekantšwe kgopolo bana bengšako ba bolawa ke tlala*
6. *Afrika bowa, kgola merithi bana ba dule ka boiketlo.*

1. [Africa, the fortunate land, where's your ache, father of maladies
2. Where's your ache, you mutilated calf wailing like crane birds of misery
3. Buccaneers have stepped on your shore, freebooter!
4. Lands are snatched, a worm is drilling your intestines
5. Mind twisted, your native children are famished
6. Return Africa, weed out shades for your children's peaceful rest.]

Contrary to the dominant hypothesis that claims poetry in African languages is utterly apolitical, Mamogobo's poetry is nothing short of socio-political discourse. His metaphors are unambiguously clear, his tone unapologetic aflame, calling Europeans "[di]phehli," which connotes unwelcomed intruders. Equally, unlike claims made on dissident poetry or poetry of insurrection being unpoetic, Mamogobo's literary merit, similarly to Serote's "*Sello sa Thaba-nthso*," is unquestionable. His metaphors and imageries are exquisite; intricately intertwined without obscuring the meaning and rhythm.

2.13. "The best of times:" The Matsepe epoch (1960)

Writing about the 1950s' Sekhukhuneland Revolt, Peter Delius mentions that from this state of unrest, "[c]hampion musicians, singers and dancers also emerged" (Delius, 1990:2). What he left out is that a strong tidal wave of writers was part of this artistic erupt. Amidst them was a man who came to be known as the façade of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa literature, novelist and poet Oliver Kgadime Matsepe, "O.K." as better known. "It was during this period that stretches from about the late 50s to about the early sixties that authors adapted the techniques of praise poetry to their everyday experiences" (Mamabolo, 1995:17). Groenewald (1983:1) regards the year 1960 to 1982 as "the Matsepe period." Although one can argue that there are notable writers who became prominent before the end of the mentioned epoch by Groenewald, one is bound to concur with his opinion on 1960 being the year in which the Matsepe period commenced.

If there is a writer who received sufficient scholarly attention in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, it will indisputably be the 1932-born Matsepe from Phokwane in Nebo. His contribution to the literary milieu is unquestionable. The available studies, however, are far from exhaustive based on the quantity and quality of his oeuvre, more so, the variety of genres and aspects it

covers. Matsepe, equivalent to Benedict Vilakazi, explored exotic poetic forms and techniques such as rhyming, sonnets and ballads with an unrivalled passion and distinction. His Afrocentric novels, centred on rural life, employed rich indigenous elements of oral tradition, especially *thetotumišo*. Matsepe's exquisite prose writing style scooped two Samuel Mqhayi Prize accolades (1964 and 1973); the SABC Prize (1972); and the E. R. Ramaila Prize (1978).

Matsepe worked as a clerk at the then Department of Bantu Administration which offered him more exposure into civil issue in relation to his people, in addition to his everyday observations. His literature dealt with timeless issues of human behaviour and relations. The fact that he completed his matric through private studies speaks volume about his self-motivation and determination, determination attested by his matchless lengthy novels. There is no doubt that had he received an opportunity to pursue tertiary education, he could have become one of the leading scholars of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. His four lengthy novels, namely *Kgorong ya Mošate*, *Letšofalela*, *Mahlatse a Madimabe* and *Tšhelang Gape*, remain the best thing to ever happen to the language. He was a literary gem of his own league, a literary genius that deserves a library, street or museum to be renamed after him.

Matsepe published five poetry volumes, yet I am of an opinion that the best of his poetic contribution was in his novels rather than in his poetry compendiums. Apart from the question of functionality of his poetry, which other scholars deeply explored, I believe limitations of rigid acculturated structural patterns Matsepe employed in his poetry somewhat shades his creativity. His poems are caged in mechanical structural confines such as sonnets, ballades, Shakespearean/Latin rhyme schemes, etc., what Vilakazi (1938:110) regards as "outward decoration." In defence of literary eclectics, Vilakazi (*Ibid*) writes:

If we imitate the form, the outward decoration which decks the charming poetry of our Western masters, that does not mean to say that we have incorporated into our poetry even their spirit.

Matsepe should be commended for his fearless exploration of exotic poetic forms, although the same exploration somewhat slacked his poetics. What his poetry achieved, though, is to prove that poetically, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is not what European or western languages

are not, and in fact, at times it can be flexible than many of those languages. He also wrote Afrocentric poems, employing the “*Kgomo e a tshwa*” formula. As Ntuli (1984:236) concludes, “[t]he success of Vilakazi with his borrowings indicates that we cannot discredit a writer for using material from other sources.” The same holds for Matsepe’s structural experimentalism. As accurately observed:

Matsepe’s poetry is in essence a poetry of censure. Social and moral improprieties are chided. In all his poetry, praise poetry, social censure, pious concepts and assessment of Nature there is always a vein of censure, he is an innovator [...] (Mashabela, 1982:36).

As an entity, his poetry is good, but not better than the poetic approach of his novels. None of his individual poems, in my view, qualifies to be crowned *crème de la crème* of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry. In the first chapter of *Tshelang Gape* (Matsepe, 1974), for instance, we are told of people who have “*dikgopolo tše sa tšwafego di bilego di sa tšhabego go tšwa mafogohlo a go nyakišiša mmakgonthe*,” meaning brains which are not lazy nor afraid of developing inquisitiveness-caused mental “chafing.” This is but one of many fresh and exquisite imageries found in Matsepe’s prose. Natural musicality carries the story throughout like in, say, “*baratani le baetelani*” (lovers and those who pay each other a visit) and in, “*dikgati tša aretse tše di golotšwego ka aretse*” (whips of who-knows, tied by who-knows). In *Letšofalela* (Matsepe, 1972) descriptions are mostly in *thetotumišo* compounds form, such as “*tšitširipa ya kgope thobalamalalatle*” (a giant bachelor who forever sleeps out); and people of “*mahlo a dintlha tše telele*” (lengthily arrowed eyes). In *Mahlatse a Madimabe* (Matsepe, 1970), apart from poetics in his prose, he included an oral poet character who was spontaneously tasked to praise a newly named child, Seitshwenyeng (Matsepe, 1970:3), and the poet says:

1. “*Kgomo e a tsha!*”
2. “*E gangwa ke mang?*”
3. *E gangwa ke nna Seitshwenyeng se seso mabiloko,*
4. *Kgomo ya pholo ga ke tlanakelwe ke malomeletša go phela;*
5. *Ge o sa nkgolwe sepela go bona lekoriba la Lerageng*
6. *Noka yeo go e batamela go tšhabjago ke tau ya ka meetseng!*

7. *Se itshwenyeng ka go edimola ga ka romeletša ke tlile ka noši,*
8. *Ge ke nyaka ke tloga ke nyaka ye e nkago dithebele le popopono*
9. *Eupša e paletšwego ke go iphekola le go itokišetša ditsela.*
10. *Iphumuleng megokgo banabešu tšela di fetile go fedile,*
11. *Seitshwenyeng ka noši ke sebeela ga a kgwathwakgwathwe;*
12. *Wa kgwatha yena o rafutše mereo ya motse ka moka.*

1. ["The cow is spitting"]
2. "Who is milking it?"
3. It is milked by me, Don't-bother, a black thing among wild berries,
4. I'm a bull; dogs which agitates me never live;
5. For testimony go to the Lerageng riverbanks
6. A river that even sea lions fear to approach!
7. Bother not, stop yawning, it's me who's personally here,
8. When I hunt, I hunt all out like divine bones and illness
9. However, divine bones failed to heal themselves and pave their own path.
10. Wipe off your tears, fellows, bygones are done and dusted,
11. Bother not yourselves in attempt to concur the undefeatable me;
12. To defeat me you must first uprooted all pillars of the village.]

In the poem, Matsepe employs the traditional introductory formula in line 1, 2, and part of 3. According to Mashabela (1979:44) the stem *-tshwa* may be a "poetic corruption" of *-swa* (to burn), meaning "the cow's udder is burning". In my opinion, line 1 symbolises cow-breasts spitting out milk, thus *kgomo e a tshwa* (the cow is spitting...through its breasts). Subsequent to this formula is a compound name, which in fact represents a verb not a noun. The theme of the poem is re-echoed in line 7 and 11, attesting to the imperative role of names in *thetotumišo*. "In Matsepe's poetry we often find an adaptation of proverbs where certain words are transposed or replaced by others which are not normally used in that specific idiomatic context" (Pretorius, 1989:6).

Line 3's "a black thing among wild berries" symbolises uniqueness, be it of character or complexion. Line 4 portrays the type of warrior the person is, which resembles the much-

feared riverbanks of Lerageng, banks dreaded even by water-dwelling creatures. This connotes that he is regarded as a warrior by those acclaimed to be warriors. In line 7, the person claims to be a much revered, thus offended by attention-deficit. He hardly rest before accomplishing a task like divinatory bones “chasing” illness (line 8). He however emphasises how incomparable he is by ridiculing the same divinatory bones, which heal and pave paths for others yet they failed to do likewise to the creature from which they are extracted. In conclusion, he urges people not to bother themselves in consulting diviners in attempts to defeat him since his strength is tantamount to that of all men of the village combined.

One can argue that in *thetotumišo* is a genre that “makes” other genres. This is self-evident in folklore narratives, traditional songs, *kiba* artform, and of course in other literary forms. *Thetotumišo* is, in a way, the mother of all literary forms. Perhaps this is what Scheub refers to when he says, “[t]here never was a story without a poem, and there never was a poem without a story” (Scheub, 2002:24) and that “oral poems evoke, express, explore, and mo[u]ld feeling” (Scheub, 2002:29).

A lot has been written about authors who “imitate” the Matseperism, yet it is evident that many scholars cannot distinguish between influence, parody, burlesque, borrowing, imitation, emulation, assimilating, parallel hunting, plagiarism, and piracy. Influence is not equal to lack of originality, more so; no work is uninfluenced. As Garrison in Mamabolo (1991) asserts, “[i]f originality were defined as the creation of entirely new products or ideas, without dependence upon the work of others, few if any of the world’s masterpieces could be termed unoriginal” (Mamabolo, 1991:19). Most importantly, uniqueness is not a synonym for creativity. Sometimes poetic creation is but communication with former or future works, forms, and practitioners.

Matsepe, therefore, employed poetic prose in his novels, a poetic form defined as “an exquisite ornately florid style of prose writing often alliterative, antithetical and embellished with elaborate figurative language” (Cuddon, 1999:293). Matsepe’s (1968:1) signature quote is the parallelism, “*Re llela go phela, re llešwa ke go phela,*” implying that we strive for life yet tormented by the very same life. This quote is not from any of his poetry collections, but his novel, *Megokgo ya Bjoko* (1968). “Poetic prose is usually employed in short works or in brief

passages in longer works in order to achieve a specific effect and to raise the emotional temperature” (Cuddon, 1999:681). Although the likes of Serudi and Mashabela explored particular aspects of Matsepe’s poetry extensively, many other aspects remain unexplored, begging for academic attention. It is regretful that none of the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa teaching institutions have not yet seen it fitting to award Matsepe’s literary contribution and knowledge production with a posthumous honorary doctorate. To say a prophet is never famous in his own town is self-hatred, worse off, to deprive the already famous prophets any honour is being at war with oneself.

2.14. Post-Matseperism: Lentsoane (1973)

Women are traditionally bearers of culture and oral tradition, so attests Herbert Mokadi Lucky Lentsoane who confesses that his grandmother, Elsina Makuntane Makgabo drew him to poetry (Lentsoane, 1973). Lentsoane, who served as a Radio Leboa presenter for the *Baithuti Kgothekgothe* show, was the head of University of the North’s Department of African Languages for 14 years until his 2001 retirement. With a title such as *Direto tša Mang le Mang* (Everyone’s Poetry), one might speculate that the 1946-born Lentsoane realized that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa was somewhat “an educated man’s business,” and he deliberately attempted to push the frontiers to accommodate a common man. Similar to most acclaimed writers in the language, Lentsoane hails from Nebo, GaMarishane in particular; and attended school at Bopedi-Bapedi although he matriculated at Orlando High in Soweto.

His precise diction, rich visual imagery, and critical reflection distinct him among the rest. Perhaps the fact that he received education in both Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa and Setswana gave him a wider exposure into various poetic heritages. Though not rigidly attached to a particular form, Lentsoane’s structuralism is evident in how he explores different poetic forms and structures. Lentsoane’s seven poetic accounts include *Ga se ya lešaka le* (It does not belong to this kraal), *Mokgako* (Muddle), *Ihlo la Moreti* (A Poet’s Eye) and *Kgogamašego* (Nocturnal Fun). Lentsoane is one of the poets who introduced previously unexplored poetic styles and techniques to the language (Tshauke, 1995:10). His ability to explore various techniques to achieve different effects outshines many of his counterparts, a factor that partly attributed to large number of studies conducted on his poetry. Together with Johannes

Maibelo, Mawatle Mojalefa, and Puleng Nkomo (NS Puleng), he produced a series of poetry anthologies, *Direti tše Nne* (Four Poets).

2.15. Noteworthy poetic voices

In terms of quality and quantity of written poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, 1970 – 1990 remains the best epoch ever, in particular the 1980s, a decade in which South Africa experienced worst instability ever. As if to validate a belief that adversity and tribulations are parents of great poetry. It is, of course, poets such as Fela, Bopape, Ratlabala, Tseke, Madisha, Mashala, Tseke, Machaka, Maebela and Maibelo, who made this period the peak of publishing output of poetry in the language. This complemented the vibrant black poetry movement of *Staffrider* magazine and groups such as *Medupi*. There is no evident of poets organising themselves as a movement in the then Northern Province, except for individuals such as Ratshitanga who was part of the Soweto poetry circle. Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa generally operated in silos.

Both the Tseke(s) are on their own league, stylistically and linguistically. Simon Tseke's collection, *Bakantirang*, a witty must-read for any researcher of poetry in the language. Hailing from Mohlaletse in Sekhukhune, Tseke worked as a teacher before his subsequent promotion to an Education Inspector in the former Lebowa government. In *Lesiba la Bokgomo*, Tseke takes *thetotumišo* to a new height, one level above his predecessors. The same holds for Maserumule's *thetotumišo* collection, *Lefakong*, which is completely different from Phala, Ramaila and Ramokgopa's accounts. Maserumule's collection, at large, focuses on *thetotumišo* for generic names free from clan, totems and genealogical lineage referrals. Fela's *Sebilwane* reveals epics exist even in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. Madisha's *Kgopu ya Meroposela* has laudable poems worth reading. In terms of humour, Maibelo is unequalled.

Most of these poetry volumes, and literature books in general, exclude biographical information about the author. In terms of anthologies, one can argue that page economy counts, but one would expect biographies on poets' individual compendiums. Although a strong poem need no contextual background, author's short biography is a window that allows the reader to better navigate and contextualise the work. Quality of book production is of inferior; generally stabled spinelessly, with sketchy illustrated covers. Publishers argue

that such mediocre production stems from the non-negotiable deal the Department of Basic Education is willing to offer. Leisure reading is generally not catered in the realm of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry. There are just no books to decorate one's bookshelf. Regretfully, the above poets are all males, which is questionable especially if bearers of clan *thetotumišo* are traditionally matriarchies.

Around 1990, performance poetry attracted more attention, leaving three notable accounts on Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa oral tradition with reference to performance: Isabel Hofmeyr's (1993) *"We Spend our Years as a Tale that is Told"*, Debra James's (1999) *Song of the Women Migrants*, and Annemie Joubert's (2004) *The Power of Performance*. Hofmeyr's account questions the view that women of southern Africa were historically silent, which, according to her, contradicts the fact that women were historically regarded as storytellers. My point exactly! James takes this further by demonstrating how women migrants at the Reef did not only adopt a rural artsform – they further recreated a new variation different from the one practised by women in the rural hinterlands of Limpopo (*lebowa*). This suggests that for these women migrants, dance was not just recreation of "home" by "homeboys" but the invention of a new and independent identity uninfluenced by male domination.

Joubert, on the other hand, simultaneously explores song, dance and praise poetry of the "Hananwa" and the "Lobedu" using a broader approach. She encompasses the commonly ignored "derogatory/negative praise poetry", which, as scholars including Doke (1948:298-9); Sole (1983:42); & Kaschula (2002:12) have argued, attests that the *seretitumišo* is also not limited to "praises" as the term "praise poet" misleadingly suggests. "Praise poems are usually explicitly laudatory," Joubert observes, "but can also include complaint motifs, uncomplimentary and critical references to the hero, or they can be derogatory." (Joubert, 2004:385).

It is, therefore, ironic that there are only two poetry books by women poets in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, namely Emma Ramaila's 1964-published *Meeno le Direto* (Totems and Poems) and Phomelelo Machika's 2005-published *Peu tša Tokologo* (Seeds of Liberation). Two exceptional anthologies with strong women voices are N.S. Puleng's *Peu tša Lerato* which feature four women poets, and Maahlamela's *Tša Borala* which feature thirteen women poets.

Groundbreaking as they may be, men compile these two anthologies, not women. There is, therefore, a pressing need for women-led anthologies. Noteworthy women poets include Boledi Mphahlele, Matshidiso Motimele, Madihlare Molapo, and Maletsepe Rakoma.

2.16. Mojalefa technauriture collection (1976)

Mawatlé Jeremiah Mojalefa joined the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in the year of the Soweto Uprising, 1976. He joined the then Radio Bantu's white-only technical team tasked to collect oral artforms in the then Transvaal region (Mojalefa, Personal communication, 3/06/2014). It took only a year for his contribution to be notable, contribution highly acclaimed by critics and artists alike. One of them remarked:

Today determined efforts are being made by Radio Bantu to visit the various Northern Sotho speaking areas with the sole purpose of retrieving the traditional praise poems, which might die in the mouths of old folk together with the indigenous culture that is embedded in them (Makwela, 1977:156)

Steelpoort, a tiny mining town known to be the largest platinum producer in South Africa, has also produced one of the leading poetry practitioners and the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa scholar of note. It is exceptional when the talented display their talents, it is, however, even more humbling when they turn their talents into tools to discover, support, and showcase talents of others. The 1948-born Mojalefa, a former council member of PanSALB, has devoted almost half a decade to nurturing and exhibiting talents of others, be it through media or academia. Ironically, he finally took the office previously occupied by Lestrade, head of University of Pretoria's Department of African languages, who had no confidence in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa as a language. Quantity of studies he promoted attest that he understood that growth of any language is attributed to its practical use, not conference strategic talks which at most remain sandcastle constructions. Although the SABC oral tradition preservation project was teamwork, one need to acknowledge that the team relied solely on Mojalefa. Writing about that epoch, the former Station Manager, Mojapelo (2008:320) attests the sentiment by singling him out:

At that time, [...] Mojalefa was the SABC music producer. [He] discovered a lot of talent in gospel and traditional music in those days.

Recent media studies attest that in terms of audiences and geographical reach, radio remains the dominant mass-medium in the continent, as compared to television, newspapers and other information and communication technologies (ICTs). One may add that it also remains the most influential media outlet in countries still confronted with high level of illiteracy. Notably, most of the peer-review journal studies meant to resolve challenges facing proletarian communities, remain inaccessible to the very same communities (Pretorius, 1982:28). Ignoring radio might mean ignoring the heart of knowledge dissemination in such countries.

Cultural wealth preserved during this initiative is still accessible at the Polokwane SABC Library even to date. If it is accurate that “many a praise-poem of these commoners have been lost for good and will never be recovered” Mamabolo’s (1995:17), then we equally need to credit the SABC for what is today retrievable such as the Majalefa *technaurite* collection. In the audio track, “Mohlaka Motala” in the album, *Pelo e Gopotše Lebowa*, the *kiba* virtuoso Johannes Mohlala conveys his gratitude to Radio Leboa for the role it plays in the society of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, but more particularly to him as a musician/*kiba* poet:

1. *Radio Leboa ke maphuthaditšhaba*
2. *E phuthile ba bannyane le ba bagolo*
3. *Radio Leboa mohlakamotala*
4. *Ke tate sebelega ditšhaba*
5. *Tšatši la hlaba senamolela batho*
6. *E re tsošitše ka mahube ra phahama*

1. [Radio Leboa is the gatherer of nations]
2. It gathers and embraces young and old
3. Radio Leboa, the evergreen
4. The father, conceiver of nations
5. Each sunrise, it is people’s rescuer

6. It awakens us at dawn] (Mohlala, 1982).

Mojalefa's sourced collection of traditional Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry includes poetry by *kiba* poets. This marked the midpoint of orality and digital technology, which, according to Kaschula and Mostert (2011) is termed, *technauriture*, a term coined to capture the transdisciplinary paradigm that embodies recording, treating, and preserving orality through technological advantage. Decoding the term's etymology, they state that the "techn" implies technology, the "auri" derives from the word *auriture* that speaks to performative realization, and the "ture" signifies literature (Kaschula & Mostert, 2011:3-4). If technology, here, refers to all forms of digital recording as stated, then radio stations fall squarely in this realm.

Notably, the ongoing digital preservation discourse narrows into software archival which somewhat fails to recognize, or choose to ignore, the role and impact radio stations play in enhancing communication, particularly in countries confronted by low internet penetration, if not expensive data, such as South Africa. Mostert (2010:149-150) states that:

No poet or oral performer remains untouched by the influence of radio, television, the Internet, and constant interaction between the oral and written word. In Africa, television and radio remain the driving technological influences promoting the oral word. Increasingly, the Internet is also playing a pivotal role.

Realizing how some of Mojalefa's collection on the vinyl and cassettes are corroding, the SABC has embarked on a digitalisation project, an understaffed project progressing in a snail pace. How much can be saved? How much will be lost? With cellphone innovation, Information and communication technology (ICT) is rapidly becoming inevitable in some African countries, as one can argue about the so-called first-world countries. The ongoing migration from analogue to digital is bound to affect all in various ways. Even in the least developed countries, digitalisation discourse discloses that in spite of economic impediments, aspiration of technological development is unescapable.

Reflecting on his fieldwork experience, Mojalefa explains that technical challenges such as power failure enhanced his insight in relation to lack of rigidity in composition and

performance of *kiba* poetry. In the event of power interruption, they would restart the recording from the beginning, only to note the difference between the subsequent recording and the interrupted recording, both of the same poem. Sometimes such difference was substantial such that it sounded like a new poem altogether (Mojalefa, Personal communication, 3/06/2014). This says the process of performance is sometimes tantamount to re-composition, answering to Makwela's (1977) observation that the same clan poem in both Phala's (1935) and Ramaila's (1954) accounts differs. Among others, the Mojalefa collection includes *kiba* groups from Modderfontein, GaKibi, a group named Bana ba Moruti Letlapa, and various *harepa/dipela* infusing *kiba* poets.

2.17. Poetic knowledge production: Serudu (1989)

Sešegotheto (Poetic Storage), a poetry anthology compiled by Maje Stephen Serudu (1989), is the most acclaimed poetry anthology in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. This 431-paged anthology comprises of poetry published in an epoch ranging from 1935 to 1988, that is, from oral poetry transcribed by Phala to the works of contemporary poets who redefined poetic landscape in the language. Before then, poetry anthologies were the 100-paged type featuring a few poets, if not friends. The solemn aim was but to fulfil the school prescription screening criteria, nothing more, nothing less. Serudu's endeavour was an answer to scarcity of tertiary learning material in the field of poetry in the language. His foreword states, "*Dipukutheto tše re nago le tšona ke tše nnyane, ka fao ga di kgotsofatše dinyakego tša mananethuto a diyunibesithi le dikholetšhethuto tša rena*" (Serudu, 1989), translates, poetry anthologies we currently have are trivial; they do not meet the requirements and needs for our university and college curriculum.

Serudu understood that the half-cooked mentality of school-prescription approach when compiling poetry anthologies is but a disservice to the language, the speakers, and both their growth. For a language to develop and match prominence of others, we need selfless and devoted individuals who will not only measure the value of their time in currency, but also in positive impact to the lives of others, especially future generations. As Kunene (1965:vi) puts it, "[t]raditional poetry has done much to preserve a common language." Poetry plays an unrivalled role in the growth and intellectualisation of a language. "In order to intellectualize African languages, universities and language practitioners need to be engaged in the larger

national historic, social, economic and political context of language use” (Magagane, 2011:39).

Before its ethnological significance, *thetotumišo* has literary significance. In addition to its literariness, it further has historical and philosophical interest (Cook 1931:184). In this age of decolonisation, it is disgraceful that the Department of Basic Education’s (DBE) poetry screening criteria is still largely Eurocentric and of crude monolithic rigidity, with oral poetry treated as a side-dish. Moloto (1970:21) rightfully asserts, “praise poems have all the qualities of European poetry,” a point this study attempts to demonstrate yet further arguing that Africa oral tradition has many rich layers to qualify it to be taught as an entity. Glorification of acculturated techniques at an expense of native traditions is not only an insult to indigenous knowledge production, but also an insult to the intellectualization of African languages.

The technique-obsessed mechanics of poetry analytics kills content-based creative engagement with the poem in a more imaginative way that will activate the right brain. Poetry, at least in the context of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, is not mathematics governed by unbending facts, logical, sequential, rational, objective, ordered patterns and forms. As Pretorius (1982:29) accurately observes, “[t]he content and form of traditional African poetry vary.” Furthermore, Kunene (1965:9) reminds us that such poetry is “characterised by the essentials of all great poetry – imagination and feelings.” Failure to decolonise such outlooks will validate and reinforce misleading notions that African poetry is an extension of European or western poetry.

Benchmarking the state of literary criticism in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa in contrast with its counterparts, Mashabela (1973) concluded that it receives negligible attention, “except for [...] Groenewald’s untiring efforts in this direction nobody seems to be interested” (Mashabela, 1973:2). At least, in the 80s, two other researchers, Serudu and Mojalefa, dominated the field, complimenting Groenewald’s conspicuous efforts. In terms of quality study that captures the marrow of oral poetry in the language, Pretorius’ (1988; 1989) works are prominent. Most criticism in the trajectory explore works of individual poets, particularly Bopape; Ratlabala; Matsepe; Ramaila; Fela; Lentsoane; and Puleng.

In terms of anthropological and historical repertoires, the three dominating scholarships are on the following polities, Balobedu (Modjadji), Bapedi (Sekhukhune), and Bahananwa (Buys/Malebogo). Given that, a high number of dialects translates into distinct and independent polities, one can imagine the backlog of quantity of rich unstudied polities neglected. Scholars such as (Eileen) Krige, Franz, Hunt, (Jack) Krige, Kruger, Mönnig, Bothma, Delius, Makhura, Setumu, Kriel, and Nkadimeng contributed immensely in this study.

The most astonishing account, however, is Kruger's *Tlôkwa Traditions* (1937), which starts with the following description: "The Tlôkwa were a large tribe. But there was no peace amongst them. They were fierce people with never-ending quarrels. Owing to their quarrels they slip up into many groups" (Kruger, 1937: 86). These Batlokwa seem utterly different from the ones in Botlokwa (South African) and in Tlokweng (Botswana), thus it becomes imperative for capable natives to rewrite such history, failure for which this misleadingly homogenous impression will remain projected about them.

Doke contests that the oral heritage of "the Bantu" is "native, indigenous, and almost entirely untouched from the outside" (Doke 1948:287). Perhaps the best take could be that it can be touched from either side, yet it mostly requires grasp of inside insight. Mashabela (1973:2) claims, "to get a clearer idea of Northern Sotho traditional poetry, it should be viewed not as an entity in itself, but as a part of a greater whole, which we may call traditional literature." I am of an opinion that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry is all what any other poetic form from anywhere can be, the distinction is mainly on preference. It is, however, such comparison misleadingly employed in defence of hegemony of exotic forms at the expense of native creative wealth. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is not, and should not be treated as, an extension of a rigid exotic poetry but rather with an admittance that it is an entity within its own cultural context, an entity that occasionally borrows from, or shares with, other entities.

Jacottet noted as earlier as 1927 that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa "comprises a very large number of dialects which are in some cases very different from each other," (Jacottet, 1927:xi). This results in additional layers to meaning in relation to the language. Mokgokong (1978) exquisitely explored the concept of *Meaning in the context of culture*, illustrating many

factors that calls for a specified cultural knowledge and vigilance before any poetic analytic endeavour in the language. This study evidently attests to the fact that in the context of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, meaning is a multifaceted concept.

Kgobe's (1989) study, *The Oral nature of Northern Sotho "Direto"*, explores compositions of *diretankwe* (royal oral poets) of the Sekhukhune Polity. Captivatingly, amid the 5 *diretankwe* he probed, all above the age of 70, he regards Molwatši Matlala as "an excellent artist who recited better than any other poet during my research" (Kgobe 1989:ii). Matlala, a visually impaired woman *seretankwe*, is a perfect case study for the definition of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa oral poetry in its spontaneous composition. More so, she attests to the fact that the publishing industry is not the true reflection of the poetic landscape as far as gender is concerned.

As much as one appreciates growth in terms of quantity of poetry studies in the language, one admits the palpable imbalance. These include scarcity of women poets, women critics, and a generic undesirable depiction of women in actual poems. Studies are mostly characterised by lack of benchmarking and exposure. Self-evidently, most of them are library-bound, with no idea of what is happening in the field of the poetry industry. Such a single-minded outlook leaves students vulnerable to the urge of guarding views of their mentors and their mentors' mentors. With all these, one can safely conclude that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry criticism is largely what Adichie (2009) calls "a single story." Adichie argues that a single story is problematic since it generates stereotypes. "[T]he problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue," she asserts, "but that they are incomplete. They make one story becomes the only story" (Adichie, 2009). Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is many stories awaiting exploration.

Admitting to this great discrepancy between poetry anthologies in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa in contrast with other African languages spoken in South Africa, Timbila Poetry Project commissioned the compilation of, *Tša Borala*, a 242-paged anthology that took six years of quality assurance. Contrary to Serudu's *Sešegotheto*, it deliberately targeted leisure readership. Poems featured are generally unpublished, contemporary, and unlike the rest of "complete" poetry anthologies, it has a fair gender balance. The quality of poems written by

13 featured women poets attests to the fact that priority was given to merit, not gender equation; thus, the outcome reminds us that poetry is indeed not a man's business. Apart from taking Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry to a new height, *Tša Borala* unapologetically broke rigid, crude, monolithic barriers and pedagogical red tapes. *Tša Borala* ascertains that "dialects" do not necessarily have to be harmonised, as many scholars argue, in order to coexist and complement each other.

2.18. Doorkeepers and kingmakers: "N.S. Puleng" case study

Failure to develop leisure readership meant literary success was, and still is, measured through one indicator, namely, school prescription. Some individuals responsible for the screening process of school prescription, were themselves writers whose books were also subject to evaluation, such conflict of interest remained unnoticed or unquestioned by the Department of Basic Education. Corruption equally infiltrated the post-1994 recommendatory bodies such as the PanSALB, resulting in nepotism, favouritism, and bribery. Such hidden dirty agendas attributed to the deterioration of the major Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa writers' organisation, LEBADI. The Gauteng-born, Puleng Samuel Nkomo, better known by his pseudonym "N.S. Puleng," is a perfect case study of poets who suffered the politics of gate-keeping and king-making of these essential organisations. Nkomo's early poetry was prematurely and unreasonably disregarded mainly due to his eclectic approach and of course his so-called "unauthentic" surname. Nkomo, a son to a Zimbabwean black missionary and a gaMadisha Mopedi woman, opted for a pseudonym, pretending his name was a surname. This, as Mokgoatšana puts it, "gave him a new identity" (Mokgoatšana, 1999:1).

Born in Bongweni, Randfontein, he then attended school in Zebediela, Seshego and Montobia (Mankweng), matriculating at Hwiti High School. His writing reflects multiple layers of identities he embodies, "lives" he lived, and linguistic exposure that encompasses his eclectic family. Nkomo's poetry is not "performing on the page," he lay down his unpretentious soul in the most autobiographic yet exceedingly creative way, portraying many complicated layers of complex and contradictory worlds. Writing about these worlds, Mokgoatšana (1999:2) says:

He suffers the domination of a racist, imperialist/apartheid domination and on the other hand, he is subjected to discrimination by his fellow Africans who are shaped by well-structured and ordered apartheid thought which consolidated a strong sense of ethnocentrism among African people.

If it is a soul of a poet, you are looking for in the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry, then the main name in that trajectory is “N.S. Puleng.” In 1984, he scooped two awards, one for his poetry compendium, *Seipone sa Madimabe* (An ill-fated Mirror), the second, for his play aired on Radio Leboa, *Mantšu a ke a bomang?* (Whose voices are these?).

His socio-political approach is the “in-your-face” type of dissident poetry sprouting from bottomless inmost, written in plain words of deeper meaning. He unmasked the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry from ambiguous rhetoric, yet he did not compromise quality for ideological framework. As Tshauke (1995:5) puts it, Puleng is “closer to reality and to an experience.” Notably, his poetry of insurrection protrudes narrative images, not party politics nor slogans. His 1994 sarcastically titled poetry volume, *Le diphiri di tla utologa* (Even wolves will re-emerge), attests to his unapologetic radicalness in his reflection of the 1994 political transition. As elaborated by Mokgoatšana (1996:3):

His poetry does not only mirror the horrors and evil nature of colonisation, but transcend the limits of protest against imperialism and goes further to lash at social improprieties without regard to the problem of race and class.

“N.S. Puleng’s” poetry oeuvre encompasses *Ditlalemeso* (Current affairs), *Kgaa Kgati tša Khwiti ya Noka yešo* (Cut a whip of our riverbank tree), *Malopo a Boreti* (Poetic divination), *Thellenyane Botlbolele* (Slippery, the easy-come), *Kabelo* (Conferred portion), *Sefahlego sa Pelo Ya Ka* (My heart’s face). Exploring all his poetic contributions, one is bound to concur with Tshauke’s (1995:11) sentiment, “[t]he influences discernible in Puleng’s poetry are traditional, exotic and political [...]” These render him the unique breed in the entire milieu of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry, possibly the only writer who uses a penname, Mr Puleng!

As much as a language has its distinct stockpile of recycled figurative expressions, it equally boxes a writer's expressive style. Nkomo, however, freed his poetry from such restrictions through maintaining essence of heterogeneity, borrowing approaches from various traditions to enhance and enrich aesthetics of his poetry. In her book, *Black Writers From South Africa*, Watts (1989) writes:

[B]lack writes in South Africa have taken on a double task: to break through the existing ideological framework as part of the liberation struggle, and to undermine the power of western critical discourse: to put a stop, within their own environment, to the policing of language, to the ideological support system provided to the power structure by the literary institutions.

Language policing is one of the impediments of poetry in any language, and in the context of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa the major players in this regard have been the DBE, DAC's Language Services, the PanSALB, LEBADI and academia. It is only today that many purists and gatekeepers start realizing the important element Nkomo's poetry was bringing to the poetic milieu in the language.

2.19. The Hudua Period: Makobe (2000)

Bishop Molopeng Tau Makobe, a 1961-born poetic genius from Ga-Phaahla in Nebo, is arguably the current face of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry. At the age of 25 his debut volume of poetry, *Meduuetšo ya Mesobonanana* (1986) was published. After pursuing his first degrees at the University of the Witwatersrand, he went to the United States of America where he completed Med, Msc, and studied towards EdD. Makobe continued writing in his mother tongue similarly to the likes of Mazisi Kunene. Commendably, he started his career as a bricklayer, today he is a deputy director at the National Department of Higher Education and Training.

Cisneros (2000:14) metaphorically states, "[a] writers can write about life only if he experienced death." It was only after surviving what could have been a fatal accident, he decided not only to live to his "Bishop" name and lead a ministry, but also to pursue a doctoral

degree in Theology. His poetry blends topics relevant to younger generation yet imbued with moral and traditional essence. Although titles of his poems and poetry volumes are somewhat hard to decode, the content is mostly penetrable. Exquisite is his ability to unpack an accustomed story in a fresh and intriguing artistry. He authored, among others, a poem regarded as one of the *crème de la crème* of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, “*Hudua*.”

1. *Piša o hlatsweditšwe,*
2. *Diphehlo le maho di taitšwe,*
3. *Maupi le meetse o lokišeditšwe,*
4. *Mollo o gotšeditšwe ke fela, fehla!*
5. *Fehla o be o hudue ngwana’a mokgalabje.*

6. *Hudua pitša ya ngwanarra,*
7. *O se no šoma go tšhela bupi, O tloge o tiiša huduo le,*
8. *O hudue gabotse ka boiketlo,*
9. *Gobane ka lebelo o tla phankganya,*
10. *Wa phankganyago wa dira dikgokolo,*
11. *Ka go hloka mollo le go se hudue, sekoko ya ba bjona.*

12. *Bo riteletše o bo riteletše le mo mathoko,*
13. *Gobane ke pitša efe e fehlelwago gašana fela, e ka loyago?*
14. *Goba ke bofe bo ka butšwago mollo o le gare fela?*
15. *Hudua! Hudua! Ngwanarra,*
16. *Kgotsofatša pitša ye e thelegilwego,*
17. *E bile o na le mahlatse o e hweditše bonolo,*
18. *Gobane pitšana ye e bohlokwa, ye pitšana,*
19. *Meetse goba ke a makae ga se ao e a hlologelago,*
20. *Segologolo ke khuduo;*
21. *Ke mo o tlogo aga motse,*
22. *Wa tsebešoro o nkwele!*

He employs a simple domestic metaphor deriving from the hearth, describing an intricate and somewhat explicit subject. Makobe's imagery remains cohesive and coherent throughout, ambiguity maintained effortlessly until line 16. The first stanza a –tšwe natural “rhyme” demonstrates the musical richness created by morphemes, which at its best outshines mechanical rhyme schemes. His uneven line length and stanza pattern illustrate how liberal his approach is, allowing the poem to create its own form that speaks to its tone and flow. Distinct diction emerges on line such as “Bo riteletše o bo riteleletše le mo mathoko” (line 12). The poem's ambiguous giveaway is in line 16 where what was all along a *passive* “pot” apparently has feelings that require to be satisfied; and in line 19, does not *miss* water. This is more of symbolism than a pure personification. The poem ends with a preachy yet humorous line that laughs at the reader's intellect, as if to say, “He of brave ear, heard (understood).” In this poem, a rural scene reflects realities of both rural and urban areas, revealing how multifaceted connotations of rural scenery are. Over and above this, the poem denotes daily domestic activities in a rural hinterland without electrical advantage, ambiguously connoting erotic activity.

Mokobe's poetry volumes include, *Merako ya Afrika* (Africa's walls), *Nkune se, Mphe se!* (Deny me this, give me that), and *Dinnete tše di babago* (Bitter Truths), most of them were prescribed for school syllabus, including for matric. Makobe's accolades include the PanSALB Award and South African Literary Awards (SALA), the latter which he won three times. In addition to winning the Nadine Gordimer Short Story Award, Makobe's poetry impeccably answered the question Gordimer (1973) asked in her book, *The Black Interpreters*, about black writers: “Are they writing good poetry?” During Makobe's era, some noteworthy poetic voices were Andrew Nkadimeng, Lerole Mamabolo, Mabonchi Motimele, Victor Molele, and Tlou Setumu. In 2006, a century after Jacottet's study, David wa Maahlamela published his debut poetry volume, *Moswarataukamariri*, which was defined as, “extremely rich and beyond the normal 22 year old brain” (Mashego, 2007:12). This completes a century of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa.

2.20. Conclusion

The conversion of oral poetry into a written form, and its development has been slow, partly due to the natives' overreliance on missionaries whose missionary endeavour had little to do with cultural and linguistic development unless if, and when, identified as a potential tool to enhance their colonial agenda. With limited and incomprehensive preliminary treatment of oral poetry by both the missionaries and the natives, the first half of the 19th century was generally a dry season for poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. Several natives carried the yoke and contributed tremendously, this includes Serote, Ramaila, Phala, Lekgothoane, Matlala, Mamogobo, to mention a few as discussed above. Early critics in the language, however, made peculiar remarks that, consciously or intuitively, committed the same sin against which they were intending to advocate. Ungrounded classification of poetry types also shadowed literary merits of great metaphoric note. It was indeed quantity not quality which was in question.

It might be accurate to say that early compositions of black South African poets who wrote in English was optimistically Christian, lacking a sense of assertive polarities (Couzens & Patel, 1991:2), moderately and apolitical (Chapman, 1984:183), superficially delving into intricate issues (Makwela, 1977:2), but this does not hold truth for early Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry. The first half of the 19th century was dominated by *thetotumišo*, which had no religious element at all, unless mentioned passingly. As Kunene asserts, *thetotumišo* is affirmative and assertive artform, boasting confidence of the praised and of the reciter (Kunene, 1965:4). More so, this *thetotumišo* is nothing short of radical socio-politics, as attested to by some of the analysed poems.

The word "traditional" is often employed to describe poetry written during this first half of the century. However, the process of oral-to-written conversion itself represented a paradigm shift, adaptation and emulation that can rarely manifest without loss, change, and adjustment. Leibhammer and Bila accurately caution, "[t]he term *traditional*, if used to imply unchanging contexts, static social structures and conservative mindsets, is deeply misleading as a description of the first half of the twentieth century. Instead, it was during this period that fundamental and devastating changes occurred" (Leibhammer & Bila, 2011:69). The same holds for the nineteenth century.

The form and technique of Serote's poem, *Sello sa Thaba-nthso*, for instance, were neither "traditional" nor acculturated, but an eclectic experiment that explored rarely embraced figurative languages such as sematic and structural ambiguity of enjambment and apostrophe-based personification, in addition to vivid and striking indigenous imagery of onionskin meanings. In the poem a place once utilized as a battlefield is regarded as a widower in a dusky unilluminated roundavel sitting in a pool of gore, a striking metaphor followed by a confrontational rhetoric that echoes sceptic attitude towards the same missionaries who educated him, wondering if won't they repeat bloody history. Reverend Serote, therefore, was an unassuming but brave wordsmith willing to embrace the hand that fed him, yet willing to bite it should it feed him poison.

Looking at poetry in the entire language, even though God is occasionally and passingly mentioned, there is a scarcity of poetry that explores spirituality in terms of Christianity. Paradoxically, Lekgothoane reveals that poetry is a prayer among Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, yet no poet can equal, say, "Rumi," or "Rabindranath Tagore." More peculiar is the fact that the largest religious institution in the country, the ZCC, originates among Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa. Serote's poem was not ecclesiastical but socio-politically engaging, confronting colonial attitudes and barbarism that led to the Thabantsho massacres of 10 May 1864. Over and above, this suggests that South African poetry of any epoch is indescribable in one sentence, or inconclusive to be one thing and that thing only. It is highly heterogeneous to be summarised, particularly by people who have linguistic limitations yet having the urge to state blanket "facts." What is true for one is not always true for all.

Regarding the language question, "ga re Bapedi" (we are not the Bapedi), a bold line from one of the *thetotumišo* in Ramaila's 1953-concluded anthology, delegitimizes the term, "Sepedi," attesting to the fact that it is exclusive. This means that Jabavu was correct to say Sepedi is the language spoken by Bapedi, yet the poem points out that the term "Bapedi" is not all-encompassing. Conversely, Jacottet (1927) reminds us that the term, "Sesotho sa Leboa," is a direct translation of Northern Sotho, and that it originates from a missionary geographic description, "Transvaal Sutu," which Bleek subsequently classified as Northern Sotho. In addition to historic facts, literature shed some light, attesting to the fact that both terms are

historically and culturally incorrect. As revealed in Serote's 1993 book, the generic term used was "Sesotho" and "Basotho," which in the context of the current day poses further challenges since it was ultimately designated mainly for Basotho ba Moshoeshoe. My emphatic point is that the only feasible solution is for all responsible and affected parties to reach a compromise based on what is best for the future of the language.

The Sepedi vs Sesotho sa Leboa debate desperately begs of Constitutional Review Committee's decision-driven deliberations. With heritage expert and a speaker of the language, Mathole Motshekga, being part of the current Constitutional Review Committee, it should be better equipped to resolve the dispute. As illustrated in this study, none of the names is more legitimate than the other, thus an open-minded negotiation is necessary. The common objective should be to strive for what is good for the language, all its speakers, and their future. "Sepedi" has cultural authenticity, and "Sesotho sa Leboa," social cohesiveness. The PanSALB Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa Language Boards (both provincial and national) should commence an all-inclusive re-standardization process free from purist oligarchy and dialectic gate-keeping, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, in particular the speakers and poets who are the first custodians of the language.

Poetry published in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa has been an exclusively "educational enterprise" and "an educated man's affair," dominated by educators writing for the education system. The school system and publishing houses, institutions that are supposed to foster the love of poetry, are the greatest architects of African languages poetry's demise through their limitation to artistic freedom. Failure to own book production and to decolonise the school prescription methodology will continue costing African languages its literature's growth. "The struggles of black writers in South Africa have been long and hard" (Couzens & Patel, 1991:1). To say a person is forever young, can be a complement, particularly when referring to their physique; the same positivity cannot hold if it is referring to literature. Regretfully, the review of the past century of written poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa suggests that it is forever young, far from competing with its counterparts.

Apart from the lexical richness of the poems, many being utterly untranslatable, limited comprehension, poor translation and unpenetrated criticism have misrepresented oral

poetry to be sketchy and of questionable literary merit. It is therefore evident that translation can either resuscitate or suffocate a poem. It is thus accurate to view translation as an intercultural mediator, requiring of a researcher to be bicultural in addition to bilingual. Translation is a highly specialized command of both the original and target languages, but more so, the ability to creatively manipulate them. Departments of African Languages should invest more in translation, and this should not be limited to translating into European languages, but other African languages such as Yoruba. There is a great need to nurture a future generation of poets in the language, particularly women poets, more so, to transcribe more of oral poetry. In the following chapter *kiba* poetry will be further contextualised.

Chapter 3: Kiba Poetry

3.1. Introduction

Poetry is the heartbeat of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa society. It permeates every corner of social and spiritual life, be it in its chanted, recited, or spoken form. Several *kiba* studies have noted or acknowledged the poetic aspect of the *kiba* artform, *kiba* poetry remains an uncultivated field of study, a field that represents the face of oral poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. *Kiba* poetry is a dusty artform that holds an unpretentious mirror to the societal soul. This Chapter gives a preliminary view into *kiba* poetry, its definition and distinct features. It further probes its applications and functionality in the realm of oral poetry. In creating an entry point into this poetic form, works of a dozen *kiba* poets will be explored, with a focus given to the works of Johannes Mohlala, who is indisputably the face of *kiba* poetry. My approach, however, will be of literary interest: investigating the degree of merit in creative and artistic resources found in the secular *kiba* poetry. The *Free Kiba* concept, the dominant discourse in this realm, is interrogated in relation to the current state of the artform. The chapter does not aim or claim to be exhaustive in its approach, it only presents a sample of what this poetic genre entails.

3.2. Kiba

3.2.1. Kiba artform

Kiba is a heterogeneous indigenous artform and an artistic communicative medium that embodies a blend of dance, song, music, poetry and theatrical elements. Predominantly practiced by Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, the *kiba* artform encompasses a wide range of cultural formations and ensembles including *dinaka*, *sekgapa/khekhapa*, *leboa*, *makgakgasa*, *mokankanyane*, *mararankodi*, *mmapadi* and *mantshegele*. Some of these names, in essence, are but regional or dialectic synonyms. About Nigerian artforms, Amechi Akwanya says, “art for the Igbo is a way of experiencing the variousness of things, and the artist is one who surprises his audience with this fact” (Akwanya, 2000:59). In *kiba*, it is not only the audience who experience the “variousness” of things in terms of the content of the performance, but the artist also enjoys this “variousness” in several artistic genres embraced in this resourceful compendium. *Kiba* offers “freedom for *self* to talk about *it-self*.” This “self” can be an individual, cultural group, community, ethnicity, race, culture, nation, religion, or the artform

itself. Moreover, this “variousness” and “self” include “a wealth of local knowledge about the pre-colonial past” (James, 1999:22), meaning identity, origin, heritage and value systems. This means in addition to its presence, *kiba* defines people’s past and future aspirations (James, 1999:36).

Culturally, Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa and vhaVenda have many similarities, and *kiba* is one of them. *Dinaka* ensemble is tantamount to *tshikona*, although *tshikona* is strictly practiced in royal assemblies, thus called “*lwa-ha-masia-khali-tshi-vhila*,” meaning its command is obligatory: “the time when people rush to the scene of the dance and leave their pots to boil over” (Blacking, 1973:51). *Malende* too has a lot in common with *sekgapa*, *makgakgasa*, and other woman dominated *kiba* forms. Gender based classifications of *kiba* can be problematic since in most cases drummers for the so-called male ensemble are woman; the opposite is occasionally true. Madimabe Mapaya argues, “[t]his does not mean that *dinaka* is a female genre, but that whatever women do musically, emulates *dinaka*” (Mapaya, 2014:427).

3.2.2. Kiba attire

Cowhide is the primordial *kiba* attire, currently replaced by *motoiši*-type homemade designs of colourful and diverse patterns, which sometimes include the maroonish *maskhotšho/maskhotšhe* (the Scottish tartan kilt pattern) theme or a Vatsonga *xibelani*-type design. Dresses, skirts, and *ditukwana* (body wraps) are generally of below-the-knee length, adorned with exquisite beads and sometimes ostrich feathers as additional decoration. Footwear is commonly *masantase* (white and light sneakers). There are male groups that still adorn cowhide, yet commonly white or brown *bemonda* (short pants) are worn, with the Scottish kilt on top. Some wear plain white t-shirts or vests, some more sophisticated handmade designs. Hand props include sculptured axes for women, and knobkerries and broken tennis rackets for men. Military themes also feature strongly in designs, which is said to hold military commemorative significance.

3.2.3. Kiba instruments

3.2.3.1. Meropa (cowhide drums)

Legendary poet Rashaka Ratshitanga says, “[t]he sound of an African drum is like the voice of our forefather talking to us down the ages” (Ratshitanga, 1986). *Meropa* (singular, *moropa*) are the most important driver of all *kiba* formations. These are mostly handmade out of a metal “drum,” tin or a wooden sculpture of a similar shape enclosed on one end with a cowhide. *Meropa* are played using a combination of bare palms and a piece of a hosepipe, resulting in sound variety. Some groups believe drums are highly spiritual, similar to the cult drum of Balobedu. *Kiba* is generally a four-piece drum set: a large, a medium, and two tiny drums. Sello Galane (2011) in “Sebobu sa bo Mmashela” employs a perfect metaphoric naming of *kiba* drums, namely a (1) *father drum* for *senkgokolo*, a big pulsating drum covered on one end by a cowhide, reverberating a heavy rhythmic sound. It is played with a single hand-held cut of a hosepipe. A (2) *mother drum* for *kaedišo*, a medium size drum, usually a 20-litter tin or tree-log sculpture, played with bare palms, and it coordinates, corresponds, and determines dance and stomping moves of the dancer. The (3) *daughter and son drums* for *dithopana*, two pot-like harmonizers of different tones, played by a single drummer with two thinner hosepipe cuts.

3.2.3.2. Dinaka (end-blown reed pipes)

Among other reasons, urbanisation and climate change result in reed scarcity, leading to the use of aluminium or metal manufactured end-blown pipes by *kiba* practitioners. Use of different sizes of pipes result in a diversity of tonal pitches. *Dinaka* are portable, played by directing an airstream into the open end of the pipe, and the collective melody is commonly in a call-and respond style.

3.2.3.3. Dipela (mbira)

Dipela, sometimes referred to as “thumb piano,” is an idiophone instrument made of a set of staggered metal tines mounted on a flat wooden board through wires. These are in adjusted sets, and they can be a single or double row, and the wooden board that usually comes with a little hole at one corner in which the player will insert a finger to strut the board while playing. When a tine is plucked, its motion causes adjacent tines to vibrate and eject sound.

Therefore, unlike a piano, the ultimate sound is not from the plucked note itself, but rather the adjacent notes.

3.2.3.4. Harepa (autoharp)

The German Lutheran missionaries introduced *harepa*, a five-tone scale autoharp, to Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa. The pioneering musicologist, John Kirby noted the use of the instrument within Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa communities in the 1920s. The first recording was, however, in the late 1940s. Kirby noted that during the first recording, “the harps were tuned to the five-tone scale” different from the originally imported German version. The presentation also, was different, “vocally centred style structured around the circular patterns found in most African music” (Allingham, 2008).

3.2.3.5. Lekope (jaw harp)

Lekope is a resonating instrument played when placed on the mouth to produce a resonator effect from the cavity echo, especially in the jaw. It is the simplest to create since it requires a flexible string, wire, metal or bamboo to be attached to both ends of a reed. It is recently becoming a rare musical item in the *kiba* trajectory, in spite of its simplicity. Similar to *lepatata/phalafala* (horn), *matšhwatšhwa/ditlhwatlhwadi* (seedpod leg-rattles) and *nakana* (flute/whistle), *lekope* is used as a garnishing instrument, unlike in the past whereby it was played independently.

3.2.4. Kiba practitioners

3.2.4.1. Salient custodians

Kiba practitioners are in two categories, namely the salient and the ancillary custodians. The salient custodians are generally rural-based and they chiefly use *kiba* as a means of communication and recreation. Groups that perform *kiba* under this category include Mafolelosha Nkwe Thabeng, Mailagofenywa, Maaparankwe, Magana go Bushwa, Bahananwa Tribal Group, TV 12 Cultural Dance, Bapedi Culture and Music (BACUM), Makgakgasa a Mapulaneng, Khekhapa kha Bolobedu, Sekgapa sa Sekgopo, Molepo Traditional Dance Group, Dinaka tša Moletjie GaMatamanyane, Dk. Mashobohlang, Dk. Malebogo, Dk. gaMokgehle, Dk.

gaDikgale, Dk. gaMothapo, and various parts of Sekhukhune. These groups usually meet on weekends (Joubert, 2004:273; James, 1999:1) at “makeshift bars” (James, 1999:1) or bottle stores, and they perform without charge, are given food, or beer or both as tokens of gratitude (Joubert, 2004:273).

3.2.4.2. Ancillary custodians

The ancillary custodians, on the other hand, are mainly individual musical professionals who explore, adapt, emulate, or imitate the product of salient custodians beyond the indigenous traditions of the artform, adding modern or acculturated elements. The ancillary encompasses the likes of Philip Tabane, Sello Galane, Tlokwe Sehume, Geoff Mapaya, Selaelo Selota, and Lesiba Maja, to name but a few. Caiphus Semenya’s song, “Khando,” falls within this realm. With his concept, *Free Kiba*, Sello Galane is the face of this category of *kiba* constituency that promotes *kiba* beyond the borders of Limpopo Province.

3.2.4.3. Pioneering recorded adepts

Notably pathfinders in the recording of *kiba* artform are the *harepa/dipela* infusing *kiba* poets: Johannes Mokgwadi, Enerst Rammutla, Beshua Malamba and Johannes Mohlala. These individuals became more popular than the ensemble from which they belonged. This *kiba* type, was then perceived as an entity on its own, thus the comment, “[a]n individual genre, playing the same songs on a *harepa* without the dance spectacle, enjoyed greater success on record than did *kiba* itself.” (James, 1999:16). Johannes Mohlala, a visually impaired harpist from Kgobokwane in the rural hinterlands of Sekhukhune, is the only one out of the four who is still alive. He was known and acclaimed for his composition approach, to borrow Albert B. Lord’s (1960) expression, he composed “*in* rather than *for* the performance”. Without braille facilities, he was obliged to be impromptu in his creation thus his various recordings of the same song sometimes sound completely different. Generally, these pioneering recorded adepts extemporise.

3.2.5. Kiba promoters

3.2.5.1. Gallo Records (EMI)

Lucky Monama produced most of Mohlala's albums, a few were produced by West Nkosi, known as a member of the Makgona Tsohle Band. Mohlala's poetic artistry led West Nkosi to blackmail him prior the release of the *Khunamang* (1976) album so he could write for Johannes Mokgwadi, another *kiba* musician promoted by Nkosi. As explained by Gallo archivist, Rob Allingham (2008):

West Nkosi, however, seemed to have an additional agenda – he insisted that Johannes write songs for a competing *harepa* artist named Johannes Mokgwadi whom Nkosi wanted to promote. When Johannes refused, Nkosi applied more pressure by deliberately holding back the release of his recordings. Eventually, after more than a year had passed, Johannes complained directly to Bopape who then ordered that the album be released immediately. By this time, it was too late to arrange for a sleeve photograph so an artist was commissioned to do a drawing instead. The album sold very well, thanks again to the heavy airplay that it received on Radio Lebowa.

The recording industry was not only characterised by doorkeepers, but also by kingmakers. In addition to merit and excellence, the *kiba* adept was faced with corporate politics.

3.2.5.2. Radio Bantu (Radio Lebowa/Thobela FM)

In spite of recording companies' politics, listeners still determined *kiba* albums that captured their spirit of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa. Based on reception on airwaves, EMI was obliged to push its frontiers beyond the norm of recording only one session for *kiba* adepts, based on high demand of Mohlala's poetry enriched work, subsequent sessions were arranged resulting in his corpus of nine well-received albums. Radio Lebowa's Tshepo Ramogwebo was instrumental in the dissemination of *kiba* albums, in particular Mohlala's work. As explained by Gallo's Rob Allingham, "In 1971, Tshe[po] Ramogwebo, a Radio Sepedi [Bantu] presenter who had been impressed by Johannes' EMI releases, asked him to record some radio transcriptions (these were recordings for broadcaster only). Two transcript sessions followed and the resulting material was given extensive airplay." (Allingham, 2008).

3.3. Kiba poetry

3.3.1. Definition of kiba poetry

“[T]he first function of criticism is classification” (Akwanya, 2000:61). Classification of artistic products or forms, however, can be problematic if, and when, read as a suggestion of similarity. The term *kiba* poetry is, therefore, not descriptive nor definitive, it only systematizes poetic forms of a particular link. Things unnamed often go unnoticed, or worse, are deemed non-existent. In contextualising the importance of naming, neuroscientists say the brain relies heavily on words in its interpretation of thoughts. *Kiba* poetry is a poetic form composed in, or for, *kiba* performance, or any suchlike enthused by, or associated with, *kiba*. Enthused, here, is not narrowed to words, it encompasses style, approach, and form.

Kiba poetry comes in multiple forms and genres, with or without musical accompaniment, and it is recited, spoken, or chanted. Although the term chiefly denotes poetry recited as a prelude or interlude during the *kiba* performance or experience, it also incorporates poetry related to such artform. The term does not suggest any particular form, structure, mood, or approach, as is the case with, say, *sonnet*, *haiku*, or *elegy*. With all these, it is self-evident from the on-set that the term, *kiba* poetry, can never be definitive. The essence of *kiba* poetry mainly “lies in the way the words lean upon each other, are linked and interlocked in sense and rhythm, and thus elicit from each other’s syllables a kind of tune whose beat and melody varies subtly” (Cuddon, 1999:678). In other words, the rhythm of words, and the *kiba* (beat) forms a poetic rhythm and beat whose flow relies mainly on alliterative rhythm than rhyme.

Kiba poetry is largely a hybrid of poetics and lyrics, reconfigured in such a way that results in a multilayered meanings within the realm of orality. Poetic wealth is shared mostly in tandem with a beat or rhythm of musical instruments or a song. Pretorius’ (1989) study, *Traditional Songs as Part of the Northern Sotho Poetic Heritage* (1989) and Petje’s *Survey of Bapedi Women’s Songs* (1998), both echo Makena’s (1987) *Theto ye e lego košeng*, illustrating the organic interception of *kiba* song and poetry. Admittedly, at its best, *kiba* song imbues poetry, making the distinction between a song and a poem is more of a labyrinthian equitation. As noted by Petje, “[p]oetic techniques are employed [in *kiba* songs] to heighten the language

to the level of succinct poetry,” (1998:46) and Pretorius adds that, “[a]spects such as imagery, parallelism, allusion, developing of thoughts, metrical patterns, sound usage, etc. which mark *thetotumišo* are important devices found in these songs” (1989:81). In the above studies, *kiba* poetry is treated as songs with poetic essence, different from Ntuli’s (1990) study, “*Remarks on Maskandi Poetry*,” which probes poetry imbued in music. Probing the poetics of a song is tantamount to identification of figurative language; conversely, probing poetry in music is inclusive of ultimate structure, forms and literary magic of the entire. Similarly, we are told:

Poetry is said to be the dominant category of literature and the major art form of the Swahili people of the East Africa coast. Yet, when performed, all Swahili poetic forms are intended to be sung or intoned, and melody is an integral part of Swahili verse (Campbell & Eastman, 1984:467).

To say that *kiba* poetry is composed “*in* rather than *for* performance” (Lord, 1960) is not to say the poet always creates a complete new poem each time they recite. Even when an old poem is performed, it is interpreted afresh, sometimes it is more like re-composition, meaning, “[a]lthough there are certain fixed phrases, they are not always recited in a regular order or sequence” (Joubert, 2004:268). As illustrated in Lesibana Rafapa’s (2016) study, *kiba* poet’s rigidity is mostly on the overall idea not the actual wording, structure, and approach. *Kiba* poetry is a living literary experience influenced by various aspects such as the tone, tempo, and rhythm of the instrumental accompaniment. Good musical additions can invoke creative density of *kiba* poetry, which might result in supplementary lines. Apart from low energy, weak musical addition might lead to lines being omitted. This, however, applies only where musical accessories are involved. Over and above this, the editorial process in *kiba* poetry is never ending, supporting the view that a poem is never completed; one can only abandon it.

Repetitive sound of organically inherent morphemes and ideophones produce exquisite musicality that somewhat surpasses the traditional Anglo-Saxon rhyme scheme. When combined with, “rhythm, chiasmus, parataxis, repetition, alliteration and imagery, especially the metaphor” (Makwela, 1977:139), the sound becomes complete, not short of rhyming.

Absent of rhyming is, therefore, not a shortfall but rather lack of preference. Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa language is one of the most rhyme-friendly languages in the world with multiple dialects enriched vocabulary, enabling *kiba* poets to express the finest shade and the most delicate nuances of meaning (Kgobe, 1989:167; Joubert, 2004:388). Rhyming is not only a technique, but also a form, which can make or break one's poem. Sir Herbert Read says in Brink (1969):

I realized that form, pattern, and order are essential aspects of existence; but in themselves they are the attributes of death. To make life, to ensure progress, to create interest and vividness, it is necessary to break form, to distort pattern, to change the nature of our civilization. In order to create, it is necessary to destroy; and the agent of destruction in society is a poet" (Brink, 1969:116).

It is said that figurative sound effects such as onomatopoeia are "more common in English poetry than it [...] in Northern Sotho." (Lehong, 1995:85). This, however, holds only for written poetry in the language, *kiba* poetry employs onomatopoeia more than it is the case for English poetry. In *kiba* artform, a song is deliberately treated as though it was a poetic recitation, similarly, a poem is deliberately treated as though it was a song. Poetic ensemble and solo, chanted and spoken, have become social institutions (Nketia, 1974:177). *Kiba* poets use poetry to communicate and commune, to announce and denounce anything and everything around and within them. *Kiba* poetry, at most, is a projection of identity, attitude and ideology.

3.3.2. Oral poetry

Oral poetry in indigenous languages has been confused for nothing beyond *thetotumišo*, conversely; *kiba* poetry entails a wide harvest of forms and types. Given that, most great poets are inspired by, or borrow from, oral wordsmiths, proving that oral poetry is the mother of all poetic forms. "It might well be argued that oral tradition and oral expression should not be termed literature; but to-day a large body of this material is being recorded verbatim in writing, and in this way may be studied as the basis of a people's literature" (Doke, 1948:284). Words such as "witty" and "sonority" were used to describe traditional oral expressions of

Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa (Doke, 1948; Pretorius 1982; Mamabolo, 1991). The legendary poet, Rampolokeng (1993:22) reminds us that traditional Sotho music is, in essence, poetry chanted or half sung and half spoken.

Those without poetic backbone have overgeneralised oral poetry to be, or perceived it to be limited to, *thetotumišo*, which is deemed to be nothing beyond the bumptious art of braggarts. What they seem not to realise is that this artform has been the heart of African knowledge systems in practicing what neuroscientists currently regard as Affirmation, defined as repetition of the simple yet empowering statements. According to the *Mind Power* author, John Kehoe, affirmation not only influences and affects the conscious mind, but also the thoughts that emanate from it (Kehoe, 1996:27-8). More so, oral poetry comes in a wide range, each serving a distinct purpose. *Kiba* poetry attests to the fact that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa oral poetry is not one thing and that thing only. More so, that there are many other oral poetic forms in *kiba* poetry beyond *thetotumišo*.

3.3.3. Kiba poets

Kiba poets hardly claim the title of a poet. In fact, most of them regard themselves anything but a poet. Declaimers such as “*ga ke rete ke a lla*” (I am not reciting, I only weep out) or “*ga ke rete ke a rapela*” (I am not reciting, I only pray aloud) often accompany the poems, so as to emphasise that “they are not poets.” As if he was referring to *kiba* poets, Yeast writes, “the worst are full of confidence, the best lack all conviction” (Mphahlele; 1950). Rampolokeng (1993:32) accurately concludes, “best poets will never be known, will never be recognised, because they do not even see themselves as poets, just as people putting words out there, in the street, mouth to ear, the kind of communication.”

In the rural hinterlands of Limpopo from which these salient constituencies hail, there is hardly any delineation between everyday language and poetry. Here, everyday language is nothing short of a figurative coating. More so, poetry is not only a prestige language of the elites, if not the intellectuals. It is mainly for this reason such wordsmiths deem themselves anything but poets. The idea of a “unique make of people” who deserve a special title for speaking or writing what is viewed among them as “everyday language,” is a foreign concept. This makes sense, since every matriarch is by default the clan poet laureate, expected to recite

poetry in any given event. During initiation school, all initiates are expected to recite poems that are named *melao*, literally translated as initiation laws. Diviners and prophets equally communicate with the other world through poetry. Mere daily greetings between senior citizens can be an unrelenting epic of sorts. Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa “are culturally and socially rooted in poetry” (Masola, 1996:281).

The most misled and misleading hypothesis in the field of oral poetry has been that “the reciters” are not necessarily composers but they simply mimic what is passed down to them by preceding generations. Equally disturbing is a claim that oral poets have now learnt and begun composing original poems, a view that is misleading and suggests that they were previously not doing this. Let alone the contradiction of these two misconceptions, some scholars have confused communal identity found in *thetotumišo* to be clichés, if not intersexualization. What is deemed “constant borrowing and cross-referencing” (Gunner & Gwala, 1994:2) is by and large communal identity culturally compulsory in locating and positioning the individual among a clan, ethnic group and community. As noted by James (1999) that *kiba* poetry of Sekhukhune people include Sekwati’s name, the former chief. Sekwati, in these poems, is employed as symbolism connoting the place, his identity becomes a synonym of GaSekhukhune. Where a clan, chieftaincy, or regional identity is involved, one ought to take cognizance of the poet’s interpretation in terms of extensions, additions, abridgement, omission, displacement, truncation, improvisation and genre transition. All these translate, and add to the poet’s interpretational creativity.

These common and nonnegotiable identities in oral poetry, *thetotumišo* in particular, are mostly personalized to speak to the deeds of an individual, not a collective. Sadly, many scholars deliberately omitted individually known composers in the urge to support the view that *diretotumišo* are “the group mind,” which are “passed from generation to generation.” Researchers often claim they do not know composers, they “only know those whose performances were recorded;” (Vansina, 1985:55) yet those known “performers” too remain uncredited or unacknowledged. “The name of the composer,” as Tšiu (2006:78) claims, were perceived to be “unimportant.” The important figure ultimately becomes the researcher.

About the 2016 State of Nation Address in an article published in Mail & Guardian (19 – 25 May 2016); Tinyiko Maluleke writes, “the bloke who stole the show was the unnamed *imbongi*,” referring Siphamandla Xaba. He further says, “The only thing we were told about him is that he hails from KwaZulu-Natal” (Maluleke, 2016:23). In spite of the contemporary technological advantage and the fact that parliament is accessible for enquiring about the “unnamed imbongi”, the poet is unnamed. As much as one can blame the author of the article, the greater share of the blame is with the parliament TV crew for not displaying Xaba’s name, an omission that on its own speaks volumes about how marginalized *diretitemišo* are as public figures. This suggests that although *kiba* poets reject the “poet title,” such rejection might partly emanate from the generic societal mistreatment of oral poets.

In his study on Maila-go-fenywa, Masoga (2006) transcribed several *kiba* poems although, just like in Sello Galane’s doctoral dissertation, no literary treatment was given to them. Contrary to popular belief that indigenous artforms are apolitical, Masoga’s study consists of, among others, works of political commentary directed to the former president, Thabo Mbeki. The same holds for artforms such as *malende* of Vhavenda, which is not only political but also explicit, be it metaphorically, euphemistically, or literally. Most Buchum based groups fall within this realm, Enerst Rammutla’s work in general, and Bahananwa Tribal Group’s “*A je boswa*” in particular.

Šalda says Pablo Neruda has “the frightful audacity to take words from the street, unwashed and uncombed, and to make of them messengers of eternity” (Mukarosky, 1976:7). This best summarizes *kiba* poets’ approach. Paucity of recognition and decent rewards for *kiba* poets are part of daily exploitations facing these adepts, and the artform in general. They, however, view being a poet as a condition rather than a profession thus, they remain passionate in spite of the regular exploitation they encounter.

3.3.4. Types of kiba poets

3.3.4.1. Impulsive kiba poet

This is usually a culturally knowledgeable wordsmith or instant muse, who uses the advantage of his or her rich vocabulary, cultural knowledge and artistic creativity to compose

spontaneously about anything and everything, at any given time. This approach is usually linked to spirituality.

3.3.4.2. Primed kiba poet

This wordsmith research, gathers relevant information before the actual composition. Here, poetry is approached as a skill and not a spiritual endeavour thus, the poet takes full control by first gaining a deeper understanding about the subject to be praised prior to the composition. The actual composition might be before or during the performance.

3.3.4.3. Template kiba poet

Template poets approach composition in a prototype form such that they can use the same poem to praise many people or occasions, with of course a few substitutions of lines to contextualise the current event and subject. Elaborating the methodology of such a type, Isidore Okpewho in *The Heritage of African Poetry*, says such a poet “already has a set of phrases which he regularly uses for praising [...]. He simply needs to fit the names, the status, the career or the attributes of the new subject in the proper places, and that will serve him well for the occasion” (Okpewho, 1985:7).

3.3.5. Poetic ensemble

Claims have been made that there is no collaborative performance in the realm of Sepedi/Sesetho sa Leboa oral poetry (e.g. Kgobe, 1994). *Kiba* poetry, conversely, attests to the fact that the poetic ensemble forms part of poetic heritage in the language. Collaborative performance comes in a form of a duet or an ensemble. One further notes that *kiba* poetry is not rigidly confined to Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, a practice harshly forbidden in the tradition of written poetry in the language. In the duet, a call-and-response style is employed, poets jointly praising the same subject in a sequent of one line a poet, each continuing from where the latter paused. The second poet might rephrase, emphasise, or expand the latter poet’s line, rhyme, or idea. In a poetic ensemble, however, more than two poets recite simultaneously, at most, without any form of coordination. This is commonly practiced in the trajectory of spirituality where audiences are not ordinary, but filled with religious vigour. In

a tributary rendition, “*Re a Lla*” by Bapedi Culture and Music (BACUM), which pays homage to a *kiba* expert, the late Dr Manoko Lorrain Semanya, four poets recite concurrently. Similarly, performative-prayers employ the same approach of poetic assemblage.

3.3.6. Kiba poet attire

When referring to poets, Makwela says, “[t]he traditional bard adorns himself with ostrich feather on the head and legs, arm himself with an assegai and a shield; and around his waist adorn a G-string (stertriem) made of some animal skin and between its belt and the body thrust a knobkerrie” (Makwela, 1977:141). In *dinaka* ensemble, *malokwane* (“referee”/the conductor) is the poet of the ensemble, and he adorns the same attire as the entire *dinaka* troupe, if not added with distinct decoration so as to establish his rank. The current day *kiba* poet does not have a customary costume, he or she wears anything regarded as Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa traditional clothing.

3.3.7. Performance

Both poetry and *kiba* resemble or emulate the battlefield. The *Kiba* poets commence their performance in various way. In Cook (1931)’s words, the *seretitumišo* begins “like a fire-engine” (Cook, 1931:183), but at most, with an assuming soft-start that gradually intensifies into the vigorous battlefield attitude, “with a highly-pitched voice whilst moving this way and that, brandishing his spear, and occasionally stabbing the ground” (Makwela, 1977:141). Some *kiba* poets, depending on the context, recites without dramatized actions and gestures. Here, what matters is the mouth and what is articulated through the poetry.

3.3.8. Ignition of kiba poetry

Kiba poetry mostly starts with a casual and literal remark that subsequently bridges into the actual poetry. Lack of vigilance might lead to premature dismissal, mystifying it for a pure factual commentary. An attentive listener can notice the actual bridge from commentary to figurative essence. Even what is supposed to be a straightforward remark is often still poetic in many ways.

In the *dinaka* ensemble, ignition of a military yet playful drill-style salutation is performed before a prelude poem. *Malokwane* (the “referee”/conductor/poet) commands the entire *kiba* troupe to do a particular action, a call-and-response salutation style. As pointed out by

Okpewho, “[t]hose who look for religion or world-view behind everything in traditional art, have often ignored the basic play interest of the artist” (Okpewho 1976:2). The ensemble poet, *malokwane*, would say:

[Salutation:]

Malokwane: *Horiaa!*

Kiba Troupe: *Hoo!* or

Malokwane: *Horiya!*

Kiba Troupe: *Hoi!*

[Instruction:]

Malokwane: *Ntebelele!* [Face towards me] They then face inward

Malokwane: *Nfuralele!* [Turn around] They then face outward

After repeating it a couple of times, he would then liven it with a joke to cheer up the audience:

Malokwane: *O ntebelele gabotse ge go sebjale ke tla go raga “felotsoko.”*

[Look at me attentively otherwise, I will kick you “somewhere.”]

From here, *malokwane* will recite a prelude poem, which mostly introduces their group, an individual, or a song they are about to play. Ignition, therefore, draws attention of the *kiba* troop, and energises their spirit. *Dinaka* ensemble, similarly to jazz, carries overwhelming emotions thus, a playful ignition serves as a breather of sorts. Some believe that in its *mogobo* style, ignition awakens spirits of that particular *kiba* ensemble, if not of individual troupe members.

3.3.9. Scenario setting

In *kiba* poetry, intergenerational communication is achieved through scenario setting, a practise in which many poets can interpret a single in-definitive scenario in various ways. Popular scenarios include blasphemy (Morwa Kwakwa), disobedience (Tšhwene), migration (Mmope mankobo), and moderation (Bjala bja Mambobyi). About Morwa Kwakwa, Galane explains that it is the corrupt form of Morwa Gwangwa, meaning Gwangwa’s son. Although it is unknown what exactly did Morwa Gwangwa say, it is regarded as a taboo, thus

interpretations generally caution him never to say it again (Galane, 2006). The version below is by Matome Mothemane featuring in Bahananwa Tribal Group's track 5, "*O tla hlakana le tšhwene*:"

1. *Ngwana wa ngaka o a lwala*
2. *Moreko ga ethekole*
3. *Le tsamaya boshego*
4. *Le yo hlakana le tšhwene.*

1. [Diviner's child is not in good health]
2. A healer cannot heal himself
3. Travelling at night
4. You will meet a baboon.]

The poem above has two voices. In line 1 and 2, the person who walks at night gives their justification for walking at night, nevertheless, in line 3 and 4, the other person still cautions that walking at night is but an invitation of misery, it is unsafe. Interpreting the same "Tšhwene" scenario, Sello Galane says:

1. *O be o eya kae?*
2. *Bošego bjo bo kakaka*
3. *O yo hlakana le tšhwene.*

1. [Where were you heading to?]
2. At this late hour of the night
3. You are going to meet a baboon.]

In this poem, emphasis is on a particular time of the night, suggesting that it is perhaps justifiable walking during the early hours of the night, but particular times are not suitable. Johannes Mohlala's interpretation of "Tšhwene" is as follows:

1. *Bošego o be o eya kae?*

2. *Bošego o re ge o sepela*
3. *O tšhabe roto ke yeo*
4. *O tšhabe tšhwene e etla*
5. *Lena le sepelang bošego*
6. *Bošego ga go sepelwe.*

1. [At night where were you heading to?
2. When you travel at night
3. Be careful of a hermit
4. Beware of the looming baboon
5. You who walk at night
6. The night is not walkable.] (Mohlala)

Here, the scenario is interpreted differently, and the wording is descriptive. One therefore notes that in general the ancillary *kiba* custodians put greater attention on the musical aspects and lesser attention on the word craft as opposed to salient custodians whose musical aspects is gradual and monotonous yet their verbal punches are unpredictable. The salient custodians generally develop an idea fully; overload a song with as many poems as possible. The ancillary custodians mostly adopt a particular element, which they use as a symbol of the whole. In the same, “Tšhwene” poem, Mothemane overlaps to the next poem without any musical change:

5. *Mahadi 'a Borwa e tla o bone*
6. *Serope sa Mmatreka*
7. *E ka re letšatši le hlaba.*

5. [Beautiful women of the south, come see
6. Mmatreka's thigh
7. Is like a rising sun.]

Scenario setting compositions are interpreted in subjective ways, accompanied with fresh and distinct poetic perspectives. Some of these scenario settings include *Mmope*, *Fegolla sa*

Borala, Morwa' Kwakwa, Mokankanyane/Bjala bja Mmago Mpoyi, Seapeapotsa, Konkorite, A re a ja sa motho, Basadi ba Baeng, Seeta sa Montela, Mainama, etc. These various interpretations come in a wide range of musical accompaniments, from *harepe* (German autoharp), *dipela* (endblown reed pipe) or *meropa* (cowhide drums) to instrument-free rendition. Tlokwe Sehume, Geoff Mapaya, and Lesiba Maja, are some of those who explored the Mokankanyane scenario with great creativity.

3.4. Johannes Mohlala

3.4.1. Biography

Hlalefang Johannes Mohlala (78), a *kiba* maestro from Kgobokwane, was born in 1939 at Motetema, near Groblersdal in Limpopo. He is the youngest of four children born to his father's second wife. This visually impaired poet-cum-musician, intuitively learnt to play various indigenous instruments such as the *lengwani* (a hollow goat bone flute) and *dipela* (the mbira). He also founded a *dinaka* (reed pipes) ensemble, all these before the age of 17. Only at 17, he encountered an instrument, which would subsequently become the centre of his life, *harepa*. Even to date, Mohlala remains the face of *kiba* poetry among Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa.

Gallo archivist, Allingham defines Mohlala as "the most renowned and commercially prolific *harepa* musician." Although he adopted an acculturated instrumental, *harepa*, he played it in such a distinct way that left it speaking Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. *Harepa* nourished his work yet the heart of his artistry is in his instinctive poetic acumen thus, he was blackmailed to compose for his counterpart. Contrary to his name, Hlalefang, which means, "be wise," his poetry is not a pretentious intellectual pursuit, albeit that it shapes Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa values, principles and intelligence.

Gedye's (2008) comparison of Mohlala's harp to the West Africa's kora-dominated music holds, but more so, his observation that "the vocals are hauntingly beautiful" (Gedye, 2008). As if to support my argument, Allingham also asserts that it is Mohlala's poetic and melodic compositions, not the instrument he plays, that defines his success, "The most unique aspect of Johannes' talent, however, found expression, not as a performer, but as a composer"

(Allingham, 2008). Mohlala is an impulsive *kiba* poet, and his spontaneous methodology is described as follows:

[...] new songs [come] to him quite spontaneously. It is almost as if someone or something was sending him a message, and just about any event, large or small, seemed capable of providing creative inspiration. The fact that he lost his sight at the age of nine after contracting smallpox possibly accentuated his abilities in this regard. Today, Johannes – who is a deeply religious man – will only say that he has been blessed in many strange and unaccountable ways (Allingham, 2008).

After attending the Itireleng School for the Blind in Ga-Rankuwa in 1956, Mohlala worked at the school's cane furniture factory. In 1961, Mohlala worked with his sister, Elizabeth, who approached EMI's African producer, Rupert Bopape who gave Mohlala and her sister a recording deal. Even when his works dominated airplays, Mohlala continued working at the cane furniture factory. In 2004, at the age of 65, Mohlala retired to his homestead in Kgobokwane. In January 2006, he performed for the King of the Bapedi, Kgoshi Mampuru III, in the commemoration of Mampuru II, a very prestigious event among Bapedi of Sekhukhune. Apart from this, many do not even know that this wordsmith is still alive.

3.4.2. Corpus of work

From 1961 to 1995 Mohlala released nine albums, namely *Khunamang* (1976), *Bana Ba Kgwale* (1979), *Khallinan Setswallong* (1979), *Pelo Egoopetshe Lebowa* (1982), *Mmatshidi* (1983), *Bakgaphetse Megokgo* (1983), *Legalana No. 2* (1985), *Madi a Manaba* (1995), and *Phalaborwa ka Moshate*. The latter is different from the rest of his albums, in particular the title track, and it was a great success. The tempo is faster and purely hip-hop than *kiba* in its traditional form. Remarking on it, Gedye (*Ibid*) says, "Having sampled Mohlala's second album, *Phalaborwa ka Moshate*, I can highly recommend this..." Although Mohlala's relationship with West Nkosi did not work well, in terms of sound engineering the work of Nkosi outshone that of his other producer, Lucky Monama. This is more evident in the title track, "*Khallinan Setswallong*," produced by Nkosi.

3.4.3. Bana ba Kgwale

His name is used on all his albums - Johannes Mohlala & His Harp, but in his songs, he always acknowledged that he is part of the Bana ba Kgwale group, acknowledging the contributions of his sister and his wife. Johannes and Elizabeth, first born to his mother, initially formed a duet. Elizabeth sang counter melodies, recited some poems, and played the rhythmic *ditlhwatlhadi/matšhwatšhwa* (seedpod leg-rattles), and later, Mohlala's wife, Paulina joined Elizabeth, playing a *moropa* (a conga-type drum). Radio Lebowe's Tshepo Ramogwebo was instrumental in the dissemination of Mohlala's successful first album, which redefined EMI's norm of offering *harepa* artists only one recording session. In *Pelo Egopotshe Lebowe*, they added the third woman, the fourth of *Mmatshidi*.

3.4.4. Mohlala ignition

Johannes Mohlala, the legendary *kiba* maestro, begins his *kiba* prelude poem for the track, "Kgomo Modumo" with the following ignition:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. [Mohlala:] | <i>Dikgwari!</i> | [Kiba Troupe:] "Goa!" |
| 2. [Mohlala:] | <i>Dikgwari!</i> | [Kiba Troupe:] "Goa!" |

Then he goes straight to the poem without any further commentary or bridge:

3. *Haa ke a bolela nna Sekilikiti se modumo,*
4. *Ke pholo ye marapo a thata*
5. *Ke mokgokolo ke mothiša leeto*
6. *Ke mahudu ge a eya baneng a kokotlela*
7. *Ga se nna serokolo serokolo ke tseba sa mohlare,*
8. *Ke tseba kgoši morwa 'a Machaba 'a dikota ke seaparankwe letlalo*
9. *La kgomo ke tšhaba matsetse ke tšhaba dinta go loma*
10. *Kwa tlase Lepelle la Mamogodu ga Mabutšadinonyana*
11. *Lepelle nkabe le epša ra topa mae a kwena re be re tope a tšhilwane*
12. *Nkabe e sa le botala esale kgale maloba kua GaMohlala*
13. *Mmamuriwi selete ka Matšiane, ka Kgobokwane naka nkabe di sa bini*

1. [[Mohlala:] Maestros! [Kiba Troupe:] Oh Yeah!
2. [Mohlala:] Maestros! [Kiba Troupe:] Oh Yeah!
3. Here I speak, me, the buzzing Sekilikiti
4. The stone-boned castrated bull
5. Circular train that shortens the trip
6. I am an elder, approaching young ones holding a stick
7. I am not a medicinal herb, the only medicinal herb I know is of a tree
8. I know chief Machaba of the wood's son, donned in tiger skin
9. Avoiding fleas of a cowhide, avoiding bites of louses
10. Down at Lepelle of Mamogodu, the bird-led place
11. If only Lepelle could dry in drought so we would pick crocodile eggs, and *tšhilwane* bird's
12. If only we were still in bygone days of the old GaMohlala village
13. At Mmamuriwi, Matšhiane region in Kgobokwane, reed pipes would have been prohibited

Typical of the *kiba* poet, in the bridging line 3, instead of “reta” (reciting) he claims that what he does is to “bolela” (speak). Although the diction might intend to call for audience’s attention, but the modest preference of “bolela” not “reta” can be linked with the generic modesty of *kiba* poets, more of a disclaimer that suggests, “he is not a poet.” Though inspired largely by factual events and conditions, Johannes Mohlala’s *kiba* goes beyond a sheer documentation of facts. As someone with a thin physique, he often mocks his own shape, saying “*di a hlepha dihlephu*,” meaning he is unable to fasten his pants tight, thus they slide down his tiny buttocks. In this poem, line 4, yet emphasising that he might be skinny but he is strong. The train metaphor in line 5 speaks to the role of a poet as a societal informer, a mental transportation. In line 6, he speaks to his visually impaired condition that obliges him to walk with a white cane as if he is an elder, conversely, the same metaphor can ambiguously connote a carrier of cultural value systems to be imparted to young ones.

He equally praises chief Machaba indirectly, regarding him as a good chief as compared to his predecessor who once prohibited *kiba* dance in the village of Kgobokwane, GaMohlala. That said, a sense of ageism reflects in the way he calls him with reference to his father, “kgoši

morwa 'a Machaka" in line 8. Line 11 and line 12, creates an emotional paradox since the former speaks of aspiration and the latter nostalgia. The poem employs emphatic provocation, that is, repetitive emphasis meant to provoke emotions "seaparankwe letlalo" in line 8, and "kgale maloba" in line 12. "Seaparankwe" on its own means "seapara letlalo la nkwe" meaning the word "letlalo" is already covered in "seaparankwe" alone, the same holds for "kgale maloba." *Synonymia* is a figurative language whereby amplification is attained by adding a synonym. This technique can be a powerful tool if used effectively.

3.4.5. Thetotumišo and commentary bridging

The poem below further explores Mohlala's different ways of beginning his poetry. The following poem commence without ignition, he goes straight to a plain literal introduction. In most cases he began with the "I am only speaking" disclaimer, but in other *diretotumišo* he would began in other ways. His commentary remarks, however, are generally brief: not more than three lines. Below are four different *diretotumišo* he approached differently:

1. *Ke a bolela ngwana' maina mantši*
2. *Mangwe a retwa ke ditšhwene thabeng.*
3. *Ke nna sefoghlele, foghlele mogatša' kgalablepu*
4. *Se se ilego sa ja motho sa mo fetša sa re taataa.*
5. *Ke sepetše kudu ka kgalalela ka tshela dinoka*
6. *Ka tšama ke tsena le magorong a banna.*
7. *Go bolela Monti 'a Mmakgopane*
8. *Marapo a kile a hlaba baloi.*

1. [I am speaking, I adorer of multiple names
2. Some are yelled by baboons on mountains
3. I am the Sefoghlele (the fondler), fondle Kgalablepu's husband
4. The one that ate a person to the last crumbs
5. I traveled a lot, become holy, and ford rivers
6. And entered many manly entrances
7. It is Monti of Mmakgopane speaking
8. Bones that once pierced witches.]

Contrary to most *diretotumišo*, referrals and descriptions of the poem are highly metaphorical, requiring contextualization for complete comprehension to be achieved. Mohlala's *thetotumišo* is not far-fetched, but an artistic reflection that goes beyond facts. As he was the most popular circulating *kiba* poet, with his vinyl records dominating the Radio Lebowa airplay, line 1 above denotes such popularity, which is exaggerated with personified hyperbole in line 2, claiming that even baboons in mountains know him. Here he uses the word "reta" (recite) for the second "person," but one first person in line 2, he replaces it with "bolela" (speak). The dominant *kiba* poet's modesty of disowning the "poet title." In the antonomasia, "ngwana' maina mantši," he ironically refers to himself as "ngwana" (a child). Line 3 imbues a rich metaphor enriched with observation of nature and employed alliteration of "fogohlele" musicality. Line 5 and 6 speaks to his spiritual journeys that reflects a bit of divination and African initiation faiths. As a poetic master, he excels in bringing the good out of the bad, thus in line 8 he says he might be boney but it was the same bones that pierced witches. Use of onomatopoeic ideophone "taataa" in line 4 produces emphatic effect.

1. *Ke a bolela ngwana' Mohlala*
2. *Morudi nke Letebele, maoto nke Mosotho*
3. *Ke yena mošemane o mosesenyana wa boMaleage Modipane*
4. *Ke seora mollo wa magala-mohwelere ka lešokeng la badiši*
5. *Ke makgahlametša go metša, ke kgope ye e kilego ya nyala*
6. *Ke ile ka kgantšhetša go metša gohlahuna go sa tla*
7. *Kgwadi tša boModipane*
8. *Nkabe e sale botala, esale kgale, maloba*
9. *Gona kua seleteng Matšiane, Kgobokwane*
10. *Nkabe ke re bulelang Madikoti tša Mogala, naga' thaba Moletši.*

1. [Here I speak, I, the child of Mohlala]
2. Morudi is like a Ndebele, legs like a Mosotho
3. Slender boy of Modipane's Maleage
4. I busk at the red bushwillow fire at the hunter's bush
5. Swift to swallow, a bachelor that once marriage

6. I once prematurely swallowed before I could chew
7. Youthfulness of the Modipane
8. If only it was bygone days
9. At the Matšiane region in Kgobokwane
10. I could have said: free the dimpled daughter of Mogale
11. Of the mountainous land of Moletši.]

This *seretotumišo* stems more on specifics, from the onset it is clear that the praised subject is “Mohlala” (line 1) of the “boMaleage Modipane” (line 3) who hails from “Matšiane [in] Kgobokwane” (line 9). Given that Mohlala is visually impaired; his obsession with his physique reveals the power of imagination in one’s wellbeing. In line 3, he blatantly declare his slenderness, and compares his legs with that of Basotho. Fascinating is how each of his *diretotumišo* differs from the rest, attesting to levels of creativity and originality in his work. The paradox in line 5, “*kgope ye e ilego ya nyala*” remains that of a poet giving new meaning to words, as opposed to accepting them for what they mean. Grammatically, his sentence is incorrect since a *kgope* (bachelor) refers to someone who has not married at all. About paradox, Cuddon (1999:634) says, “the word had acquired the commonly accepted meaning it now has: an apparently self-contradictory (even absurd) statement which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites.” The nostalgic longing, one of his signature themes, is noted in line 8, and 9. Line 10, is a praise for a particular *kiba* song, meaning part of it is used to define the entire. This becomes *synecdoche* of *kiba* artform as a whole. In the *seretotumišo* below, he begins it differently from the above, with a plain introduction:

1. *Leina laka ke nna Hlalefang Mohlala*
2. *Kua ga Modula*
3. *Ke nna maledu ntšhotšhonono*
4. *Ga geso ke tšhušitše bana bošego*
5. *Ka tsoga ke bitšwa kgorong ba banna*
6. *Ke nna Mogotle moswanyana*
7. *Ke sella ka pelo mogokgo ga o tšwe*
8. *Ke nna makhuparela tša potlana swii*

9. *Ke tšhaba go tsenya letsogo potleng*
10. *Ke tšhaba go kwa tše tšhipi e se ilang*
11. *Ka potleng ya bomorwa' Mahlaba' Modipane 'a*
12. *Boduma' Phaahla' rema*
13. *Ntšu laka, le ge nka hwa, laka le ka se hwe,*
14. *Le ditlogolwana di tla šala di le bolela.*

1. [My name is Hlalefang Mohlala
2. Hailing from Modula
3. I am the goat-bearded
4. In my village I scared children at night
5. Summoned to the traditional court in the morning
6. I am the mahogany Mogotle
7. He of a cardiac weep, free from tear drops
8. My palm is kept closed, pocket sealed
9. I avoid dipping a hand in my pocket
10. I avoid discovering what a metal fears
11. In Mahlaba of Modipane's pocket
12. Modipane of the axing Phaahla.
13. Should I die, my voice (name) will not perish
14. Even grandchildren will continue talking about it.]

Mohlala's actual poem starts in line 3, the first two lines being literal remarks. It is unpoetic to say someone "hails from Modula" (line 2), as opposed to using the chief's name as symbolism of a place (line 12). The "axing" Phaahla in line 12 implies the ruling out of disputes, chief Phaahla was acclaimed for his accurate or fair judgmental acumen. Having employed both in the same poem, one can conclude that the unpoetic nature of line 1 and 2 are deliberate soft-start technique. In line 3 and 4, musicality is produced by *š* and *n* resonance. The "ke" alliteration becomes a thread that holds together lines between line 5 and line 11. "Sella ka pelo" in line 7 ambiguously refers to endurance and cheeky. Line 8 and 9 connotes how economic he is, if not purely stingy. He justifies it with personification that he does not want to be forever broke like Mahlaba ("metal fears"). His sense of fulfilment in line 13 and

14, implies that since his artistic works are preserved and well disseminated, his legacy will outlive his demise.

The *seretitumišo*, as it is already emphasised, does not only exalt the chief, but he also critiques or criticizes him. What is not mentioned is that in addition to exalting himself, interpreted as arrogance, the *seretitumišo* also introspect, analyse, and criticize themselves, as witnessed in Mohlala's remarks on his cheekiness and stinginess. More so, he makes fun of others: like the forever-broke Modipadi. One can admit that *thetotumišo*, at least in the context of *kiba* poetry, is not descriptive or limited to a particular task.

1. *Le mo kwele ge a ntheta motepana?*
2. *A ntheteletša bothakga*
3. *A mpitša ngwana' tshego la Makula*
4. *Ngwana' sa lle bošego*
5. *A re bolela ba go kwe mošemane mosesenyane*
6. *Bolela ba go kwe Letšeke la Makganyane*
7. *Tšeke la Makganyane lekganyammele*
8. *Ngwana Mohlala Morudi lekganyammele lekganya le sa roge motho*
9. *Le mo kwele ge a ntheta mothepana?*
10. *A re ngwana' tshego la Makula*
11. *Tšhila tša gagwe ke lebese lege a ka hlapa nka nwa.*
12. *Lapa la mme le a wa ke duma ge nka le tsoša.*

1. [Have you heard a maiden singing me praises?
2. Exulting me for my artistry
3. Calling me: a child with an Indian laughter
4. A child that does not cry at night
5. Speak up slender, she said, let them hear you
6. Speak up, the tallish, let them hear you
7. The proud tallish boy, proud of his physique
8. Morudi, Mohlala's child, proud without ridiculing any one
9. Have you heard a maiden singing me praises?

10. Saying: a child with an Indian laughter
11. His dirt is milk, I can drink water from which he bathed
12. Oh, my mother's family is collapsing, I wish I could revive it.]

Notably, Mohlala employs the word *reta* (recites) on line 1 (“*ntheta*”), but again this is only employed when referring to the second person, conversely, his modesty is still self-evident in line 6 where “*bolele*” (speak) substitute “*reta*” (recite) since he is referring to himself. In addition to alliteration, three repetitive forms, namely *anaphora*, *anadiplosis*, and *conduplicado*, heavily enrich musicality of Mohlala’s poetry. *Anaphora* is defined as “a rhetorical device involving repetition of words or group of words in successive clauses.” (Cuddon, 1999:37). *Anadiplosis* is “repetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next” (Lindquist, 1996:2). *Conduplicado* is “repetition of a word or words in succeeding clauses (Lindquist, 1996, *Ibid*). From “*ntheta*” (line 1) to “*ntheteletša*” (line 2), and “*letšeke*” (line 6) to “*tšeke*” (line 7). Most commendably, however, is the extended development of the *-kganya-* stem on “*Makganyane*” (line 6) repeated in line 7, “*lekganyammele*” (line 7) repeated in line 8, and “*lekganya*” (line 8). This logically creates and invokes a poetic pivot, more of a point of reference.

On “*mošemane mosesenyane*” (line 5) alliteration is taken to another level, with both consecutive words both starting and ending with the same morphemes “*mo-*” and “*-ane*.” The weight of the anaphora in line 1 and 9, “*Le mo kwele ge a ntheta mothepana?*” is richly commanding. Antonomasia, “substitution of a descriptive phrase for someone’s proper name,” (Lindquist, 1996:1) is a common technique used when creating compound names in the realm of *kiba* praise poetry. Antonomasia is noted in “*ngwana’ tshago la Makula*” (line 3) and “*ngwana’ sa lle bošego*” (line 4). Hyperbole imbued punchline, “[*t*]šhila tša gagwe ke lebeso lege a ka hlapa nka nwa” in line 11 is the epitome of poetic essence and excellence, connoting unconditional love. In such a positive mood of the poem, he unexpectedly concludes with a somewhat displaced sense of longing, which reveals reality as it stands; people turn to long for their loved ones during the peak of emotional climax, be it sadness or happiness.

3.4.6. Interpretation of scenario setting

Mohlala's diction piles layers of meaning to what could have otherwise been a straightforward thought. His interpretation of "Mokankanyane" goes as follows:

1. *Mahlo a mathari ke a mahwibidu*
 2. *Ba letše ba lla ba re banna ba rena*
 3. *E sa le ba ile ruri, le go boya ga ba sa boya*
 4. *Mokankanyane bjala bjola bja mmago Mpoyi*
 5. *Ba re Banna ba lena ga re a ipiletša*
 6. *Be biditšwe ke lebone monyako.*
-
1. [Maidens' eyes turned scarlet
 2. They were crying all night, weeping:
 3. Our men are indeed gone, they are not returning
 4. Mokankanyane, sorghum beer brewed by Mpoyi's mother
 5. They say we did not invite your men
 6. A lit bulb at the entrance invited them.]

Since the culprit for the disappearance of the maiden's husbands is a single person, Mpoyi's mother, the use of "Ba re" (they say) in line 5 reveals that it is actually not only Mpoyi's mother, there are other women involved. If that is the case, "lebone monyako" in line 6 will mean more than an electrical bulb, perhaps connotes beauty, beauty of these possible concubines. Then we can conclude that, "Bjala bja mmago Mpoyi" denotes literal (1) beer brewed by Mpoyi's mother, or (2) beer added with an inviting herb, and metaphorically it connotes a love affair outside marriage.

3.4.7. Longing for people

Mohlala's dominant theme is loss and longing, be it loss of his parents, his ruins, his eyesight, and happiness. He longs for, among others, Leboa (Limpopo), the past and social justice. In the album, *Pelo e gopotše Leboa*, Johannes Mohlala (& his Harp) sings out the poem, "Mokomane," which tackles various themes. At first teenage pregnancy seems to be his concern on: "*Ga gešo ga Mohlala ge bana ba etšwa matswele re lla sello/[...]Re re nkore ge*

ba etšwa dikgoka kgokabadiši dikgokamasogana." [At GaMohlala, my home village, we weep when maidens bud breasts/[...]We wonder why they grow inciters of herders, inciters of lads]. He then moves to his signature theme of longing for his deceased parents:

1. *Bana bešo ke gopotše batswadi baka ke a lla*
2. *O wa mpona ke tšhiwanyana ya mmathabane ka thaba nageng*
3. *Tšhiwana ka thaba ge ke ile go šoma ke itše ge ke goroga ka lla*
4. *Tšhiwana ka re morwalo ke y'o lahla kae gaMohlala.*

1. [Companions, I miss my parents hence I wail
2. You see I am an orphan who rejoices, rejoices only in far afield
3. Orphan who rejoices only when I am at work, sadness when homebound
4. Orphan, I wonder who will receive my luggage at GaMohlala, my home village.]

Apart from the k resonance, the *thaba-* anaphora and the *tšhiwana* alliteration attest to musicality that surpasses rhyming. There is a powerful punctuation-paradox in line 2 after the first rejoice, similar effect created by enjambment.

3.4.8. Longing for places

Nostalgia and homesickness seem to steal his peace to such an extent that sometimes he sounds depressed:

1. *Bošego ga ke robale ke a okobala*
2. *Lefamolele, pelo e lapile, ke gopotše morago*
3. *Ke gopotše Leboa la kgomo le motho*
4. *Leboa la go bušwa ke magoši*
5. *Leboa la batho ka moka*
6. *Maruping a boMotetema*

1. [At night I do not sleep, I only calm
2. A migrant worker's heart is wearily homesick
3. I miss home north of people and cattle

4. Chieftaincy governed north
5. North of all and sundry
6. The Motetema ruins] (Mohlala, 34)

It is now unnecessary to over emphasise anything on musicality, Mohlala's poetry is nothing short of musicality and any musical accompaniment is additional. In line 2, he employs dislocated referral, as if he is referring to someone else. The theme of the poem has been the heart of *kiba* poetry, reflecting difficult dynamics faced by rural people because of urbanisation. Mohlala too seems to be frustrated by municipal governance, as it is eloquently elaborated in Tlokwe Sehume's "Masepalati." Apart from governance, a sense of belonging and of inclusivity seem to be absent in urban structures. Lucas Ledwaba says, Mohlala "expresses this deep longing for return to the ruins of his forefathers [...] how he is haunted by dreams, struggling to sleep at night as a result of the desire to return; how his heart longs for the peace and beauty of the ruins of his childhood in Motetema" (Ledwaba, 2014).

3.4.9. Dirge prelude

The following poem is a prelude to a dirge:

1. *Koša ya rena Magopotše Malediša*
 2. *Koša ya rena e gopotša ba ba ilego*
 3. *Koša ya rena enke mogobo*
 4. *Enke koša ya makgema*
-
1. [Our song, the reminder of the forgotten
 2. Our song reminds us of those who are gone
 3. Our song resembles a regimental requiem
 4. Like song of the cannibal.]

The last line attests to similarities between Sesotho and Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, since "Song of the cannibal" exists in Sesotho (Coplan, 1985). Mohlala's reminiscence of loss of parents is not limited to poetic therapy, he further confesses to the torment he experiences each time he is in the company of another orphan:

1. *Tšhiwana ge di kopana*
2. *Di gopotšana mahlomola*

1. [When paupers/orphans meet
2. They reminisce on each other's miseries]

3.4.10. Orphanage and death

Mohlala's poetry around death and state of being an orphan are, in my opinion, the most outstanding in terms of imbuing heartfelt emotions. It somewhat validates the paradox that claims, "the greatest beauty does not spring from pleasure but from pain, not from happiness but from sorrow, not from satisfaction but from desire" (Brooks & Warren, 1960:100). The following poem speaks of his parents' death:

1. *Le a mpona ke tšhiwana ya Ramawele ga gona hlokabareti*
2. *Tšhiwana ke lahlegetšwe ke batswadi kamoka*
3. *O ntšhile tate Dimaphaahle ngwana' Mahlako sebelegadithakga*
4. *O ntšhile mma Motšwadi ngwana Mogale'a disego*
5. *Tšhiwana nna ka šala ke opela.*

1. [You see, I am an orphan of Ramawele, he who has no praise poet
2. Orphan, I lost all my parents
3. My father, Dima of Phaahle, a child to Mahlako who only gives birth to maestros, left me
4. My mother Motšwadi, a child to the ever-laughing Mogale, left me
5. Poor orphan! I remain singing.]

Synonymia is effectively employed in "batswadi kamoka" (all my parents) in line 2. The prefix or morpheme *ba-* in "batswadi" denotes plural, meaning all. Head rhyme and alliteration creates a numbing melody that provokes effortless empathy. In his heavy ornately florid lines, he agitates emotions further with elements of "praise poetry" when he mentions his deceased parents' praises, which puts humanness to the poem. It shifts from what could have been more or less a death announcement into a feeling-provoking artistry. Compound words

such as “sebelegadithakga” result in word economy, remaining only with impact-aimed words.

From such heavy emotions, he then lightens it up by focusing on his talent, his tested craftsman in the *kiba* artform, more like a self assured self-praise: “*Bana bešo thakga bjaka bo šita mang?/Thakga bjaka bo šita mang? Išita le bahu ba hwile ba bo tseba./[...]Ba bantši ba bo robalela mabitleng bothakga.*” [Companions, who could fail to identify my artistry?/Who can mistaken my artistry? Even the dead died knowing it./...]Many lay in graves due to such artistry]. Three distinct poetic moods are experienced in this single *kiba* song, namely concern, mourning, and praise. Failure to notice that these are actually three poems in one might result in comprehension limitations.

In his study on Johannes Mokgwadi’s poetry, Mojalefa (2010) states that Mokgwadi is “the only divinatory poet who rendered the shortest divinatory poems in Sepedi oral works” (2010:3). This study, however, reveals that Mohlala has composed poems as short as one line, which in them the entire heart and soul of an idea is perfectly compressed. These one-liners are shorter than the Japanese haiku.

1. *Sekepe sa bahu ntšeye o yo ntahla kgole.*

1. [Ship of the dead, take me and toss me away]

The poem summarizes his despair moments and how he feels inside. Looking at his unprompted composition, one can conclude that this was not a mere word play but a therapeutic composition. It is ironic, however, that all the other three pioneer *kiba* poets are now deceased and Mohlala who composed poems longing for death is the only one remaining.

3.4.11. Disparity and his own death

The level of despair is alarming in the following poem:

1. *Ke pholo ya bosekelere ke a hlotša*

2. *Ke re go hwa le nkepele tseleng*

3. *Bitla la ka le gate ke makoloi*

1. [I am a limping, marooned bull
2. Should I die bury me at the road side
3. Let vehicles drive on my grave]

“Ke a hlotša” (limping) in the first line implies being adversity-ridden. The most powerful yet painful imagery in the last line carries all the essence of the poem. Figurative language can, at times, throttle a poem. Simplicity can also make a poem emotionally complex. In fact, a strong poem is not strong due to “figurative language applied”, but rather on the “how” part. This means an ambiguous metaphor can weaken a poem. It is for this that I concur with the opinion that “in its loosening of language, poetry can also take us to the edges of our imagination” (Naicker, 2014:70) which is the reason why *kiba* poetry forms an important part of the South African poetry landscape.

3.4.12. African value system

The following is one of Mohlala’s popular poems, where he humorously confronts his fellow migrants at the Gold Reef:

1. *Se re go ja mbunyane la leba*
2. *Ra hloka le magagešo dumelang*

1. [Don’t eat flour, and turn forgetful
2. And stop saying: “greetings, fellows”]

In Sepulane, *mbunyane*/*mponyane* refers to baking flour. In other dialects, the word is used to refer to brown bread. Mohlala encompassed several dialects apart from his own. In one poem, he used the complete phrase, which is popular among Bapulana, that is, “*seghwa sa mbunyane ga ke je*” (I do not eat flour-baked bread). Therefore, in the context of this poem, *mbunyane* will be a synecdoche, connoting bread if not palatable food. He implies that let prosperity make us lose our humanity. No matter how serious is the message; one cannot

ignore his humorous diction. The concept of *Botho* (humanity) seems to be closer to his heart, thus imparting it to those around him, as seen in the poem below:

1. *Mmago ngwana se re go ja kudu wa furalela metse ya batho*

1. [A child's mother, when well-fed don't give neighbours your back]

In the poem, to give neighbours one's back, metaphorically means to avoid, or worse, to disregard them. What makes the poem complete is that it can be completed by common sense in one's mind. It is understood that life is a wheel; tomorrow it might turn in your neighbour's favour, obliging one to request their assistance. This is the principle that holds villages together, such that the gap between the haves and the have-nots is hardly noticeable.

3.4.13. Mining industry

It is perhaps due to the unjust apartheid system and its inhumane practices he observed in everyday life of a migrant worker in Johannesburg, especially at the locked De Beers' Cullinan Mine compounds, that he has sleepless nights of longing for inclusivity and the sense of belonging of Motetema. In the poem, "*Khallinan Setswallong*," he says, "*Khallinan Setswallong/Naga ya mabati a sa bulweng/Ba sa ile le go ngwala ba sa ngwale*." Cullinan, for him, was but "*setswalelong*," the penitentiary. More alarming, for him, is the fact that these exploited migrant workers are mostly illiterate, making them desperate and vulnerable. Having worked for De Beers for over seven years, first as a general worker, I can safely attest that such exploitation still continues in the current day, the difference is that it manifests itself in more strategic and diplomatic ways. Looking at how diamonds are treated as more valuable than human life, the line 3 of the previous poem, "*Leboa la kgomo le motho*," connotes a place where money is not valued over human life. According to the poet, the only place with such qualities happens to be the rural hinterlands of Motetema.

3.4.14. Playfulness

Influenced by facts, Mohlala's poetry goes beyond factualism. In other poems, he explored various literary approaches such as employing voices apart from his own. This, however, connotes admittance to personal shortcomings, his poetic way to say, I too am just a human being:

1. *Bolebadi wee! Botlaela bjaka.*
2. *Ka šiya thari ya ngwanaka morago.*

1. [Forgetfulness is my stupidity
2. I forgot a child sling behind]

His playfulness also comes in the form of ridicule of his own cowardice. Mohlala's compositions suggests he is a rounded and grounded human with no need for presence or exhibition of intelligence. This is an ordinary person's enterprise, composition without anything to lose. In the following poem, he unabashedly exposes his cowardice in the romantic realm:

1. *O nkgwatha kgwatha, tseba nna ga ke rate go kgwathiwa*
2. *O nkgwatha ke ituletše, tseba nna ke tšhaba melato gopatela*
3. *Se nkgwathe nna ga ke na kgomo tša go patella*
4. *Gona o reng o nkgwatha bosele, bošego o be o le kae mothepana?*

1. [You poke me, I dislike being poked
2. You poke me while I'm relaxing, I fear to be accused and charged
3. Don't poke me I own no cow to settle the fine
4. Anyway, why do you poke me during the day, where were you at night, maiden?]

The same Mohlala who depicts himself as romantically or sexually naïve reappears in another poem as an expert, teaching an amateur bachelor some humorous tricks:

1. *Kgope, phirimalela o robale*
1. [bachelor, stay late and sleep over]

In this sarcastic poem, the poet teaches a trick to a bachelor: to stay until late so that he could be asked to sleep over since it would be unsafe to let him walk home. This way, the bachelor might perhaps get an opportunity to share a bed with someone. It is fascinating how four

words could carry such a complex idea. As the definition goes, at its best poetry says the most through stating the least. Distinct diction results in word economy, which is referred to as, “[maximizing] striking power of a single word.” (Pretorius, 1989:6). If “praise poetry” has the power to unite, by default it also has the power to divide, power that requires a poet to be responsible and not to underestimate their influence on the society.

3.4.15. Marital dynamics

Listening to his poetry in general, Mohlala strongly argues against divorce particularly because he believes children are the ones who suffer the most. He personally confessed his moments of marital frustrations in “*Mma nkabe a mpona nkabe a nkwela bohloko/Gobane ke kopane le mathata/Ke noka hlaoka boelelo, ka makaditšwe ke mosadi.*” (Mother, could you see me, you would have sympathized/because I have encountered hardship/I am a river with nowhere to flow to, puzzled by my wife.) In a contrary tone, in a subsequent composition he says, “*Motho waka nkane ke mo rata/Ba fela ba re mo tlogele/Ke tla mo tlogela ka kgona?*” (Why do I continue loving my person/whereas they urge me to desert her/Can I afford to leave her?). Only a rounded and grounded poet can honestly share his moment of uncertainty and confusion, attesting that “the impulse and methods of poetry are rooted very deep in human experience” (Brooks & Warren, 1960:8). About divorce in the context of the current day, particularly the unilateral and subjective approach of the current generation of youth in matters of the heart, meaning love and separation, he says:

1. *Re jele dikgomo ra fetša ra lebala hlalo*
2. *Re lebetše hlalo, bana ba boswa ga le kwe le a hlala.*

1. [We ate all the cattle, finished them, and forgot about divorce]
2. Nowadays kids do not listen when contemplating divorce]

3.4.16. Punchlines

At times, his humour is coated with a light sheet of sarcastic metaphor such that it can be easily mistaken for a literary description. Mohlala’s poetry is characterized by punchlines, usually parallelism, which nail a concept in its core, such as the following:

1. *Leru le Mamohlake le duma eng,*
2. *Le duma eng le se na pula.*

1. [What is Mamohlake's cloud thundering
2. When it has no rain]

Apart from anadiplosis of "le duma eng" at the end of line 1 and at the beginning of line 2, the metaphor is employed in a striking and sarcastic way. He denounces action-less talk, noise that lacks content, speech that never translates into action. Such ridicule is seen in several other parallelisms such as the following, in which he mocks someone who regards himself as, or is known to be, a ladies' man yet a girl from Benoni rejected him: "*Binone le a pala lekgarebe/Le paletše bophuti bomahlwaadibona.*" (Benoni, the girl is a cunning hard bean/She crushed Casanova, the Mr seen-it-all).

3.4.17. Paradox in kiba poetry

It is said "the language of poetry is a language of paradox" (Cuddon, 1999:663), which results in meaning and interpretation of a line invalidated by the subsequent contradictory line. Paradox seems to be one of the remarkable figurative techniques explored in such a special way in *kiba* poetry:

13. *Lena bana bešo kiba ga e roge motho*
14. *Kiba e rogile bontlabatlaba*
15. *Bontlabatlaba ke dibete.*

13. [Companions, *kiba* does not insult anyone
14. *Kiba* insulted the annoyed ones
15. The ones who are easily annoyed.]

In defense of *kiba* poetry, he starts by saying it does not insult (line 13), yet in the subsequent line he contradicts himself pointing out that actually *kiba* poetry does insult, although only particular people. Mohlala and *kiba* poets in general, employ paradox in many other *kiba* poems in general.

3.4.18. Poetic visuals

“If a picture tells a million words, then a poem paints a million pictures” (Maahlamela, 2014). As it was seen in terms of description of his physique and bodily features in his “praise poetry,” Mohlala’s poetry embodies accurate descriptions that paint a true reflection of a scenic visual. Expressing his romantic charms, he says:

1. *Mmakgwadi, kobo ye kgwadi e a go swanela.*
1. [“Yellow bone,” you look perfect in that scarlet garment]

Listening or reading his poetry makes one ponder as to what it means to be visually impaired, particularly because the opposite of the visually impaired is not-yet visually impaired. In the digital world where a paper is replaced by a monitor, losing sight is inevitable. In the title, “Osaile” in the album, *Bakgaphetše Megokgo*, he says, “*Ba bantši ga re a tswalwa le bogole/Bo fo re tlela re godile, sebatana*” (Mohlala, 1983). Many of us, he means, were not born disabled; disability only attacked us in our elderly age like a little beast. One notes how the world is accurately engraved on Mohlala’s mind such that he is able to describe events more precisely than the visually unimpaired. Perhaps it is for this reason that the term, “disabled people” was found to be offensive and derogatory, replacing it with “differently abled.”

3.4.19. An unofficial seretitumišo

Former scholars have pointed out that only a chief’s *imbongi* (seretitumišo), the village’s poet laureate, has poetic license and is allowed to publicly criticize the chief. Mohlala was not a poet laureate, nor even regarded himself as a poet for that matter, but that did not hinder him from criticizing the chief when deemed necessary. The following poem is evidence of his bravery, taking a stance without fear or favour:

1. *Ngwana’ Makgatla, ngwana malladigwegwe*
2. *Sepeke Mmamagane hle re a rapela, Mokwena*
3. *Se neše pula marega*
4. *Lehlabula e a re gana e re bakela difako*
5. *Nkabe e sa le kgale botala maloba*

6. *Nkabe go sa buša Morena kgoši ya go buša*

7. *Phaahla' Ngwato, Mamišidi 'a Meroba.*

1. [Makgatla's child, Malladigwegwe's child
2. You, Sepeke of Mmamagane, we plead with you, Crocodile
3. Don't summon rain in winter
4. The Autumn rain dislikes us, it brings us storms
5. If only we could reverse time
6. We would be led by His Honorable, the governing chief
7. Phaahla of Ngwato, Mamišidi of Meroba.]

As other scholars already observe, the role of a "praise poet" is not limited to praising, but it encompasses critical evaluation of the royal leadership when and if deemed necessary, meaning (Doke, 1948:298-9; Sole, 1983:42; & Kaschula, 2002:12). In line 5, 6, and 7, we see what Joubert (2004:385) calls "derogatory/negative praise poetry," a poet is airing uncomplimentary disapproval of the current leadership in contrast with the former. As he points out in the poem, this motion of no confidence is due to limited knowledge of chief Sekepe of Mmamagane in cultural rituals, especially in relation to rain calling.

Kiba poetry is one of the richest and most precious poetic traditions of South Africa, more so, of African languages on the African continent. If *kiba* poetry of Johannes Mohlala could be transcribed, it can surpass most of the leading (written) poets in the language, but most importantly, it could enrich poetic heritage of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, setting a new trend of poetic excellence. Mohlala writes about anything and everything, including unexplored subjects in written form. *Kiba* poetry is more open to explore and to be enriched by poetic heritages of other languages.

Kiba poetry, especially Mohlala's *kiba* poetry, reminds us that, "[p]oetry does not even have to be an intellectual pursuit, albeit it shapes intellectuality. Sometimes good poetry can be a masterpiece of nonsense, such that in its topsy-turvy world the craziest things might seem ordinary, and the most common thing might seem out of place" (Maahlamela, 2014). Given the fact that *kiba* poets hardly regard themselves as poets, perhaps this is partly the reason

pioneer collectors of oral poetry in the language did not credit composers and reciters: because they did not regard themselves as poets. Any assessment of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry milieu that excludes *kiba* poetry will not only be doing a disservice to both the genre and language, but it will also be misleading. Over and above this, Mohlala's signature theme was longing, which is evident even in his moments of fulfilment. Longing to see again, to be with his parents, to be led by particular chiefs, to be at a spiritual solace, to return to his ruins.

3.5. Alex Mathunyane

Alex Mathunyane of the Dinakangwedi *kiba* group, a well-travelled *kiba* poet, commences his poem with a commentary on the relationship between Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa and Portuguese, code-switching between a wide range of languages, including English, Portuguese, Sesotho and isiZulu; Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa being the actual *lingua franca*:

1. *Ke rata go botša batheeletše baka gore monna ge a tšofetše o swana le tšhwene*
2. So life of an old man is tantamount to that of an old monkey
3. *Ge ke le kua boSpain Mapotokisi ba bitša monna ge a tšofetše: makako sanreko.*
4. *Seo se ra gore an old monkey; Ba go rela bare ga o na tšhelete: tinyero nata.*
5. *Ga o bereke: notra manya; Gona sepela, mokgalabjana: tira fora, makako sanreko.*
6. *Jwale ka lena Dinakangwedi molato ga o gona*
7. *Re lebeletše re re le ge ekahlwe go kile gwa ba ka mokgwa o mongwe*
8. *Monna wa ga Napo le bathekgi ba gagwe ba re thekgile*
9. *Mohlomongwe re ka ba ra ya ra fihla moo banna ba yago gona*
10. *Ga ke rate go senya nako nna Mantšupu 'a tatago Pharamololo, Ntšokotšoko*
11. *Molomo go tšokatšoka wo o jago o rego ga ke weši Lepono ke weša Ledoda*
12. *Lela go romela Monyalo kua gaMatebele, ngwana' theledi ye botse mogatša' Letšhekane*
13. *Ke kgetha ka Letšhekane Matebeleng, weni Seruru se mphekgiše kgang:*
14. *Ge ke re ke Lepono wa re ke Lekgalaka, ge ke ipitša Monope wa mpitša Lepogo*
15. *Mo go tlogo nna Mantšuku 'a tatago Pharamolomo, Ntšhokotšhoko.*

1. [I would like to tell my listeners that when a man is aging he is like a monkey

2. *Bjale bophelo bja mokgalabje bo swana le bja roto*
3. When I am in Spain, the Portuguese refer to an aging man as: *macaco [velho]*
4. Meaning an old man; When they tell you “you have no money:” *dinheiro não tem*
5. You are unemployed: *sem trabalho*; then leave, old man: *tira fora, [velho] macaco.*
6. Therefore, through you, Dinakangwedi troop, all is well
7. We are closely observing, come what may
8. This man, Napo, and his team are our strut
9. We will probably reach where men are heading.
10. I dislike wasting time, me, Mantšupu, Ntšokotšoko, Pharamololo’s father
11. The waging mouth is the eating one, saying: I don’t attack a Boer, I attack a Zulu man
12. The one that sent Monyalo to Ndebele land, a perfectly figured Letšhekane’s wife
13. At Ndebele land I benchmark with Letšhekane, Seruru dare not argue with me
14. When I say I am a Boer don’t say I’m a Karanga, Don’t call me a tiger when I’m a Monope
15. Tracks mark evidence of my existence, Mantšupu, Ntšokotšoko, Pharamololo’s father.]

Alex Mathunyane’s bridge from commentary to poetics is “*Ga ke rate go senya nako...*” in line 10. Poetic essence is, however, noted in previous lines such as musicality in “*le bathekqi ba gagwe ba re thekgile*” in line 8, and simile of a man resembling a monkey on “*monna ge a tšofetše o swana le tšwene*” in line 1. Describing her poetic approach, Gabeba Baderoon said she approaches poetry as “a very indirect art,” meaning rather than naming or listing things the way they are, she “use language in its other registers” (Baderoon, 2005). Mathunyane uses the same approach of not naming through ordinary register in “*moo banna ba yago gona*” in line 9. Line 11 speaks to socio-politics of the time: political sell-outs were given bribery to instigate tribal commotion during the apartheid era. Emphatic provocation, or simply *synonymia*, a repetitive device in which an idea or thought is amplified by adding a synonym, is employed in “mphekgiše kang” in line 13.

From line 15, Mathunyane’s poem adopts a staccato rhythm, code-switching into isiZulu, English, and then Sesotho, taking advantage of his multilingualism command to broaden the

poem beyond his native language. This is a must-listen, particularly to those who think the absence of rhyming in *kiba* poetry is to be translated into a shortcoming. As I illustrated during the 2014 *Kiba* Seminar in Polokwane, Alex Mathunyane's recital style of *kiba* poetry is exactly what is today known as rap or spoken word. Describing Lesego Rampolokeng's poetry delivery, Malan says, "it is as if he is drumming with his tongue" (Malan, Personal communication, 1/03/2013). This analogy is precisely the nearest description to Alex Mathunyane's delivery.

3.6. Bahananwa Tribal Group

Kiba poetry of the Bahananwa Tribal Group artistically blends complexity and simplicity in the same poem in their track 2 entitled, "Matome thata ya seepe:"

1. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
2. *Matome thata ya seepe*
3. *Ke teta (rema) ga tee ka lesa*
4. *Ka rutantšha merolwana.*
5. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
6. *Mathari ba ile Moria*
7. *Ba ile go phetha taelo.*
8. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
9. *Nkoriyeni kua Moria*
10. *Nna dibe di ya ntshwenya*
11. *Dibe di nyaka Lekganyane*
12. *Moruti yo moholoholo.*
13. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
14. *Wa balabala Mathekga*
15. *Motho ge a khutile ga a buyi*
16. *Ke tlhagoletše leokana.*
1. *[Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!]*

2. Matome, the digging stick
3. I hit once and complete
4. Teaching lads how it is done
5. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
6. Maidens went to Moria
7. To execute an injunction
8. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
9. Let's go to Moria
10. Sins are bothering me
11. Sins require Lekganyane
12. The greatest of priests.
13. *Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*
14. Mathekga, you are such a grumbling nag
15. A hidden person does not speak
16. I seem to have cultivated a thorny weed.]

In the first stanza, she recites the *seretotumišo* for the name, Matome: a straight-to-the-point kind of person who through his commitment and precise determination is known for completing a task in his first attempt, a typical trendsetter. In the second stanza, that is, line 5-7, she says all young women went to perform an injunction in Moria, the headquarters of the ZCC. In the penultimate stanza, she invites Matome to go with her to Moria because she is overpowered by sins, and according to her, only Lekganyane, the Spiritual Head of the ZCC, can assist her in this regard. In the last stanza, she cautions Mathekga, probably the surname of first stanza's Matome, to stop complaining because a hiding person is not supposed to make a noise. If it is accurate that Matome is actually Matome Mathekga, then it will mean he ultimately took to "hide" with her, thus line 16 suggests her regret, if not disappointment.

In its totality, the poem speaks to the problematic concept recently known by the figurative term, "Ben 10," implying that an old woman engaging in erotic enterprise with a relatively young boy. The poet, who is an old woman, persuaded the little Matome to participate in

illicit romance, in her seductive argument being that his age-mates are all gone for the Moria pilgrimage. Thus, he might as well settle for her. The “Mboyi” in the “*Hailala, Mboyi! Hailala, Mboyi!*” refrain, is used both as a Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa name, but also as a corrupt derivation of the English word, boy. She, however, admits that she is defeated by sins, and only the Bishop of the ZCC could rescue her. From such a serious note, she then focuses on her “sin,” where Matome Mathekga’s unending complaints annoys her. As she cautions him to stop complaining, she concludes with an introspective proverbial line, regretting for “cultivating a thorny weed” since it is now piercing her.

The above poem reveals that the concept of Christianity also features in secular *kiba* compositions, as much as it can be argued about divination, or African Traditional Religion. Secular *kiba*, which was depicted by former *kiba* scholars as a realm of “heathens,” is in fact a reflective site of spirituality and religion, more so, it embraces Christianity. This is contrary to the paucity of faith in the trajectory of written poetry in the language.

3.7. Matome Mothemane

As already pointed out, in Mawatle Mojalefa’s (2010) study, Johannes Mokgwadi explores religion in its African Traditional Religion (ATR) context, Matome Mothemane featuring in Bahananwa Tribal Group’s Track 3, “Mmamokhethi,” also explores the equivalent trajectory:

1. *Ke tlhaha Bopedi ga Ramokgopa*
2. *Ke humane kgaka di beša nama*
3. *Ga e go ngaka, dithebe tšeya o latlhe.*

1. [I am from Ramokgopa in Bopedi
2. I found partridges barbecuing meat
3. The diviner is gone; throw away divining bones.]

The same secular *kiba* group, the Bahananwa Tribal Group, which in the previous poem was embracing an African initiated church, is in this poem embracing African traditional religion. Members of secular *kiba* groups are religiously heterogeneous. *Kiba* groups, therefore, celebrate African religion in its totality, especially African initiated churches and African

traditional religion. Both the above are generally spirit-types, and their faith is easily expressed through this spirit-type artform of *kiba*.

3.8. Bapedi Culture and Music (BACUM)

Some introductory commentary to poems is brief and to the point, nearly unnoticeable. In her wedding announcement poem, Mamaruping (Malekana Seetla) of Bapedi Culture and Music (BACUM) recites as follows:

1. *Agee Agaa*
2. *Re tlile mo ka baka sa bakgaditsi ba babedi*
3. *Elego Malope le Ngwato*
4. *Bana ba Mokiritle, ba Hlabirwa*
5. *O re ke Mokiritle wa boMalehlakeng*
6. *Ke tholo ya boMotsomi wa Mmakgabule*
7. *O re ga ka ntšha melao bana ba betwa ke letlhokwa tseleng*
8. *O re Kadi, tlogela dipitsi o rake dinare*
9. *A re mehlala ya dipitsi ga ke e bone*
10. *Pitsi di ile mešetša di ile Molapo, Kgongwane*
11. *O re e bjatše e se tau nka melapo e sa tsenwe.*

1. [Hurray! Hurray!]
2. We have gathered here because of two glittering stars
3. Namely Malope and Ngwato
4. Children of Mokiritle, children of Hlabirwa
5. He who says: I am Mokiritle of the Malehlakeng
6. The great kudu of the Mmakgabule hunters
7. He who says I shared not marital rules, throttling newlyweds with a stick along the road.
8. He who says Kadi, let go of zebras. Chase buffalos.
9. He who says: zebras' tracks are unseen
10. Zebras went abroad, by the Kgongwane Valleys
11. How dare they enter the no-go valleys whilst they are not lions?]

In Mamaruping's poem, for instance, this bridge is "O re..." in line 5, yet referral of the newlyweds as "*bakgaditsi*" in line 2 serves as a poetic warmup. Instead of praising the newlyweds, the poet focuses on one of the couple's parents, Mokiritile, until line 7. Such deviation is usually a feasible improvisation to compensate for the impulsive *kiba* poet's lack of insight into the subject to be praised. The society generally expects oral poets to know praises for anything and everything. Zebras, in line 10 of the poem, are not a totem but rather a symbol of deceptive looks and physical beauty. A good-looking lover, as the poem denotes, can flee untraceably. As ugly as "buffalos" are, they can be reliable and stable. The last lines imply that as innocent as it seems, a zebra can be lion-merciless, connoting that looks can be deceiving.

3.9. Philip Tabane

In his doctoral dissertation, Sello Galane (2009) reveals that a prominent jazz maestro, Philip Tabane adopted and adapted *kiba* poetry into his contemporary jazz songs. One of the *kiba* poems by Philip Tabane adopted and adapted into, "Phampha Madiba," is as follows:

1. *Ke sepetše le ngwana' mpedi mpara*
2. *A tsamaya a ntshegiša ka balata*
3. *A ntshegiša ka maPedi a ga Marishane*
4. *Tšhipu o rile ke lebelo*
5. *Mohlaba wa re ke nabile*
6. *Ba re ke nna wa bo Titi 'a Makosha*
7. *Basadi ba ba nyaka go hlotlela ka ganong la ka*
8. *Ba nkiša Moretele*
9. *Mo ba ilego ba nthea lebitso la ka la bonna.* (Galane Appendix, 2009:30)

1. [I travelled with an impudent child of Mopedi
2. Who cost me servants' mockeries
3. I was ridiculed by Bapedi from Marishane
4. Genet (grey wild cat) said: I am a fast runner

5. And the sand said: I am much wider
6. I am, they say, of the songbird's rhythm
7. Women want to brew in my mouth
8. They take me to Moretele
9. Where they named me a virile name.]

Galane writes, "Most of the lyrics from Phampha Madiba, Mpredi, use the authentic texts from praises text 3, 4, 5, and 20 in the resource list below" (Galane, 2009:30). Although it is said that Philip Tabane transcribed this poetry from *kiba* groups, he ought to be given credit for structuring disjointed phrases, which he moulded to tell his personal story, an approach most ancillary *kiba* custodians employ. Thus, it will be disingenuous to read them as the original version from the *kiba* performance. What he achieved perfectly is to maintain the essence of *kiba* poetry. Usually, metaphors of *kiba* poetry are scattered as if they are telling different stories although it is one cohesive voice. In the first stanza, the poem is talking about an impudent Pedi boy, in the second stanza it speaks of a genet and sand, then in the last stanza about women who want to brew in his mouth; all these, however, tell a single story.

He travelled with someone who made people laugh at him, with the proverb in the second stanza he implies that he attempted fleeing this ridicule-causing person but his attempts were in vain. To his surprise, at his destination women loved him in spite of his weird company. They loved the melody that came out of his mouth, which by brewing in his mouth implies how they will not mind doing a time consuming task while in conversation with him. Again, the same line can ambiguously connote erotic undertakings. Ultimately, whatever happened at Moretele, which is open for interpretation, led to him being named a manly name.

The moral of the poet is in two categories: (1) embrace your family members or relatives in spite of their shortcomings; (2) those who are meant to love you, will love you in the face of whatever you deem negative, for a simple reason that love is when nothing else matters. The poem ends with a technique known as "black hole in a story," which according to Malan (2013) means telling a story with a chunk of the story not revealed (Maahlamela, 2013:83).

The following stanza from which Tabane composed the last stanza of the above poem is as follows:

1. *Tsurutsuru ya mehlotlo*
2. *Basadi ge le hlotla le a nkufa*
3. *Gore nkabe le nhlotlela ka ganong*
4. *Ga e le ka mpatela matlakala* (Galane, no 4).

Only a segment was used yet he twisted and compressed the metaphor of line 2 and 3 into a thought-provoking punchline. Tabane has, therefore, engraved his creative fingerprint on the transcribed *kiba* poetry, which attests to the fact that even in the process of adoption and adaptation, the ancillary *kiba* poet still employs his own artistic and creative skills, similar to the scenario setting approach.

3.10. Kiba poetry as Spirituality

Poetry has been depicted as religion, although others strongly believe it is only a site in which religion is asserted and embraced. African diviners accompany their bone throwing with poetry (Eiselen, 1932; Laydevant, 1933; Mojalefa, 2010a), and prophets imbue their prophecies with poetry (Rafapa, 2011). Poetry and religion surely grow together, modulate, serve, and determine each other, but they are definitely not synonyms (Langer, 1966; Hynes, 1980). As George Santayana puts it, “Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry” (Santayana, 1900; 1901). To say that what is regarded as poetry is “actually a spiritual language tamed” (Shusha. Personal communication, 21/10/2015) is not to say poetry is deity but rather a powerful language in which communication with deity can be established. In the spiritual realm poetry becomes what Federico Lorca (1933) calls, “a mysterious power,” with which one can transcend into unworldly forms of reality.

It is accurate to say that total emancipation of Africans includes spirituality (Araoye, 2016), yet that spirituality does not mean only one thing. African spirituality is not a homogenous entity, let alone practiced or expressed in monochrome. This mean total emancipation will include the recognition of African faiths in their wide diversity. In the national poetic trajectory, poets such as Credo Mutwa, Mazisi Kunene, Wally Serote and Chris Mann have

poetically explored the African cosmological milieu. Treatment of oral poetry in divination has received sufficient attention (Eiselen, 1932; Laydevant, 1933; Mojalefa, 2010a; Werbner, 2015). We are reminded that Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa rely predominately on divinatory and prophetic healing (Lebaka, 2001:66), with the latter dominated by Spirit-type African initiated churches. Ecstatic poetic forms remain unexplored and untreated. Although Christianity has not received any intense exploration in the realm of written poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, but one notes that it is fully explored in the *kiba* oral repertoire. Lorca asserts that *duende* is not a concept but rather a mysterious force felt, yet no philosopher has explained this in words (Lorca, 1933). This sums up the function of poetry in the realm of spirituality. Here, poets are not merely reciting or poetically preaching; they are praying, they are producing prophecies, and they are healing: connecting the living and the living-dead (Makgopa, 2005); the created and the Creator. As observed at the ZCC during Brass Band intervals, *kiba* poetry also induces and transmits transcendence currents. Regretfully, disappearance of several indigenous forms is also noted in the realm of African Traditional Religious (see Mugovhani, 2009), thus it is vital to investigate if the same holds for African initiated churches.

3.11. Free-Kiba concept

About post-liberation, Fanon asserts that the society is likely to witness “breakup of the old strata of culture” to be followed by “the renewing of forms of expression and the rebirth of the imagination” (Fanon, 1965:197). In the context of *kiba* artform, it always enjoyed the autonomy of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa cultural expression. Cultural purists did not welcome any artistic or creative distortion of original *kiba* forms until it remained monotonous and unreflective of the current life and generation. In admittance that purism is the enemy of cultural growth, the concept of *Free-Kiba* was formed to advocate and inspire cultural eclectics of *kiba* artform. As Galane puts it, “*Kiba* par excellence is the indigenous cultural *communication* system. But *Free-Kiba* style is a contemporary-cultural inter and intra communication art form” (Galane, 1999).

Galane’s success and popularity as a *Free-Kiba* practitioner assisted in rebranding the eclectic promotion of the *Free-Kiba* concept, a concept initiated to, among others, “raise the profile of the communities which have sustained the art form beyond oppressive conditions”

(Galane, 1999). Around 2010, the eclectic promotion received attention, and several musicians joined Galane in this endeavour, exploring artistic and creative code switching in *kiba*. “On the whole such changes are condemned in the name of a rigid code of artistic style and of a cultural life” (Fanon, 1965:195). This then created what Biko calls “state of alienation” (Biko, 2004:111) in which the salient *kiba* constituency “developed a two-faced attitude” (Biko, 2004:113) toward *kiba* in its original form. As the slogan goes, respect existence or expect resistance. In its monolithic rigidity, *kiba* did not admit that times are changing and it needed to allow the new generation to see themselves in it.

In Economics, the term Creative Destruction refers to, “[t]he hypothesis that the creation of new products and production methods simultaneously destroys the market power of existing monopolies” (van Rensburg, *et al*, 2015:546). In the context of the study, *Kiba* Creative Destruction will mean post-2010, the emergence of a new cultural expression known as *mmino wa s’tepe* or *tša manyalo*, which to a greater extent, has occupied social autonomy previously known to be designated only for various types of *kiba*. *Mmino wa S’tepe* is purely fast-tempo disco music, of literal lyrics mainly tackling domestic dynamics, and it is accompanied by a wide variety of dance moves ranging from *kiba*, *disco*, and *kwasa-kwasa*.

This, however, is a concept for which *Free-Kiba* promotes the contemporary nature of the indigenous artforms, an endeavour that was initiated without strategic methods of encouraging equal practice and preservation of the original par excellence. A good thing that *mmino wa s’tepe* has done is to be integral in the social lifestyle of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, especially Bapedi of Sekhukhune where wedding *stokvels* (rotating-savings clubs) are practiced. In this part of the province, even a mother whose son has passed on can join the wedding *stokvel* and eventually marry on behalf of her deceased son. Her daughter-in-law will be referred to as *ngwetši ya lapa* which implies that she is a wife to the entire family. This practise exists among many ethnicities, although it remains a contested issue. GaSekhukhune is, due to wedding *stokvels*, known as the wedding capital of Limpopo, and *mmino wa s’tepe* is the music of preference. The challenge is that unlike in *kiba*, there is no poetic form in *mmino wa s’tepe*. Now, secular *kiba* is in “a journey for which its destination is still unknown” (Ratshitanga, 1986), its future is on a steep descent or ascent, depending on how one views these new developments.

3.12. Conclusion

Kiba poetry is a poetic form composed in, or for, *kiba* performance, or any suchlike enthused by, or associated with, *kiba*. This poetic form is used to communicate and commune, so to announce and denounce anything and everything around and within *kiba* poetry. It is mostly a projection of identity, attitude and ideology. Among its constituencies, *kiba* poetry is neither a prestigious nor intellectual artform, but rather an everyday language of the commoner, a dusty artform that unpretentiously reflects their day-to-day life and language, language that is nothing short of poetry. These wordsmiths of note deem themselves anything else but poets, especially the salient custodians of highly rich poetic wealth, unlike the ancillary custodians who mostly put greater attention on the musical aspect than poetry.

Recording companies attempted to be doorkeepers and kingmakers, but due to other role players such as the SABC Radio, these attempts do not seem to have been successful as with the book publishing industry. Once the *kiba* poet's work was aired on radio, it was the public, through airplay requests, that made a final call on who best captured the spirit of the society. *Kiba* poetry exposes expresses opposition to the misconceptions previously made regarding African oral poetry in terms of composition. *Kiba* poets compose on current issues including socio-political challenges, demystifying the hypothesis of oral poets being sheer heritage conveyors, passively passing down inherited compositions from one generation to the other. It further demonstrates creative input in the individual interpretation of scenario setting and communal identities, which were vilified to be "constant borrowing and cross-referencing," proving that the two are but a communal canvass on which oral poets paint with their subjective colours, engraving personal creative and artistic fingerprints. A scenario setting is often employed as a litmus test of wordsmiths' interpretational acumen throughout artistic and generational diversity. Individual and personal interpretation earns a poem and poet merit, not the ability to replicate the artistic predecessors.

Kiba poets further enjoy the freedom of codeswitching, exploring and harmonising poetic heritages of other languages to enrich Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetic heritage, a practice highly discouraged in the publishing industry. Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa are indeed rooted in poetry. Oral poetry does not only embody cultural, historic, intellectual, linguistic, and

genealogical wealth of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa from their pre-colonial past, but it also carries their presence, aspiration, imagination, and more so, their present-day spirituality. As the main oral tradition, *kiba* artform encompasses, influences, and reflects the society in its totality, bridging social constructs predicted to be definitively parallel. Artistic and creative essence of *kiba* poetry is evidently rich, calling for a much deliberate effort to document and explore it to grow the poetic body of work in the language. Elasticity of *kiba* poetry allows it to come in numerous forms and styles, making it a fascinating field of study that is ever evolving. These poems range from epics to one-liners. In this realm, it is the weight of the poem, not of a poet's name, that matters. *Kiba* poets do not necessarily perform, but they "commune" in the richest of languages.

Johannes Mohlala explores personal, domestic, social, political, industrial and spiritual aspects with a distinct attention to detail in this chapter. His poetry is far from an intellectual pursuit. It comprises a sense of self-question, introspection, and self-ridicule, and acceptance of failure coated with humanness. Titles such as "*Nkile ka iphora*" (I once fooled myself) validates this sentiment. Mohlala's poetry gives many layers to the concept of seeing, since he seems to see both the tangible and intangible that are unseen by the visually unimpaired, or at least not incorporated in their *kiba* poetry. Mohlala's works form part of *crème de la crème* of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa. *Kiba* poetry as a whole, is a wealthy literary well than can save and reclaim the dignity of the language, poetry capable of confronting sheer reporting accounts with which the school system hopes to incite literary appetite of the younger generation.

It imperative to encourage the community to "celebrate and acknowledge the reality that exists in our villages; that of polyglotism, polyphony, plurovocality, multiculturalism, and plurospirituality" (Galane, 2006), but in this process, the new should not *replace* the old, but rather *coexist* with it. In his poetic account, *The Blood of Peace*, Taure Ojaide (1991) says, "[v]ery soon those who cry for the tree to be downed/will weep that the cut is too deep." The concept of *Free-Kiba*'s main aim is to grow the artform through exploring it into other forms, resulting in variations such as *mmino wa s'tepe/tša manyalo*. Failure to, equally, promote parallel practice of the original form created what can be described as *kiba* creative destruction. In the past decade we have witnessed the drastic deterioration of *kiba* practice

in most parts of Ga-Sekhukhune, the main *kiba* constituency, affecting the preservation of secular *kiba* tremendously. This paradigm shift has affected the main promoter of *kiba*, Thobela FM Radio, to adjust and substitute several programmes to cater for this new form, *mmino wa s'tepe/tša manyalo*. For instance, the Saturday weddings announcement show is now led by this new form, which is rapidly becoming the face of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa culture. Poetry's function, in the traditional context of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa, is heterogeneous, thus debates ensue as to whether poetry should be merely a vehicle for entertainment or a socio-political weapon. It is argued in this chapter that discourse on South African poetry will remain an incompletely mapped terrain until it is inclusive of poetry in African languages. The following chapter looks at *Kiba* poetry within the religious domain.

Chapter 4: Kiba poetry ensemble in the ZCC

4.1. Introduction

The dominant narrative identifies religion, especially Christianity, as one of the main culprits instigating the demise of indigenous African artforms. Christianity alongside civilisation, urbanisation, and globalisation have, as the argument goes, vilified, smeared, and discouraged the practice of cultural artforms deemed primitive and unholy. Recent scholarship argues that this claim might hold in the context of Christian missionary establishments but definitely not in the context of the African initiated churches (AICs). In fact, it is argued that AICs such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) are the main religious catalyst, if not social, in the restoration, preservation, and promotion of indigenous artforms. This chapter investigates artistic and cultural practices, especially *kiba* poetry encompassed in performative-prayers, within the ZCC in conjunction with the church's principles, values, and practices. In the greater scheme of things, the chapter explores the intersection of African belief system and the Eurocentric façade of Christianity within AICs, how African belief systems and culture enrich, and are enriched by, Christianity.

4.2. Background on the Zion Christian Church

4.2.1. Religion

It is clearer today, than ever before that religion is, or ought to be, a contextual negotiation: an exchange of empowering values to nourish the soul and the flesh, an enabler of mutual engagement between spiritual, physical, and societal midpoint that centres one's soul. Contrary to the depiction of Africans as originally dull and "passive recipients" (Stinton, 2004) in issues of faith and praxis, John Mbiti accurately points out that "[a]lthough many African languages do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death" (Mbiti, 1990:2). Artistic compositions and creations of southern African Aborigines attest that religion, or spiritual belief systems, existed even prior to the arrival of the missionaries (see, Krog, 2004:8). One can further argue that if African characters and settings feature in the Bible, it is therefore self-evident that Christianity was practiced in Africa way before the compilation of the Bible. As Mbiti accurately observes, "Africans are notoriously religious" such that "[r]eligion

permeates into all the departments of life so fully that is not easy or possible to isolate it” (Mbiti, 2004:1).

4.2.2. Eurocentric Christianity

Only more recently, for example in the early 1800s in South Africa, did European Christianity come to the shores of the African continent via various missionaries. Since then, the term “Christianity” was viewed from the point of view of race and nationality (Elphick, 2012:1). Subsequent ecclesiastical segregation evidently spelt out that the aim of a Christian orientation to the natives was supposed to be limited to the indoctrination of colonial and imperial enhancing principles. As Steve Biko observes, “[t]he people amongst whom Christianity was spread had to cast away their indigenous clothing, their customs, their beliefs which were all described as being pagan and barbaric” (Biko, 2009:60).

4.2.3. Formation of African initiated churches (AICs)

Such a Eurocentric façade and its monolithic rigidity left many Africans feeling like they were spiritual asylum-seekers in the Christian milieu, seeing a need to insert Africanisms in the theological narrative so to dilute the unwelcoming far-fetched religious relations. Formation of African initiated churches (AICs) attempted to give Africans a sense of belonging, contextualizing Christianity into concrete realities of the local context and their own socio-religious and socio-political universe. These establishments are generally depicted as a protest response toward ecclesiastical injustice of colonial imperialism, but however, the ZCC was formed mainly as a response to a spiritual injunction revealed through vision (Z.C.C. Family Bible, 1995:vi; Mopeli-Paulus, 1972:8). The church, like most AICs, ultimately and organically became a solution to challenges emanating from the missionary establishments.

4.2.4. Relevance of African initiated churches (AICs)

AICs were generally perceived as “churches of the poor and the illiterate” or “proletarian churches” because their indigenisation of Christianity somewhat lowered theology to the ordinary people. Black theology and African theology therefore remained an intellectual fantasy, an untouchable mirage in their own establishments. To borrow poet Kobus Moolman’s expression, AICs did not “[c]alculate the weight of the world/ through a window,” (Moolman, 2000:25) instead “they hoist[ed] overnight bags onto their shoulders and walk[ed]

towards the light” (Moolman, 2000:59). “Our beliefs,” as John Kehoe puts it, “are the single most important factor in determining what will happen to us, yet most of us pay them minimal if any attention” (Kehoe, 2011:53). He further emphasises the need to choose what he regards as an “empowering belief,” arguing that “[n]o one will ever achieve a goal when their foundation beliefs are contradictory to what they desire” (Kehoe, 2011:56). Looking at rapid growth of AICs, one can conclude that many Africans found AICs to be “empowering belief,” if not enhancing it. “[I]n terms of Christian growth, these churches are growing faster than the mainline churches” (Acquah, 2008:41).

4.2.5. The Zion Christian Church

The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) was founded in 1910. Although the name “Zion Christian Church” is only traceable from 1924, 1910 refers to the commencement of an unworldly passage embarked on by the founding father, Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. Since its inception, the church has had three spiritual leaders: Bishop Engenas, Bishop Edward, and the current Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane. Apart from its Zion City Moria headquarters in Polokwane, the ZCC has three spiritual ruins, namely Podungwane, Thabakgone and Thobolong. Only the first two are functional, the latter is privately utilized, with no church activities. Thabakgone is 4km from Moria, whereas Podungwane is over 60km, towards Lebowakgomo.

The ZCC is a highly spiritual, Afrocentric, bible-based church introduced as a respond to a spiritual injunction. Leadership is in a monarch-inspired primogeniture, and it is purely monotheism with the spiritual head serving as God’s servant: *Mookamedi* (the overseer). Its ethnic diversity consolidates into a single unworldly identity of *Bosione* (spiritual maturity). Baptism is the Riverine type, meaning a river triune or threefold immersion style. Its Christology is Africa orientated, enriched with African values and principles. It is generally classified as an African initiated church (AIC), which should mean “a generic description for those African Christian churches that arose independently of colonial missionary efforts” rather than “in reaction to colonial missionary efforts” (Müller, 2011:5). With membership outside the African continent, it attests to its inceptive outlook and vision of worldwide peace that goes beyond the African continent. The ZCC, commonly known as *Segolakampherefere*, *Seilampherefere* (That which dislikes trouble, yet prospers amidst troubles), is not only the largest AIC in southern Africa, but also the largest ecumenical institution in South Africa.

4.2.6. The ZCC membership

It seems to have been easier to estimate the quantity of the ZCC adherents in its earlier years than it is today. We know that in 1925 it had 926 adherents; 2000 in 1935; 27487 in 1942 and between 40000; 45000 in 1943 (Anderson, 1999:285), and 120000 in 1948 (Motolla, 1999:2). Based on the 2001 South African Census, the ZCC was regarded as the largest African initiated church in southern Africa with about 4.97 million adherents, ranking it the second largest on the African continent. Due to Statistics South Africa's decision to exclude religious affiliation on the 2011 Census, researchers still rely on the outcome of the survey conducted 15 years ago. Given the drastic and rapid growth of AICs, one cannot presume the status quo has remained constant, or that previous numbers still holds. More so, the above statistics are not concrete since they exclude adherents from, say, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, and Malawi. The latest overall estimations, nevertheless, range around 15 million adherents worldwide.

4.2.7. Multi-ethnicity

According to Mbiti, "one traditional religion cannot be propagated in another tribal group" (Mbiti, 1990:4). Although AICs such as AmaNazaretha are rooted in a monolithic ethnic experience, the success of the ZCC is partly due to its ability to transverse into, and accommodate, other ethnicities outside that of the founders. Beyond indigenisation of Christianity, the ZCC laid its foundation on multiculturalism, drawing from particular elastic cultural practices that are easily interpretable in other cultures. Through such cultural eclecticism, the ZCC transcends dichotomies between ethnicities, classes, cultures, and languages, while embracing personal cultural inheritance and identity. The ZCC was founded at the time when interaction among various South African ethnicities was viewed by the then authority as problematic, in favour of *dīvide et īmpera* (the divide and conquer), yet its resilience to the integrational stance was inclusive to nationality. Its worldwide-peace seeking was, and still is, unapologetically none-violent in its solutions. Although characterised by its respectful obedience to authority, the ZCC rejects political manipulation of religion, a stance that made it somewhat unpopular among some of the political movements, especially under the apartheid system. Nevertheless, it sets the record straight that it remains above politics.

4.2.8. Kiba artform in the ZCC

In her study of migrant women of the Reef, James states that the ZCC regards *kiba* traditional dance as “pagan” (James, 1999:51). Recent studies by Mapaya (2013) and Lesibana Rafapa (2013; 2016) reveal the opposite. Their arguments deem the ZCC to be one of the AICs identified as a cultural resource, which effectively influences and builds new cross-community connections in South Africa and beyond, a cultural and heritage hub of sorts to front, among others, musical and poetic elements of *kiba* artform. As Mapaya puts it, the ZCC is part of “reservoirs for some of the indigenous [artistic] practices that would have otherwise faced extinction” (Mapaya, 2013:46).

The following demystification attests the fact that, the problem seems to have been overreliance on partial data, leading to premature conclusions. We learn from James’ study that secular *kiba* groups host weekly practices on “Sunday mornings” (James, 1999:1; Joubert, 2004:273) in “makeshift bars” (James, 1999, *Ibid*) to be thanked with, among others, “beer” (Joubert, 2004, *Ibid*). Conversely, we are reminded that the ZCC performative-prayers are also held on “Sunday morning[s]” (Mapaya, 2013:50) at the “churchyard” (Mapaya, 2013, *Ibid*), moreover, that the ZCC adherents “do not consume alcohol” (Z.C.C. Constitution, 1961; 1975; Moripe, 1996:42). This is, therefore, self-explanatory enough due to the ZCC adherents’ in particular secular *kiba* events that James and Joubert visited, which is misinterpreted as the ZCC’s disapproval of this ancient artform of the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa.

The ZCC performative-prayers include *kiba* artforms such as *dinaka*, *sekgapa*, and *makgakgasa*. The latter is also recorded in a form of a sonic album, *Z.C.C. Makgakgasa*, an album popular for the tracks, “Ditšhaba” and “Mapulaneng.” The prominent *kiba* groups include the Mothapo Dinaka Group led by Mr Monyela and the Bushbuckridge Makgakgasa. The latter is distinct for its flamboyant peacock-style costume characterised by colourful mirror-decorated designs, more so, because its members include Queen Chiloane of Mapulaneng. *Kiba* secular groups unaffiliated to the ZCC are invited to perform during the three annual pilgrimage-cum-conferences in Moria (Motolla, 1999:8; Mapaya, 2013:53), a practice traceable to the days of Bishop Edward who used to host *kiba* groups at the Podungwane ruins as part of the Christmas celebration (Jonas Mphahlele & Johannes Boreni, Personal communication, 28/03/2015).

If it is accurate that the ZCC is pivotal in the undertaking to recover, preserve, and promote “endangered” ancient *kiba* artforms, then faith organisations need to be identified as strategic artistic and cultural catalysts to be considered in the cultural mapping of areas in which they operate. The outcome will therefore encourage a deliberate nurturing and promotion of the endangered artforms within the religious fraternity, which will further enhance social cohesion and transcultural exchange. Religious institutional influences on society could be extended to how the society relates to primordial artforms such as *kiba*.

Most ZCC branches do not have proper church buildings. Some branches still hold services under trees, if not in makeshift wooden or corrugated iron structures. Several scholars regard this as evidence that the ZCC is purely a proletarian church, deliberately embracing poverty. There are, of course, AICs that embrace the absence of a church building, but the ZCC is not one of them. The ZCC identify lack of sufficient land to cater for the needs of the ZCC as the main impediment in this regard. Most allocated sites largely meet specs for the church building, but not performative-prayers such as *mokhukhu*, *nkedi* and *mpoho*. In response to this, the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Council reached a resolution to hand over six title deeds to the ZCC in 2013, 100 years after the 1913 promulgation of the Native Land Act. During the event held in Atteridgeville’s Lucas Moripe Stadium, Bishop Barnabas stated that:

people always thought that we don’t want to build structures or we are comfortable under trees, whereas the real reason behind is lack of land space [...] We have rejected opportunities of acquiring land in places where we would not be able to worship in true ZCC style. [...] what is ZCC without *mokhukhu wa masogana* [...] without *khwaere ya makgarebe*? ZCC is not complete without *nkedi*. So, when we settle for land in any area, we will have to be able to practice those traditions of the church (Lekganyane, 2013a).

Apart from *kiba* in its purest form; that is, *dinaka*, *sekgapa*, *makgakgasa*, and suchlike; the rest of the performative-prayers somewhat assimilate or emulate *kiba*. Most notably, *kiba* poetry features strongly in *mpoho*. Chanting, reciting poetry, prayers and mantras are some of the assentations that inculcate and emanate innermost harmony (Kehoe, 1996:27). Assentation as an inner empowering tool gives birth to, and nurtures, what John Kehoe calls

an “empowering belief,” which he regards to be the centre of human drive. The ZCC does not nullify *kiba* artform, let alone perceive it as a societal frontier. Practice of *kiba* and *kiba* variants performative-prayers within the ZCC, as the above sentiment reveals, are uncompromised, defining factors that are the very DNA of the ZCC, factors without which the ZCC cannot fully function.

The interchangeable relation between secular *kiba* and the ZCC compositions further attests to the fact that *kiba* artform has, and continues to bridge(d) societal segments, which could have otherwise remained fragmented. As Thomas Hardy would put it, the relationship between *kiba* and religion is reciprocal such that they “modulate into each other” which is not to say they are “different names for the same thing” (Hynes, 1980). *Kiba* artform, therefore, “is not religion, but grows up with religion, serves it, and in large measure determines it” (Langer, 1966:5).

According to Mbiti, “one traditional religion cannot be propagated in another tribal group” (Mbiti, 1990:4). Although AICs such as AmaNazaretha are rooted on a monolithic ethnic experience, the success of the ZCC is due to its ability to transverse into, and accommodate, other ethnicities outside that of the founder’s. Beyond indigenisation of Christianity, the ZCC laid its foundation on multiculturalism, drawing from particular elastic cultural practices that are easily interpretable in other cultures. Through such cultural eclecticism, the ZCC transcends dichotomies between ethnicities, classes, cultures, and languages, while embracing personal cultural inheritance and identity. The ZCC was founded at the time when interaction among various African ethnicities was viewed by the authority as problematic, in favour of *dīvide et īmpera* (divide and conquer), yet its resilience to the integrational stance was inclusive to nationality. Its worldwide-peace seeking was, and still is, unapologetically non-violent in its solutions. Although characterised by its respectful obedience to authority, the ZCC rejects political manipulation of religion, a stance that made it somewhat unpopular among some of the political movements. Nevertheless, it remains above politics.

4.2.9. Religion vis-à-vis culture

Although it seems imperative theologically to differentiate between “religion” and “culture(s),” in terms of history and phenomenology such a distinction might seem to hold no water (Müller, 2011:6). Armin W Geertz (2015:384), for instance, regards religion as “a

cultural system and a social institution that governs and promotes ideal interpretations of existence and ideal praxis with reference to postulated powers or beings” (2015:384). Conversely, Comaroff (2012:6) defines it as “that which pertains to the divine or the supernatural.” In totality, the study will not view religion as culture, but rather probe the relation between, or intersection of, *kiba* “culture” and “religion.” Admittedly, in the context of the ZCC the two occasionally overlap. Here a spiritual identity of *Bosione* may seem to overshadow biological, geographical, cultural, and linguistic identities.

4.2.10. The ZCC leadership

Bishop Engenas’ epoch is characterised by the establishment of the concrete foundation in the face of denialism. His discovery of the prophetic “talking rock” of Mount Zion has cost him humiliation, ridicule, and at times, physical assault. The vision of a church that was subsequently going to reach the four corners of the globe seems to have been more vivid to him, thus in those dusky days of dung-polished and reed-fenced churches, he kept asking his cynics if they too see the gleam (*O a le bona naa lesedi la Jesu?*). Bishop Edward’s epoch, also characterised by spectacular miracles that tilted denialism into tolerance, establishing its strong presence in other parts of SADC. This too came at a price, which included having to be taught values and principle of a church completely opposite of his own. His epoch was but construction of the ZCC realm, with infrastructural development that encompasses construction of the *Jerusalem* church building, and many other community advancement services. The current epoch of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane is but the age of acceptance and overwhelming progression that expands the institution beyond African borders, with community advancement initiatives widely benefiting SADC communities who might not necessarily be the ZCC adherents. “Although each leader exhibited different characteristics of leadership (Anderson, 1999:287), these are indeed “three distinct but interrelated eras” (Lekganyane, 2010e) which speak to a common divine vision.

4.2.11. Zion City Moria

Zion City Moria, the headquarters of the ZCC, is not only the country’s largest pilgrimage but also a sacred place with spiritual power (Müller, 2011:7; Wouters, 2014:235-6). Ironically, this “city” is in the “rural” hinterlands of Limpopo, in the Mmakau Valley between GaMolepo and GaMamabolo villages, along the Kwenane River. During its three annual pilgrimages-cum-

conferences, this village transforms into a metropolitan of sorts. “A modern village [...] a tapestry of languages and musical styles that include [...] a typical quilt of praise song-dance music” (Galane, 2006). Every Easter weekend (March/April), the Christian liturgical year consecration weekend (September), and Christmas (December) multitudes of the ZCC pilgrims from countrywide, the African continent, and abroad gather in the dusty holy grounds of ThabaSione, Moria. Also known as *Moria la bo setšheni, tšhaba di setšhwa ke moya* (Moria of the Spiritual Commander, multitudes are spiritually palpated), Moria is situated 35 kilometres east of Polokwane (Limpopo), and regarded by many as healing grounds. Moria holds spiritual significance for its “cow hoof-printed rock” (or “talking rock”) on which daily prayers are held, but most importantly, the “meteorite impact site” on which the church building is erected.

4.2.12. Meteorite impact site

In 2014, a team of four University of Pretoria astrological scholars disseminated geomorphological findings on a historic cosmic event confirmed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Richard P Wade, Patrick G Eriksson, Hannes C J deW Rauternbach, and GA Duncan published a ground-breaking study, which traces the 1944 inferred meteor of a special star known as Halley’s Comet, which is believed to have fallen precisely at an area where Bishop Edward Lekganyane has built a church named *Jerusalem*, in the Zion City Moria. “Verification of this event was established through many years of fieldwork, surveys and eyewitness accounts of a strewn field, craters and associated ring features located 16-25km from Zion City Moria” (Wade *et al*, 2014:84). Notably, their study corresponds with internal ZCC oral history by senior adherents, narrated in the official church publication, *The ZCC Messenger*. The 1951-born Ben Jonas Mashele’s (2010) describes a “hard rock” that broke chisels and pick heads during the construction of *Jerusalem* church building (Mashele, 2010:57). The 1930-born Maria “Mmago Makgoka” Macheru reports about two occasions during which “astrologists from abroad” arrived in Moria in search for a “missing star” (Macheru, 2010:67). Comparing this cosmic wonder with the Black Stone of the Kaaba in Mecca, the researchers speculate that such a cosmological event might have spiritual significance.

The power of such a celestial inspiration in religious terms has well known parallels with the star that the Wise Men followed at the time of Jesus' birth and in the meteorite associated with Mecca, the holy site of the Muslim Faith in Saudi Arabia (Buchner *et al.*, 2012; Wade *et al.*, 2014).

Pondering on the spiritual wealth of the ZCC, Bishop Barnabas says, "I wonder if my grandfather fully understood the impact of what God was leading him to start when he ventured to launch the ZCC" (Lekganyane, 2015u). If such meteorology or cosmic events are first discovered religiously, then that is self-evident that "science" can possibly learn a thing or two from "religion."

4.2.13. Bohlale bja Semoya (spiritual intelligence)

The concept of *Bohlale bja Semoya*, literally translates as "Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)", and it existed in the ZCC way before the field could receive its recent academic attention. It has always been the underling ground of *Bosione* and it is eloquently summed up by Bishop Barnabas' assertion, "*ge Moya o re ema, re a ema*" (Lekganyane, 2015s), meaning in the ZCC when the Holy Spirit instructs us to stop, we do likewise. "Art is a collaboration between God and the artist," a French Nobel Prize in Literature recipient, André Guillaume Gide (2017) states, "and the less the artist does the better." This definition perfectly elaborates *Bohlale bja Semoya* (SQ) in the context of the ZCC: a collaboration between the adherent and the God of Mount Zion in all areas of the adherent's life. It is wisdom explored and reflecting in uninformed yet accurate discernment guided by spirituality, the heterogeneous consciousness of exploring more than cognitive knowledge (IQ) or emotional intelligence (EQ). SQ is multiple ways of knowing, of attaining, and of maintaining equanimity: the integration of the inner life of the mind and spirit with the outer life of worldly work. *Bohlale bja Semoya* is not the tapping into, but rather becoming one with, spiritual power. It is the underlying ground of being, which one can, in the face of adversity or tribulations, maintain inner and outer peace (Vaughan, 2002; Wigglesworth, 2015).

Bishop Edward Engenas Lekganyane taught his followers to interpret what they saw and heard in line with the Lord and Christ's teachings (Lekganyane, 2010e). *Bohlale bja Semoya* does not teach one "to suffer peacefully" but rather to see through suffering the "how" and

“when” of God’s intervention. *Bohlale bja Semoya* also enables one to differentiate between “a human voice” and “God speaking through a human voice.” It further enables one to hear and understand non-verbal spiritual conversation through nature, or any other omens. One has to, however, shed off some of one’s Cognitive Intelligence (IQ) and its logical securities for *Bohlale bja Semoya* to prevail in them. It is for this reason that most SQ scholarship focuses on neutralisation of ego. *Bohlale bja Semoya* is a “space” necessary for effortless humanity and passion, allowing one to transcend into the subconscious realm of abundance of spiritual wealth. *Bohlale bja Semoya* is the “space” that allows God of Mount Zion to reveal Himself to a person. At most, *Bohlale bja Semoya* operates from the point of not knowing, thus one does not necessarily have to be “intellectual” in the sense of the word, yet fruits of their effortless and accurate spirit-guided discernment will be interpreted as IQ. It is through *Bohlale bja Semoya* (spiritual intelligence) that one graduates to *Bosione* (spiritual maturity).

4.2.14. Bosione (spiritual maturity)

There are three stages to be embarked on by every ZCC adherent, namely (1) baptism, (2) acquiring *Bosione*, and ultimately, (3) practicing *Bosione*. Although an adherent is commonly regarded as *Mosione* (a person who attained *Bosione*) immediately after their baptism, *Bosione* develops over time; it is a disciplined individual journey with God of Mount Zion. Unlike baptism, *Bosione* is not an event but rather a life-changing process that requires high levels of determination. As if to distinguish the two, during his Bulawayo sermon, Bishop Barnabas (Lekganyane, 2011z) emphasised that he is “*Mosione*” and so were his predecessors. *Bosione* is the spiritual maturity as per principles of God of Mount Zion achieved through sustained practise of spiritual intelligence, compassion and respect towards self, and in relation to other people, regardless. It is a sustained exploration of faith, and attaining full grasp on the art of multiple levels of knowing, which includes access to vision, dreams, prophecy and other perspectives and multiple modes of knowing. Most importantly, *Bosione* is a constant spirit-guided state of living, connecting the inner life of mind, heart, and spirit with the outer life of action, service, and prayer for peace and love, even in the face of impermanence (Vaughan, 2002). Such inner transformation should translate and be evident in interpersonal relations. At his or her best, *Mosione* serves as a servant leader with unceasing graciousness.

Mosione uses spiritual guidance to remain true to their life purpose, compassionately cooperating and coexisting without distorting their identity, no matter the advantage at hand. *Mosione* accepts prosperity, however, is not prosperity-driven but rather a Godly-purpose-driven. Charlotte Mavhungu's article, "Find Trust, Love and Serve God – Entirely beyond your own Understanding, Knowledge and Wisdom," in *The ZCC Messenger* 94 (Easter 2016) is important and carries the epitome of *Bosione*. She sums it with Philippians 4: 11, which reads thus: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances" (Mavhungu, 2016:33).

Bohlale bja Semoya is to live an omniscient-guided life that strives to honour the covenant with God, a path to *Bosione*. In other words, the distance between baptism and *Bosione* is *Bohlale-bja-Semoya*. "Self-awareness is essential for developing spiritual maturity" (Vaughan, 2002:4). Self-awareness includes knowing one's spiritual gifts, and being able to utilize them. It also includes knowing the God who is by their side, and his ability. Such awareness is vital in maintaining inner peace without worries, allowing one, in the heart of adversity, to *pray* instead of *crying* to God. Through a purposeful life of *Bohlale bja Semoya*, one is equipped with the ability to see "the reason" behind a reason, this means, what is regarded by some as coincidence becomes a God-incident.

4.2.15. Impetus(es) of the ZCC

In his study, Stuart (2008:16) states that 80% of the ZCC adherents joined the church because of sickness. Although this sounds like a complement to the healing power of the ZCC, Stuart said this as an attempt to vilify the ZCC's Christology, claiming that adherents convert to the ZCC because of anything else but not Christology. The impetuses of the ZCC, not the impetus, vary from person to person such that even the leadership does not claim to simplify its complexity

(see Bishop Edward's last sermon, Mopeli-Paulus, 1972:3). Going through testimonies published in *The ZCC Messenger*, one notes that impetuses differ yet most of them are spirit-type such as a divine revelation through a dream, vision, "inner voice," or the need for prophetic consultation. In his account, *Systematic Theology*, the 1873-born Louis Berkhof asserts, "[t]he idea of revelation is, in some form or other, found in all religions, and this proves quite sufficiently that it is a necessary corollary of religion" (Berkhof, 1938:114).

In her study, Deborah James (1999:164) misleadingly regards the church's affordable burial society as its impetus, and she claims that "upon becoming widows," migrant women "allowed their membership to lapse" and they subsequently seceded. The ZCC is indeed concerned about death, but more so on what will happen to the soul as opposed to the flesh. As noted by Mbiti, it is true that "[m]any of the churches in Africa are awakening to the social needs" (1990:233), but it would be insulting to presume people's faiths are grounded on a mere afterthought burial incentive. If it is true that Africans are a highly spiritual nation, and that the ZCC is a spirit-based church, one can conclude that the ZCC is chiefly an awakening to the spiritual needs. As a spirit-type AIC, one notes from testimonials that the ZCC impetuses are not limited to the outer worldly needs, they mainly encompasses innermost spiritual prerequisites. Spirituality is not limited to the "visible part of reality."

4.2.16. Cultural eclecticism

The foundation of the ZCC is grounded on ecumenical, ideological, linguistic, cultural and national eclecticism. Religious eclecticism in its indigenised Christianity, which is characterised by a blend of Jewish-Israeli heritage in, among others, the adoption of the Christian liturgical year; and African values encompassed in Ubuntu, especially its respectful consideration and cooperative humaneness. The ZCC does not only respect and honour traditional leadership, but its governance structures emulate *bogoši* (chieftaincy). The ZCC performative-prayers are inspired or resemble various cultures starting with *kiba*-derived *mpoho* and *nkedi* of dance moves similar to the Khoisan healing dance or Basarwa male dance movements. The leaping and stomping in *mokhukhu* is between the vhaVenda male dance and the Maasai leaping dance. Both the male and female choirs have a flavour of choral, *isicathamiya*, and *clap 'n tap* style. The brass band is more or less the British military style, with a military theme dominating the design of male outfits, especially the brass band/*nkedi* gabardine, the Scottish traditional kilt etiquette with diced-band Glengarry bonnets or berets, and the *mokhukhu* khakhi, which is between the German and British military attire.

During times of war, the biblical Joel instructed people to turn shovels into swords, and hoes into spears (Joel 3:3, NKJV); conversely, during the time of reconciliation and peace, Isaiah instructed them to transform their swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning-hooks,

so that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4, NKJV). Given that the ZCC’s mission is to pray for worldwide peace, its adoption of military attire symbolises Isaiah’s instruction of using the same tools previously used to shed blood, as tools with which bloodshed is stop. As Emmanuel Motolla pointed out, failure to grasp this, leads to headlines such as, “Lekganyane formed a defence force” or “ZCC Defence Force” (Motolla, 1999:6).

In addition to its multilingual approach, the adoption of the Sesotho sa Moshoeshe hymnal book, and the preference of the word, *kgotso* instead of the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboha “*khutšo*” for “peace,” are some of the common code switching within the ZCC. Adoption of culturally elastic practices allows adaptation or cultural interpretational thus *mpoho* performative-prayer, for instance, has numerous ethnic variations. It is, therefore, accurate to say, “[t]he ZCC does not draw on a single, monolithic, traditional culture” (Müller, 2011:16). The foundation of the ZCC is rooted on the concept of eclecticism, which does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, but instead draws upon multiple theories, styles, or ideas to gain complementary insights into a subject, or applies different theories in particular cases. Tladi (2002:307) identifies the phenomenon of eclecticism as the feasible method to grow any culture, defining it as:

to borrow ideas, to enhance and enrich aesthetic of a given concept or the nature of a thing, but most importantly that particular *thing* should not lose its original characteristics and become something that lacks authenticity in the context of its tradition and dynamic.

Tladi argues, “Western civilization has eclectically taken the best out of the colonized societies to boost its cultural value” (Tladi, 2002, *ibid*). As much as cultural purists discourage acculturation, it is self-evident that, say, *seanamarena*, a blanket gift given to King Moshoeshe by Mr Howel in 1860, enriched the Basotho ba Moshoeshe culture such that it became a cultural trademark that spoke squarely to the cold climate of the mountainous Lesotho. In the context of the cultural eclectic relations between western Christianity and African culture within the AICs, Madimabe Mapaya calls it “a give and take fashion,” which he deems reciprocal such that, “as Christianity was changing the complexion of the African life,

African culture was also affecting Christianity” (Mapaya, 2013:46). Muller concludes that the ZCC’s successful growth is partly attributable to “its ability to cross cultural and linguistic barriers” (Müller, 2011:16).

Early prophecies of the church state clearly that the church was going to go beyond the borders of the country and continent, thus its foundation had a global outlook in its Africanism, matching with its vision of praying for peace in the “four corners” of the globe. From borrowing the best of other cultures beyond its borders, leadership’s ethnicity, nationality, or continent, the ZCC allowed modernity to synergize with traditionalism, national with international, yet prodigious emphasis was, and still is, on Africanism.

4.2.17. ZCC, the global AIC

Some scholars define AICs in terms of geographic margins, as churches limited to Africa, and only meant for Africans. The ZCC, however, has from its origin manifested outside such prescriptive margins, borderless in its worldwide-peace vision and the prophesied quartet-global-corners growth. Chuene Rammutla (2010), a senior legal practitioner, recently observed that the ZCC is rapidly becoming “a global church,” flourishing extensively across the African diaspora and worldwide. Given the growth of the 2003 established Rotherham branch at the city of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, one is bound to concur with Rammutla. Every July, hundreds of Masione from all “corners of the world” join the UK ZCC congregation for an annual Summer Mpoho Prayer, an event that is “gradually becoming an integral part of the calendar of the ZCC” (Lekganyane, 2017u). In this weekend, which is usually the penultimate weekend of July, members practice performative-prayers such as *mokhukhu*, *khwaere*, and of course, *mpoho*. The practice of performative-prayers is much softer than elsewhere since they are practiced indoors, “on carpet, concrete and tiled floors.”

Members of the Rotherham branch, originally hailing from Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, are scattered throughout the cosmopolitan areas and villages of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on occupational or academic adventures. Although English is adopted as their *lingua franca*, other African languages such as Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, Setswana, isiNdebele, isiZulu, Ikalanga, Chishona, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Otjiherero and Afrikaans are occasionally spoken or interpreted.

Performative-prayers are practised as per original tradition of the church, something that fascinated the Moria delegation sent to attend the *mpoho* night vigil in 2013. The delegation reported that *mpoho* was performed in its “original version” like it is the case in Moria, attesting that in spite of distance, the branch adheres to the church constitution that stipulates, “*Baruti le rute batho go bina Mpoho bjalo ka kgale*,” translates: Priests, teach congregations to perform *Mpoho* in its original form (Z.C.C. Constitution, 1961; 1975). In his remark, Bishop Barnabas said, “May He [God] bless you accordingly for keeping the traditions of the ZCC alive in a foreign land, [...] You took Moria [...] to England” (Lekganyane, 2014u). This reveals that the preservation of endangered *kiba* artform in its original outlook is a deliberate stance within the ZCC, and such preservation has become part of the church’s code of conduct dating as back to 1961, before our beloved scholars could embark in this enterprise. Welcoming visitors during the 2014 pilgrimage-cum-conference in Moria, Bishop Barnabas said:

Whereas we have always acknowledged individual members of the ZCC from America, Canada, Oceanic and Oriental countries, including of course central African region and our branch in the United Kingdom, today it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the presence of our representatives from Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Lekganyane, 2014e).

In his recent UK sermon, Bishop Barnabas said, “Masione, [...] are required to live modern lives” yet they should abstain “from desires of flesh, which rage war against [their] soul” (Lekganyane, 2017u; Peter 2:11, NKJV). This means, in their various endeavours abroad, they should maintain their spiritual identity, spiritual maturity, and spiritual obligation of *Bosione* in Diaspora (and elsewhere): to pray for peace in the four corners of the world. The formation the UK ZCC branch is part of the church’s foundational prophecies. Bishop Barnabas confirms, “[a]ncient prophecies of the ZCC foretold [...] that this church will outgrow the borders of South Africa, and indeed it has” (Lekganyane, 2015u). He adds, “[t]he founders of this church said it over a hundred years ago that this church [was going to] cross borders and oceans” (Lekganyane, *Ibid*). These were prophecies that Reverend Engenas received when the church

membership was less than a thousand people. One can safely attest to the fact that the ZCC “has outdone the imagination of many, [especially] its hecklers” (Lekganyane, 2014u).

Mbiti states, “[t]raditional religion have no missionaries to propagate them; and one individual does not preach his religion to another” (Mbiti, 1990:4). To the contrary, the ZCC’s mission “is to spread the word of God and the message of peace all over the world” (Lekganyane, 2015u). Thus, the bishop advises the UK congregation that he would like to see “some extremely serious missionary work” (Lekganyane, *Ibid*) in opening up the church to “the locals” who are “not of [the congregation’s] backgrounds.” He argues that the ZCC is not, and should not become, a “personal social club.” “The ZCC should not just be a church of black people from Africa. It must grow to include the majority of locals as well” (Lekganyane, *Ibid*). He then advises that tolerance, or inclusivity, is “the only way [they] can plant the seed of PEACE *khutlong tse nne tsa lefase*” (Lekganyane, *Ibid*). Just like European missionaries, AICs have an international agenda that stretches into the rest of the globe, at least a peaceful one free from political conspiracy. Venter’s (2004:25) definition of AICs being religious establishments “in Africa by Africans for Africans” is calling for a revisit, since we see AICs such as the ZCC not constrained within Africa and its society, but rather pushing further the ecumenical frontiers.

4.2.17. Documenting heritage of exceptional value

Oral history is inevitably imperative in an attempt to close a vast cleavage between the actual history and recorded historic accounts. “Used initially as one source among many, oral testimony has come to occupy a more and more central place in an increasing number of studies” (Hofmeyr, 1993:1). History teaches us that social fabric of any nation is sewed together by a deliberate preservation and an unapologetic conservation of that society’s cultural identities and experiences. This does not only translate into generational continuity, but it further strengthens, among others, the collective enthusiasm among inhabitants. Responding to the “who” and “how” question of historic, especially the connection between an ideological standpoint and the writing of history, Kwame Nkrumah (2009:63) says:

In the new African renaissance, we place great emphasis on the presentation of history. Our history needs to be written as the history of our society, not as the story of

European adventures. African society must be treated as enjoying its own integrity; its history must be a mirror of that society, and the European contact must find its place in this history only as an African experience, even if as a crucial one.

As part of its 2010 centenary celebration, the ZCC launched an oral history collection project (2010-2012), according elderly members an opportunity to add their chronicles into the dominating narrative on the history of the ZCC that was, before then, filled with a widely perpetuated bizarre set of erroneous beliefs and fallacies. These oral narratives were published in *The ZCC Messenger* historic series, a series in the official and quarterly publication (magazine) of the ZCC. These accounts encompass even the pre-1910 events: when the founding spiritual leader, Bishop Engenas, was still a herder. The 1928-born ZCC elder, Daniel Lesufi says, “[he] noticed that the church’s history is misinterpreted by many” (Lesufi, 2010:38). Lesufi, as one of those who did not hear nor read about events, but rather witnessed and participated in some, took his time to clarify and falsify some of the historic delusions on the ZCC. Evidently, the preservation and conversation of literary and historic assertions of any nation or people is not a sporadic activity, but rather a heterogeneous incessant task, the responsibility of all capable societal structures within a specific space, group, and time.

It is important to record the official history of any institution, and more significant is to ensure that the ordinary people take part in the process of compiling such an authoritative voice. *The ZCC Messenger* as a publication can be interpreted as ZCC’s admittance that history is inscribed by, and belongs to, the people, ordinary people in particular. For a protocol-driven religious institution of the ZCC’s calibre, *The ZCC Messenger* becomes a significant platform that allows intergenerational dialogue, offering direct access to either the leadership or whatsoever niche readership. Articles published here are not by people of a specific rank within church structures, ordinary adherents get their works published alongside their spiritual leader’s sermons and speeches. Leaders and ordinary adherents are afforded a fair opportunity to continuously reflect their personal comprehension, interpretations and outlook of anything and everything in any imaginable language. This includes contributors who are not necessarily adherents of the ZCC. With such an overwhelming quantity of its

readership, one then admits that this quarterly publication is one of the most influential and impactful long-standing publications in the country.

Given the historic wealth of historic knowledge in this centenary celebratory focus, it will be misleading to assume that the history of the church is completely undocumented, or that it is not disseminated among relevant stakeholders. The most fascinating discovery is how most of these accounts match with some of the scientifically verified studies, as already seen on the interred meteor case. These oral narratives are mostly self-effacing, with modest expressions, painting symbolic representations which are not always sequential or strictly chronological. Unlike most written historic accounts, these oral historic testaments do not pretend to give insight into the experience of many; they only share experience as perceived by a particular narrator. Details such as time and place are often neglected with focus given to the content of the episode. This means it is often the “what” and “how” that are addressed, the “where” and “when” are generally deemed less important.

Africanists draw upon linguistic, archaeological, ethnographic, genealogical, oral-performative, and oral-interview evidence in addition to the documentary sources more conventionally understood as primary sources within the discipline. [...] It would be a mistake, however, to overstate the absence of documentary sources for the construction of African history. [...] It would be an even bigger mistake to imagine that African historians by and large rely on any one kind of evidence to the exclusion of others (Cooper, 2005:191).

Some of the studies regarded as authoritative accounts on the ZCC give an impression that their lack of knowledge on existing internal historic accounts on the church translates into unavailability of such, but more so, that the church’s foundation is laid on a quicksand. Not only the ZCC has received the overstating spotlight of scarcity of documentary sources, this has been a common anthropological anthem in the trajectory of African Studies. It took decades before leading scholars such as Ruth Finnegan (2012:xxiii) could admit that scarcity was not always the issue. In her recently revised edition of *Oral Literature in Africa*, she writes:

When I first became interested in research into one particular form of African oral literature in 1961, I found to my surprise that there was no easily accessible work to which I could turn to give me some idea of what was known in this field, the various publications available, or the controversies and problems that demanded further investigation. In fact, I gradually discovered, there was an immense amount in print – but most of it was not easy to find, it was not systematic, and there was relatively little treatment of contemporary forms. It was true that there was plenty of work...

In the context of the ZCC, the 2010 oral history series forms part of the untapped historic wealth and heritage on the church. Although primarily ecumenical, articles published in the *ZCC Messenger* are not limited to religion. Themes range from religion, law, finance, leadership, health, and so forth. Seasoned scholars such as Prof Lesibana Rafapa, Prof Temba Mosia, Dr C.J. Makhubela and Prof Taukobong are some of the regular contributors. Remarkable occasional features include articles by mayors, government ministers, vice chancellors, political leaders, ambassadors, civil servants, language practitioners and corporate experts. Any academic study should be disseminated among the people whose lives are studied, particularly if such a scholar aims to make any meaningful contribution. The dissemination of research findings is not, and should not be, limited to the hegemonic, esoteric peer-review publication.

The ZCC Messenger has from its days as *Moria News*, preserved and conserved both literary and historic wealth of the ZCC. Moreover, a ninety-two page Sesotho sa Moshoeshoe unpublished historic manuscript by A.S. Mopeli-Paulus, *Histori ya Kereke ya Zion Christian Church*, adds to the list of resources one can utilize. A.S. Mopeli-Paulus was one of Bishop Edward's special advisors (Mopeli-Paulus, 1972:1) and one of the two men tasked to crown Bishop Edward in 1966 (Mashele, 2010:60), revealing how close he was to him. This widely circulating manuscript consists of a rare collection of photographs covering the first two epochs of the church, a historic narrative, Bishop Edward's last sermon, testimonies, letters and poetry. What still has to be investigated is whether Mopeli-Paulus is the same famous Sesotho writer, Atwell Sidwell Mopeli-Paulus (1913-1960), the author of *Ho tsamaea ke ho bona*, *Blanket Boy's Moon*, *Turn to the Dark*, and the posthumous *The World and the Cattle*. If not, were they related? Furthermore, what was his relationship with Howell "Mopelinyana"

Mopeli-Paulus, an unsung political stalwart who died in 1971, after a 19 year banishment? Stamped with a ZCC official stamp dated 23 November 1972, one can regard Mopeli-Paulus' account as a reputable internal viewpoint of the church, if not its symbol. It was, according to the foreword written by the author, reviewed and endorsed by Bishop Edward and his council. None of the so-called authoritative studies on the ZCC history has interrogated this rich source.

In addition to scarcity defence, one further notes how exquisite the accounts are that are written in African indigenous languages and how they are reduced to nonexistence in the academic milieu where not only certain indigenous languages are vilified, but also any valuable information that comes in those languages. It does not then come as a surprise when senior academics such as Michael Chapman claim, "Publishing realities demanded contributions in English, or translations into English, a language challenge that continues to tax Africa inside and out" (Chapman, 2012). In his continental anthology, *The Picardor Book of African Stories*, Stephen Gray has, perfectly demystified this view that "gives the impression that all the literature of the continent worth reading is really written in English, with perhaps the odd translation attached" (Gray, 2004:viii).

During his 2015 Rotherham visit, Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane echoed Martin Luther King Jr, expressing his own dream "of a day when children of our land will be taught the true history of their forefathers and the true history of the Zion Christian Church" (Lekganyane, 2015u). This study is in a way an attempt to answer to this call through exploration of authentic aforementioned sources, including oral tradition preserved in the form of vinyl (LPs/records).

4.3. Kiba poetry in the ZCC

Sufficient ethnomusicological studies have probed the relationship between music and worship, particularly in the syncretic churches, but interception of religion and poetry remains an uncultivated field desperately calling for scholarly attention. To what extent is poetry part of the ZCC worship? What types of poetry exists in the ZCC, but most importantly, apart from their cultural or religious significance, are they of literary merit? These are the questions to be explored under this section.

4.3.1. Mpoho performative-prayer

Mpoho is an unisex, somatic, performative-prayer in which rhythmic clapping and stomping are weaved together by a reverberant melodic thread of a poetic ensemble that encompasses a range of other of poetic forms. Mainly, *mpoho* consists of two types of poetry, namely *sound poetry*, which forms the base melody on which the second type, *synthetic anecdotal rendition*, is recited. Legendary South African poet, Vonani Bila, calls *mpoho* a “the classical poem” (Bila, 2015:86). It is the first performative-prayer of the ZCC, which the founding spiritual head, Bishop Engenas used to sing with people of different nationalities and ethnicities in the early years of the church. *Mpoho* is a foundational performative prayer that is not only sung in its construct as an entity, but the rest of the ZCC performative prayer formations also commence with it.

4.3.1.1. Sound poetry in Mpoho

As a *sound poem*, *Mpoho* entails a wide diverse of vocal manipulations that form onomatopoeia of the word “*mpoho*,” “*mpogo*,” or “*mpoo*.” The only recordable European origin of *sound poetry* dates from the 20th century, with the 1876-born Italian poet and former soldier, Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti as one of the pioneer practitioners. Marinetti, the founder of the Futurist movement, used onomatopoeias as his poetic interpretation of his experience of a battle in Tripoli. Ironically, *mpoho* is also known as *kwadi ya marumo* (an ode of spears). *Kwadi ya marumo* denotes a battle song, yet spiritual. In 2011, I shared a stage with Jaap Blonk, a prominent Dutch sound poet who continues the legacy of his compatriots such as the legendary Theo van Doesburg. In addition to it been “a spoken photography,” Blonk’s sound poetry enable one to experience the environment as opposed to being told about it. The popular *sound poetry* within the Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa is *mogobo*, a regiment song, which is adapted into a *kiba* song is commonly known as *monti*.

Sound poetry is an artistic form bridging literary and musical composition, in which the phonetic aspects of human speech are foregrounded instead of mere conventional semantic and syntactic values. (Wikipedia, 2017b).

Mogobo derives from “*go goba*,” meaning to bark. *Mpoho* has strong continuities of *mogobo* but has transcended in terms of interpretational elasticity, and spirituality. “It is endlessly varied by disciplined improvisation within the bounds of repeated [poetic and] musical phrases” (Katz *et al.*, 1982:2). In his poem, “*Ge e le ka direto*,” Petrus Moleleman calls *mpoho*, “*koša ye e senago leepo*,” meaning a wordless song, which echoes Hugo Ball’s 1916 description of sound poetry: “verse without words” (Albright, 2004). As a flexible and wordless composition, every nation, ethnicity, or tribe is able to interpret it in the local or regional cultural context, thus the richest and creative of cultures reflects through quantity and colourfulness of its variations. These variations are, however, treated as supplementary to the original composition, not a replacement. *Mpoho* does not, therefore, reconstruct identity but rather cultivate it. At its best, *mpoho* intrigues one to dance. About such a relationship between *sound poems* and the rest of the body, Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo (2011) write, “The Baroness’s sound poems let her body speak through her expansive use of sound, the Baroness conveys the fluidity of gender as a constantly changing, polysemous signifier” (Gammel & Zelazo, 2011).

The unpopularity of *sound poetry* or *sonic poetry* in the study of African oral tradition does not translate into its inexistence. *Mpoho* reminds us that poetry is not limited to “words or the order in which they are arranged” (Okpewho, 1985:3). Although it is practiced in many African societies, it is only the naming that seems to be absent. *Mpoho*, for instance, is commonly regarded as “*koša*,” a term that is interchangeably used for a song, dance and music. Unlike in the European context, *sound poetry* in most African cultures seems to have a spiritual connotation. The Basarwa (Khoisan), for instance, use a trance *sound poem* as a healing tool, a rhythmic clapping and a vigorous stomping accompany the poem. Just like *mpoho*, the Basarwa *sound poem* is regarded as a “healing song,” if not a “healing dance.”

Introducing their 1968 recorded “healing dance music of the Kalahari San,” Richard Katz, Megan Biesele and Marjorie Shostak write, “[t]he music evokes a religious altered-state-of-consciousness,” causing dancers to transcend. As if they are referring to the weekly (Saturday) nocturnal *mpoho* session, they add, “[t]he central event in this healing tradition is the all-night healing dance.” They then conclude, “[a]lthough dances are as much for enjoyment as anything else, the healing of sickness, both manifest and latent, remains a central feature”

(Katz *et al.*, 1982:2). “In the traditions of our people,” as Rashaka Ratshitanga (1985) puts it, “sickness has both physical and spiritual causes.” Apart from being a prayer, it is also believed that *mpoho* is an ecstatic poem with healing powers, trance inducement (Mapaya, 2013:51) and the power to ward off evil spirits (Pewa, 1997:10).

4.3.1.2. Synthetic anecdotal rendition

As has been observed about *kiba* in general, *mpoho* employs a melodic cycle of polyrhythm of call-and-response style with two main segments of the call-and-response sound poetry led by, and embroidered with, word-based poetry. This leading and embroidering poetry, which comes in a form of a extemporized poetic assemble, can either be *thetotumišo* (“praise poetry”) thanking God or sometimes it “consists of praise singing in reference to the leader of the church” (Mapaya, 2013:50), or *thetosello* (dirge/protest/request) submitting one’s adversity to God. James calls such endless repeated rhythmic style a “hocketing” technique, “whereby the notes of what appears as a single melody are sung or played by several different players” (James, 1999:71).

4.3.1.3. Ignition of *mpoho*

Unlike in other *kiba* artforms, or the rest of the ZCC performative-prayers, *mpoho* does not have a designated *malokwane* (a leader), thus any capable member is allowed to “ignite” *mpoho* with a prelude verse for which its intensity and pitch directly affect how the rest of the ensemble will “receive” it, and how long will its “flame” last. The best “igniter” is usually not necessarily the musically gifted, but rather the spiritually gift. *Mpoho* is not a song but a prayer (Lekganyane, 2014u), a performative-prayer. Therefore, spiritual intensity connects “fires” of the ensemble. The igniting verse depends on the ignitor’s creativity, yet it is often a very profound parallelism. Some of common igniting poetic preludes are as follows:

1. *O sa ile le mafase,*
2. *O tla re tlela le setšhaba!*
1. [He travelled to far afield;
2. He will bring us multitudes!] or
1. *Mmabaledi wee,*

2. *Mmabaledi wa go phela!*

1. [Oh protector,

3. The living protector!] or

1. *Bathomi ba kereke ye*

2. *Ba re rutila thapelo!*

1. [The founders of the church

2. Taught us the art of praying!] or

1. *S'thethethelele wee,*

2. *S'thethethelele, S'mkhonto!*

1. [Please advocate.

2. Advocate for us, Father of spears.]

4.3.1.4. Mpoho poetic ensemble

Mpoho is regarded as a classic poem because it mothers various types, forms and styles of poetry. As a field of study, *kiba* poetry found in *mpoho* is not exhaustible. I noted that the Basotho of Moshoeshoe have a distinct way of infusing or interpreting *kiba* poetry in *mpoho*. Of most interest would be how it is interpreted in other SADC countries of different cultural and linguistic interpretations such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, and Swaziland.

4.3.1.5. Mpoho poetic solo

It is then safe to say, *kiba* is a multi-functional artform that encompasses a variety of literary genres fundamental to the everyday life of both the “religious” and the “heathens.” Below is *kiba* poetry transcribed from Jahannes Mohlala’s track, “Mpoho,” from the album, *Khunamang*:

1. *Re lebalele melato, papa wee re lebalele melato*

2. *Papa wee re lebalele melato, re ba dibe re ba nama*

3. *Re ba dibe re ba nama, re bona kgoduadipelo*

4. *Moporofeta naka di a lla,*

5. *Di lla ga Mamabolo dithabeng*
6. *Kgomo yešo Sebariki le e gameng ga botse*
7. *Kgomo yešo le e gamele ditšhiwana*
8. *Sebariki e a hlaba, Sebariki ka maoto e a raga*
9. *Etla mpepu leseanyana re sepele*
10. *Etla mpepu re sepele mpepu wee ngwanaka re tšame re khutšakhutša*

1. [Forgive us our sins, oh father forgive our sins
2. Oh father forgive our sins and flesh, we are governed by sins and flesh
3. We are governed by the sin, we the heart-agitated
4. Prophet, a reed pipes are sounding
5. From Mamabolo mountains
6. Milk *Sebariki*, our cow, with great care
7. Milk it and feed orphans/destitute
8. *Sebariki* pierces, With its hoofs *Sebariki* boosts
9. Come dear child let me back-sling you
10. Back-sling you, my child and we will take nomadic rests along...]

Unlike the other two *mpoho* featured in other albums, Johannes Mohlala is a led poet on Khunamang. The first three lines are more of an act of contrition. In line 2, the line, “*re ba dibe re ba nama*” has an syllabic-equilibrium caesura which creates an automatic “re” alliteration. The syllabic analytics will be as follow: *re-ba-di-be//re-ba-na-ma*. It has four syllables in each side of the caesura. In line 4, “*naka*” refers to reed pipes used in a *kiba* assemble, yet it can metaphorically connote *diphala*, the ZCC brass band. In line 6, there are two mentioned cows, the first being the totem of the Lekganyane, *Sebariki*, one of Bishop Barnabas’ praise names. In the same line, “*gameng ga botse*” implies cooperation, and “*gamele ditšhiwana*” in the subsequent line reflect the considerate approach the church and its leadership showed to the impoverished, leading to it being classified as “a proletariat church.” Alliteration is noted in line 6 and 7. The poem closes with much casual lines, that is, 9 and 10, which sounds more isolated from the rest of the poem, yet forming part of the casual dramatization associated with *mpoho*.

The generic unassuming attitude of *mpoho* poets and *kiba* poets in general, can be summarised by Motšha Motimele's line, "*ga ke rete ke a rapela*," (I am not reciting, but rather praying). On a ZCC album, a *kiba* poet "pray" as follows:

1. *Yee o sa ile le mafase, papa wee, o tla re tlela le setshaba.*
2. *O tla re tlela le setshaba wee, le Bakgaga le Bakwena.*
3. *Iyoo le Bakgaga le Bakwena, le makgowa o tle nawo.*
4. *Agee o nametse folaematshene wee, o tla boya Rotoshiaya.*
5. *Agee Khutlo tse nne tsa lefase, papa, re tla go rapelela ditshaba*

1. [Yeah! He went far afield, oh father, he will bring us multitudes
2. He will bring us multitudes, including the Bakgaga and Bakwena
3. Oh! Including the Bakgaga and Bakwena, and forgets not the whites
4. Oh! He boarded an aeroplane, yeah, he will return from Rhodesia
5. Oh! Four corners of the globe, father, we will pray for nations]

These circular lines bear significant historic events in the history of the ZCC such that one can regard it as an important form of preserving and passing down the church's heritage. We are told that during his visit to Tlhabine, the place of the Bakgaga people outside Tzaneen, the founder of the church and his church were assaulted (Mashele, 2010:56-62). On their second visit, a great number of Bakgaga were baptised. A similar event was witnessed in 1946 at the Bakwena of Kgosi Molefi Pilane of Bakgatla ba Mochudi in Botswana where ZCC members were chased out of the village, some were imprisoned without trial (Ramocha, 2010: 71-74). Bakgaga and Bakwena in the poetry, might be using these two as symbols of potential church adherents who might currently be against the church.

1. *Iyee le ge dira di ka tsoga, re tla tshabela Sione*
2. *Ka lebelela go lefe ke morwa' Raditsiye*
3. *Ke morwa' Raditsiye o dutse le ngwana' kgoro*
4. *Ngwana' kgoro ngwana a se nang molato*
5. *Swiswi le o re khutetse, o khutetse majakane*
6. *O khutetse Majakane le baruti ba dikholoro*

1. [Even if foes could aggravate, we will flee to Zion
2. Which side did I look when I saw Raditsiye's son
3. Raditsiye's son sitting with the child of the reception
4. Child of the reception is but an innocent child
5. In such darkness he disguised himself from us, concealed from Christians
6. Concealed from Christians and the clerical-collar priests.]

The New (second edition) of the Oxford South African Concise Dictionary (van Niekerk, et al., 2015) does not have the word, *anadiplosis*. If it is not there in the English dictionary, one could prematurely conclude that it does not exist in the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa oral poetry. *The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines anadiplosis as, "[t]he repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause to gain a special effect" (Cuddon, 1999:34). The poem above has explored this rhetorical device is employed in line 2 and 3 with "*ke morwa' Raditsiye*," line 3 and 4 with "*ngwana' kgoro*," and line 5 and 6 with "*o khutetse Majakane*." Just like I argued about *sound poetry*, the fact that it is not named in the African oral tradition, does not mean it is not practiced.

The word "*tsoga*" literary means wake...waking up. It does not mean "*dira*" were sleeping, but rather idiomatically connote the coming in full force. "*Ngwana' kgoro*" does not mean the reception as an object, has a child, but rather it *antonomasia*, signify administration and the ruler, meaning the person in question is from the royal house. In the context of the poem it refers to Bishop Barnabas, it probably refers to the epoch when a regent(s) was entrusted with his throne before he reached 21. The penultimate and the last line suggests that the "charismatic churches" have attempted in vain to probe and scrutinize him. Hilton Neil English (2017) who is a member of the church transcribed the following *mpoho* poem, and circulated it on 1 September 2017:

1. *Yelele wee mosadi wa pelo ke mang?*
2. *Yelele a ntshalele le ngwana*
3. *Sitimela se ya ntshiya*
4. *Se labile bochabelo*

5. *Ga go kgole, go kgole go mokgelogi*
6. *Nna ka maoto nka fihla.*
7. *Lentswe laka le shwelang nkabo ke mo rorisha*
8. *Yelele wee ga le dume ga le nkgatlhe*
9. *Ga le etse dinku di lela*
10. *Di lelela dikonyana*
11. *Le buang ka dipelo, menagano ke mabitla.*

1. [Where's a merciful woman
2. Who can babysit my child
3. I'm about to miss my train
4. The east-bound train
5. It not that far, it is far for the seceded.
6. I can get there by my bear feet.
7. Oh, my dying voice, I could have been praising him
8. I am not impressed with your lack of reverberation
9. You do not assimilate bleating sheep
10. Bleating for their lambs
11. Why are you in cardiac talks? Your minds are graves.]

In *Khunamang*, the poem concluded with casual lines, in English's transcription the poem begins with casual lines until line 4 where a name of an existing place, Botšhabelo in the Middelburg, is used as a symbol of another place, that is, Moria. This symbolism is followed by paradox in line 5, "*ga go kgole, go kgole go mokgelogi.*" The essence of this contrary, though, is that it is not for paradox sake, it symbolise how a person how has relapse from anything would find excuses. A Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa proverb coins it eloquently, when a goat is lazy to give birth it will blame the adder which is small. Although we do not know the exact location of the poet, it might be away from Moria, if that is the case, the claim in line 6 of going to Moria by foot will be aggregation, or poetically a hyperbole. Grammar of line 7 reveals that either the transcriber or the poet is a Motswana, if not a speaker of "Sepitori." Simile in line 9 is in its negative form. A direct translation of line 11 will be "you speak through your heart," which will mean the heart has developed a mouth. Such bodily personification is

regularly encountered in phrases such as “listen to your hear.” It only means being absent minded. In *mpoho*, one finds types of poetry that none ever imagined existing in the African poetic landscape.

4.3.1.6. Mpoho poetic duet

Esteemed scholars such as Dominic Kgobe have claimed that there is no duet or poetic collaboration in the recital of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa (Kgobe, 1994). In addition to *mpoho* being a collage of poetic forms, two poets sometimes recite together as a team in a duet style. Leading poets on the Johannes Mohlala’s *mpoho* version of *Madi a Manaba* album are Elizabeth Molala (Mohlala’s sister) and Pauline Mohlala (Mohlala’s wife). Although the recording company wanted to protrude him as an individual, Mohlala never referred to himself as Johannes Mohlala and His Harp, but as part of the *Bana ba Kgware* group, thus in tracks such as this he is purely an instrumentalist. A poetic duet is a bit challenging since the expectation to extemporized lines, which in a way are coherent, or correspond, with the counterpart. In the context of the contemporary artforms, one can call it a “hip-hop battle” or “spoken word free-styling” of sorts. The (a) below represents the leading poet (Elizabeth), and (b) the supporting poet (Pauline).

1a. *Ko ko re bulele, re bulele re bulele re ba dibe re ba nama*

1b. *Ko ko re bulele, re ba dibe re ba nama*

2a. *Ko ko re bulele, bula keite re tsene re ba dibe re ba gago, Morena*

2b. *Ko ko re bulele, re bulele re tsene re ba dibe re ba nama*

3a. *Bula keiti re tsene re ba dibe re ba gago re ka se tsene ka kgoro*

3b. *Re ba dibe re ba nama re ka se tsene ka kgoro*

4a. *Re ka re tsene ka kgoro, ka kgoro re ka se tsene ka mmila o mosesane*

4b. *Re ka se tsene ka kgoro ka mmila o mosesane*

5a. *Mmilana o mosesane, mmilana o mosesane wo o gakago mawatla*

5b. *Mmila o mosesane o šitang mawatla*

6a. *Theeletša o tle o kwe, theeletša o tle o kwe, dira di goba mogobo*

6b. *Theeletša o tle o kwe mma dira di a goba*

7a. *Dira di giba mogobo, dira di goba mogobo mogobo wa nyakalalo*

7b. *Dira di goba mogobo di goba wa nyakalalo*

- 8a. *Mantšhidi wa bolelope, mantšhidi wa bo lelope re tla go gopola o ile, Morena*
 8b. *Mantšhidi wa bolelope, Tšhidi wa bo lelope re tla go gopola o ile, Morena*
- 9a. *Ke sa tlogetšeng lerapo, Mongwarona o a re lokiša ke sa tlogetšeng lerapo*
 9b. *Boelelang ke lekwe ke sa tlogetšeng lerapo*
- 10a. *Mpepu ngwanaka re tloge, mpepu ngwanaka re tloge re ikele Botšhabelo*
 10b. *Mpepu ngwanaka re tloge re ikele Botšhabelo*
- 11a. *Eriye ka Moria, eriye ka Moria Moria ke botšhabelo*
 11b. *Eriye ka Moria Moria ke botšhabelo*
- 12a. *Jesu o agile Mmole, Jesu o agile Mmole o agile Pheleleng*
 12b. *Jesu o agile Mmole, Jesu o agile Mmole o agile Pheleleng*
- 13a. *Nna re bone leaka, nna ke bone leaka leaka le akaletše*
 13b. *Nna re bone leaka, nna ke bone leaka leaka le akaletše*
- 14a. *Nna re bone naledi, nna re bone naledi setšwa ga Mamabolo Morena*
 14b. *Nna re bone naledi, naledi ye ke ye hubedu*
- 15a. *Eriye ka Moria, eriyeng ka Moria ga go pheko ga go ngaka*
 15b. *Eriye ka Moria, ga go pheko ga go ngaka*

The second poet's improvisation, here, is somewhat limited and expanded by the first poets, thus in some instances she would repeat what was said by the first without putting her own creative imprint. This approach requires a vigilant and attentive poet with a sharp listening skill, but more so, a spontaneous muse to make and twist what is presented by the former poet and lead it to one's own direction. *Mpoho* is a poetic duet and a poetic marathon, exposing the hypothesis that questions creativity in oral poetry.

Mpoho is a concerted effort of the entire community of ZCC adherents to pray for the end of war, social conflicts and social challenges. It is a prayer for peace and love in four cardinal corners of the globe. It is a session of self-healing and healing for others. It is an act of contrition, and a request for life span elongation and for eternal life. It is also to "banish misfortune and reaffirm [...] spiritual life" (Katz, *et al.*, 1982:2). Over and above this, it connects man and God.

4.3.1.7. Moving metaphors

In dramaturgy, dance and poetry are the most reliable artistic cousins in structurally shaping a performance. The two are related such that some scholars use one to teach the other, or define one through the other. Dance is referred to as “poetry in motion,” “silent poetry,” or “poetry on the foot.” All these are attempts to acknowledge that the two are in essence doing the same thing in the same way using different tools. At most, they, through a metaphoric representation, convey a denotation of a concrete or abstract experience that connotes something else. Although not defined by, they often do carry or imbue deep rhythm and feelings. Over and above this, the two stimulate each other, especially in *mpoho* where a perfect harmony of sound poetry stimulates the dancer, as much as a charged dancer stimulates intensity of both sound poetry and synthetic anecdotal rendition.

Some dancers wear seedpod leg-rattles, a whistle or a horn is blown sporadically to intensify the melody. “When the awesome sound of the dancers’ leg rattle is added to the [sound poem] and sharply clapped cadences, a music of truly profound beauty is produced” (Katz, *et al.*, 1982:2). Although there is a customary stomping pattern, habitually the dancer’s interpretational style divulges one’s ethnic identity. Notably, the customary, vigorous stomping pattern of male ensemble members resemble a combination of the Basarwa (Khoisan) and *kiba* dance.

The most popular variation of *mpoho* is the one of Bapedi of Sekhukhune, nicknamed *setimamollo* (extinguisher of fire). Here, dance is charismatic, facial gestures are expressive, and quality of poetry is by both male and women members. The richness of performance is due to the poetic heritage of the Sekhukhune area, be it the written poetry of the Serotes to Makobes, or oral poetry of the Mohlalas. The male is more of a sequential dramatization, with a dancer entering the centre of the circular patterned ensemble unassuming yet self-assured in his soft-start customary rhythm that still commands attention, gradually intensifying into a vigorous syncopated staccato, subsequently ascending climaxing to the ultimate incisive accentuation. At this stage, he paces about and around with the entire body narrates an experience of sensation through colourfully projective mimes, communicative expressions, and imaginative movements. He regularly makes visual art with his hands, which are drastically thrown sideways and sometimes shield the face. The virtuoso will occasionally leap

in between individual steps in such a manner that looks like both the legs are hanging suspended in the air. To boast the sound of their stomp, male dancers often wear industrial or military boots. This is just one of the many variations, *mpoho* has an enormous cross-fertilisation of ethnically inspired dances.

4.3.1.8. Mime and dramatization

Occasionally a woman, or two, will be on her knees in the middle of a *mpoho* assemble circle, miming the hand mill motion, a rhythm-driven dramatization led by the *sound poem*, rhythmically clapping, and stomping foot-beat. Some mime day-to-day activities of village life, such as fetching water with a *moeta* (gourd) on the head, or pretending that the luggage they carry their back is a back sling carrying a baby. During the 2014 *Kiba* Seminar, Sekgothe Mokgoatšana and Manoko Semenya pointed out that, some dancers turn to imitate their totems in the characters they mime in their dance (Sekgothe Mokgoatšana & Manoko Semenya, Personal communication, 15/09/2014). Considering that a greater portion live in urbanized areas, from their mimes one picks up a combination of nostalgia and African Renaissance.

4.3.1.9. Mpoho influencing secular kiba

Kiba maestro, Johannes Mohlala featured *mpoho* in three of his albums, namely *Khunamang* (1976), *Mmatshidi* (1983), and *Madi a Manaba* (1995). In addition, he featured “*Lesedi*,” one of Bishop Engenas’ composition, in *Bana Ba Kgwale* (1979). *Lesedi* and *Mahlomoleng* are more like cousin songs of *Mpoho*, all composed by the founder. *Lesedi* also a call-and-respond type with an unchanging baseline of “*Wa le bona lesedi, lesedi wa le bona*,” with leading voices vary from “*...la Jeso*” and “*Ga Mamabolo*” “*Sedi wa leboana*.” The joined message of the song is: Do you see the gleam of Jesus, at GaMamabolo. In Sello Galane’s *Free Kiba* series, a tribute to Philip Tabane is named, *Mpogo*. Various *dinaka* groups feature the song, some sing it beyond just playing it with reed pipes.

4.3.2. Lifela poetry

Mpoho is often followed by *lifela* (pronounced as *difela*, for hymns), before proceeding into patterns of their respective assembles. These *lifela* are from a Sesotho (sa Moshoeshoe) hymns, *Lifela tsa Sione* (The Z.C.C. Hymn Book, 2009) acculturated from the missionaries. On

his study of migrant *lifela* (*sefela*, for singular), David Coplan writes, “*Sefela* can mean simply “a song” in Sesotho, but the word has strong emotional connotations.” The art of composing *lifela*, he adds, is taught “through poetic accounts” (Coplan, 1985:18). About *Lifela tsa Litsamaea-naha* poetry, M.I.P. Mokitimi asserts, “[*l*]ifela [...] falls under the praise poetry genre” (Mokitimi, 1998:12). Without poetry, the expression of the ZCC’s liturgy is certainly incomplete.

Lifela embody precise diction such as “re se re hlolwa ke nyakallo” (we are *defeated* by jubilation) or “tsa lefase di ntahile” (*intoxicated* by worldly desires), and simile such as “Re be iwale ka difate” (Let us be *like* trees). Here, faith (*tumelo*) is a shield (*thebe*), and flesh (*nama ya mmele*) is regarded as a decomposable garment (“*kobo e bolang*”). Metaphoric personification in “leha re ka arohana/Pelo tsona di teane” (Though we could part ways/May our hearts still *meet*), or “taba tsa ha eke lesedi/Le lelekisang lefifi” (His Word is a gleam, *chasing* away gloom), further attest that *lifela* are not only imbued with figurative language, but they are poems musically composed. Intrinsic rhythm is distinct in “Lala ho nna, shoalane e wele/Meriti ya bosiu ke ena/Ba neng ba nthusa ba tsanaile/Wena, Morena, tlo, lala ho nna!” (Lay by me, dusk has fallen/Nocturnal shades are here/Those who used to help me are all gone/You, Lord, come lay by me.) Evoking alteration is also noted in “Se te ka botshabeho, Morena/Tlo ka mosa, tlo ka matshediso/Tlosa dibe tse ke llang ka tsona” (Come not in a startling manner, Lord/Come in grace, come in comfort/Remove, from me, sins for which I weep.) Various metaphoric rhyme schemes feature such as:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Toko, mohau di a <u>kane</u> (a) | 1. Praise should kiss grace |
| 2. Dibe di bonetswe phe <u>ko</u> (b) | 2. A cure for sins is discovered |
| 3. Kgotso, nnete di kop <u>ane</u> (a) | 3. Peace should meet truth |
| 4. Sefapanong sa lere <u>ko</u> . (b) | 4. At the cross of salvation. |

or

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. U re nee ho thabe <u>la</u> (a) | 1. Grant us appreciation of |
| 2. Tsee u di ratang kaofe <u>la</u> (a) | 2. All that pleases you |
| 3. Thato ya hao e phe <u>thehe</u> (b) | 3. May your will be done and |

4. Bana ba hao ba kgethehe (b) 4. Your children be distinct.

4.3.3. Makgagasa syllabic poetry

To say that oral African poetry is not an extension of oral Anglo-Saxon poetry, is not to say African poetry is anything short of Western poetry. Apart from the fact that the latter enjoys extensive scholarly treatment, the main dichotomy between the two is on taste as opposed to skill. Metrical patterns, hemistichal syllables, rhythmical summits, emphatic diacritics and suchlike, seem to matter less in their disjunctive analytics, what matters their organic experience they conjunctively create free from pretentious catachresis and digressive conundrums or *chevilles*, that is, a word or phrase used to secure the necessary number of syllables in a line of a verse to fulfil metrical requirements. In *kiba* poetry, metrical patterns mostly serve a distinct purpose; it is not a feel-good exercise. Only if the composer works with limitation of an accompaniment form, such as rhythmic sound poetry or musical instruments, then the composer is bound to mould their composition to fit squarely within rhythmic constrain of the performance form.

Lack of metrical interest does not translate into creative shortfall. Quartet syllabic-equilibrium caesura is a common feature among *kiba* poetry of the ZCC, especially by women poets. One can safely claim that in *kiba* poetry by male counterparts, form comes after content. Such metrical approach feature in “Ditšhaba” and “Mahlomoleng.”

4.3.3.1. Ditšhaba

Ditšhaba poem, characterised by its quartet syllabic-equilibrium caesura and the exquisiteness of its rhythmic lines, gains weight during particular events, especially during baptism sessions and pilgrimages. It is commonly sung by those working at the main entrance to the Zion City Moria, namely Welcome Gate, as they welcome multitudes. “*Hilewe sana Morena/Di a tsena ke ditšhaba/Di a fola di a tšhaba/Nyakišeng ke a nyaka/Ke lahlegetšwe ke tsela/Di a tsena ke ditšhaba/Tlang le bone mehlolo/Modimo’ swana le mang?/Sebariki e a hlaba/Ka maoto e a raga/Banyefudi ba a hlaka/Ba lahlegetšwe ke tsela.*” Translated, *Hilewe sana* Oh Lord, Multitudes are entering/And they flee after being healed/Come to my rescue I am in a search/I lost my path/Multitudes are entering/Come witness these wonders/Who resembles God?/Sebariki [Name of a cow, praise connoting the spiritual head] pierces/And

kicks with its hoofs/Hucksters are suffering/They lost their path). Its syllabic analytic representation is as follows:

1. Hi-le-we-sa/na-Mo-re-na (8)
2. Di-a-tse-na//ke-di-tšha-ba (8)
3. Di-a-fo-la//di-a-tšha-ba (8)
4. 'Nya-ki-še-ng//ke-a-nya-ka (8)
5. Ke-la-hle-ge/tšwe-ke-tse-la (8)
6. Di-a-tse-na//ke-di-tšha-ba (8)
7. 'Tla-ng-le-bo/ne-me-hlo-lo (8)
8. Mo-di-mo'-swa/na-le-ma-ng? (8)
9. Se-ba-ri-ki//e-a-hla-ba (8)
10. Ka-ma-o-to//e-a-ra-ga (8)
11. Ba-nye-fu-di//ba-a-hla-ka (8)
12. Ba-la-hle-ge/tšwe-ke-tse-la. (8)

4.3.3.2. Mahlomoleng

Syllabic-equilibrium caesura is also noted in the *makgakgasa*-style song, *Mahlomoleng*, In the ZCC *Mpoho and Brass Band* album: “Mohwaduba 'a Maphaka dula fase re go rete/Le ge o sena le lefa lefa la gago ke rena,” (Mohwaduba of Maphaka, sit down so we could praise you/Although you have no inheritance, we are your inheritance):

1. Mo-hwa-du-ba//'a-Ma-pha-ka (8)
2. Du-la-fa-se//re-go-re-te (8)
3. Le-ge-o-se/na-le-le-fa (8)
4. Le-fa-la-ga/go-ke-re-na (8)

Poetry permeates all performative-prayers, direct or indirectly. In the ZCC *Mpoho and Brass Band* album, the song starts with a prelude poem deriving from Molelemané's composition. The performative-prayers of the ZCC derive from secular *kiba* artform, and have in turn, inspired and influenced the same secular *kiba*.

4.3.3.3. Makgakgasa influencing other performative-prayers

The sonic album, *Z.C.C. Makgakgasa*, is by a *makgakgasa* group from Bushbuckridge area in Mapulaneng, thus the track, “Mapulaneng.” Interestingly, the rest of the ZCC performative-prayers have adopted these lines, “*Re a lotšha, re re Thobela, Morena. Mapulaneng ke lehae la rona,*” which denotes, “Hail thy Highness! We hail from Mapulaneng.” The lines are adopted without any adaption, meaning, even those who are from other geographic positions away from the Mapulaneng area, still sing it as it is. In 2017 during the UK Summer Mpoho, the *mokhukhu* performative-prayer sang it, attesting to the fact that the name Mapulaneng is now poetically employed, as a symbolism for any other physical location in which Masione around the world find themselves.

4.3.4. Mokhukhu performative-prayer

Mokhukhu, previously a unisex prayer, is a male-only prayer, the most physical performative-prayer whose members do not only benefit from its spiritual rewards, but also the fitness opportunity, thus the nickname, *Long-life*. It is also known as *koša*, a name equally used to refer to *kiba*. Optimistic scholars attempted tracing etymology of the word through a phonaesthetics-driven approach and from isiZulu orthography, *u yasha umkhukhu* (a shack is burning), in an attempt to link it with the dispute in succession of the first generation of leadership (e.g., Ramogale & Galane, 1997), but one notes the lack of internal sources from their speculative studies.

4.3.4.1. The origin of Mokhukhu

On the origin of the *mokhukhu*, Bishop Engenas prophesied that he “sees” white-shoed men in the South, fighting and killing one another. This connoted the famous *Malaita* (notorious thugs or gangs) of Marabastad in Pretoria. He then said he “sees” them joining the ZCC, using the similar white-shoes to fight spiritual battles (Joseph Mphahlele & Johannes Boreni, Personal Communication, 28/03/2015). Similarly to the military theme of other uniforms and the Scottish kilt, these white shoes previously used to shed blood, as per Isaiah’s injunction (Isaiah 2:4, NKJV), but were used to symbolise transformation of “swords into plowshares” and “spears into pruning-hooks.”

The Bapedi migrants' study of Peter Delius reveals that "Pedi migrants" outside of mine compounded employment created various associations, and the most important one was *Malaita* which "gathered on Sundays and marched to their battle places" (Delius, 1990:4). Today, children and grandchildren of these Bapedi *Malaita* are still marching to a battle place on Sundays, but this time around a spiritual battle fought at the Orient ZCC branch. The etymology of the word, *mokhukhu* is functional, an onomatopoeia deriving from the "*khuuu-khuuu*" sound from the leaps and stomps of a tyre-soled adoption of a *Malaita* shoes, currently known as *manyanyatha*. This is further attested to by Mathiba Maria Lekganyane's testimony in the centenary series:

Go be go na le batho ba mesako [Engenas] a re le a bona ba, ke nyaka go ba sokolla ba tla apara dieta tše di šweu tša kereke, (MM Lekganyane, 2010:53).

According to family members, Eva Kheko Lekganyane and Gela Ragele Lekganyane, people such as Mr Voortrekker Molepo started *mokhukhu*. They explain that it was on the basis of attire that women were in 1953 prohibited from being part of this highly physical performative dance. Before then, women would dance behind men as singers, wearing slit skirts and nylon see-through blouses, and men were wearing shorts. "*Ge ba dutše ka mo dikhoneng di ntšha di onderrok. Bishop Edward a re dikhethe tše tša go bontšha di onder-rok le diblouse tša go bontšha dipoti di ka se bereke. Koša e swanetše go apara manyanyatha e ye go tima mollo. Basadi ba ka se kgone go e šala morago*" (EV Lekganyane & GR Lekganyane, 2010:70). A need to adjust the uniforms arose, parallel to this woman-only performative-prayers were formed, leading to the distinct patterns. Around the late 1980s and beginning 1990s, *mokhukhu* used to receive injunctions to dance in the surrounding townships. That was indeed the era of "*go tima mollo*" (extinguishing turmoil).

4.3.4.2. Mokhukhu moving metaphors

Dance in *mokhukhu* is customary, it involves an incessant step, slow sometimes in a perfunctory jogging tempo, with the footwear known as *manyanyatha*, explained as "the white custom-made church boots embellish the dance as well as providing the heavy thumping sound, which is part of the musical performance" (Cilderter, 1992; Mapaya, 2013:50). Niehaus *et al.* compares the *mokhukhu* with *muchongolo* of the VaTsonga, stating,

“they stamp their feet on the ground in a vigorous and aggressive manner, making holes and kicking up a large amount of dust” (Niehaus *et al.*, 2004:372). He then echoes Comaroff’s sentiment that, “[i]n these dances, men transform their feet, the most vulnerable part of the body, into mighty weapons” (Comaroff, 1985:244; Niehaus *et al.*, 2004, *Ibid*). In addition to feet being transformed into spiritual weapons, they are also transformed into musical instruments - drums. The “stepping and a vigorous synchronised stomping which produces a heavy thumping sounds” (Mapaya, 2013, *Ibid*). Culturally, *mokhukhu* dance is a combination between the vhaVenda and the Masaai leaping dances.

Some interpret the leaps as “symbolic of each member’s desire to fly on the wings of faith – wings which help the faithful to remain buoyant even in adversity” (Ramogale & Galane, 1997). The leaps and stomps are cultural expressions embodied in *kiba* artform, and various aboriginal traditions across the African continent, the method the ZCC adopted as its interpretation injunction of King David, praising God anyhow: with “dance” and “sounding cymbals”, “loud clashing cymbals!” (Psalm 150:1-6, NKJV). Moraka Makhura refers to *mukhukhu* as “the most creative institutions in modern religious development,” with benefits including “physically strengthening, socially enhancing and spiritually reviving” (Makhura, 2010:79).

4.3.4.3. Mokhukhu poetry

A poem can be musical in the same way a song can be poetic. The question that remains unanswered is the distinction between a lyrical poem and a poetic song. According to J.A. Cuddon in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, “many poems, even if not set to music, may be called songs, [...] but their term, in its literary sense, usually denotes a poem and its musical settings; a poem for singing or chatting, with or without musical accompaniment. Music and words may be composed together; or the music may be “fitted” to the words and vice versa” (Cuddon, 1999:839). In my opinion, a song is *words which are to be sung*, whereas a poem is *words that sing*. When the two interchange qualities, it yields a lyrical poem or a poetic song. This is more like two people exiting their respective countries, meeting in a no-man’s land, yet convincing themselves that they are still in their respective countries. For me, the unjustifiable distinction between a lyrical poem and poetic songs is more theoretic and part of genre guarding. *Mokhukhu* poetry, therefore, often transits

between song and poetic song, if not poem and lyrical poem, something in the range of William Carlos Williams' 1934 famous poem, "This is just to say." "*Mokhukhu* sessions take place every Sunday morning, Wednesday and Saturday nights at the churchyard" (Mapaya, 2013, *Ibid*).

4.3.4.3.1. Mokhukhu sound-poetry

For most *mokhukhu* ensembles, they commence sessions with *mpoho* sound-poetry, followed by *lifela*. Before they could switch to secular ZCC songs, they contritely chant a stimulating *mogobo*-style sound poem, the equivalent of *monti* in *kiba*. This nameless and wordless sound poem is highly spiritual, chanted with faces tilted downward, without a dancing step, sometimes with hands supporting on the thighs. Here, the *malokwane/khurse* (leader/conductor) ignites a sound poem with a remorseful line, "*O re tshwarele melato*," which denotes, "forgive our sins," and the rest of the ensemble respond with fluctuating melody of a stretched "*hoooohoooohoooo!*" At this point, each silently confess their sins *lekunutung le Morena* (sacredly without any mediator).

4.3.4.1.2. Mokhukhu lyrical poems

Lesibana Rafapa states, "[p]opular music in the ZCC is a vehicle for Christian and African cultural values distinctively associated with the church" (Rafapa, 2013:24). *Mokhukhu* lyrical poetry, mostly inspired by poetic biblical scriptures and church principles, convey, revive and orally disseminate the church values and creed. Motolla (1999:7) confirms that the ZCC "relies on the passing of traditional African values by way of mouth." For instance, the following:

1. *Le ge ba bolela*
2. *le se ba fetole*
3. *Le thole le re tuu*

1. [Though they may say whatsoever,
2. say nothing in return,
3. never retaliate.]

This lyrical poem embodies the heart of *Bohlale bja Semoya* (spiritual intelligence) that requires one to let God fight battles on their behalf since he is, or should be, their Vindicator. Those who witnessed the unethical journalistic cyclone of 1997 when SABC radio stations such as Thobela and Motswedding were propagating insensitive speculations on the church characterised by lack of rapport, could attest to the power of *Bohlale bja Semoya*. In his secular (ZCC/6/1) to his constituency in response to this, the Bishop Barnabas writes, “*Ba thomile gape. Le a ba tseba ba bjalo*” (You know them; here they start again). At Sekgosese on 27 July 1997 he concluded, “*ereng ke ye go botšiša Modimo gore ke dire eng ka bona*,” translated, let me go and consult God on what to do about them (Lekganyane, 1997s). Needless to enquire what God’s response was, a ZCC adherent subsequently became the Thobela FM Station Manager, later a national manager for SABC radio stations, which encompasses Motswedding FM. Those who trust, depend and rely on the Lord, as several scriptures assert, are firm and unshakable as mount Zion. As articulated by Emanuel Motolla during the TRC, “this church simply keeps quite, when there is no need to respond, because we believe from the teachings of Engenas” (Motolla, 1999:7). Jan Mukhondo takes it further that: “we are taught not to indulge in malice, envy and hate speeches” (Mukhondo, 1998:12). The *Mokhukhu* genre is explored outside the realm of the church by, among others, Mojeremane, Nkosana, Oleseng Shuping, Kenny, and Simon Makgatholela.

4.3.5. Nkedi performative-prayer

Nkedi is a *dinaka* ensemble free from reed pipes and drums. Drumbeat, here, is replaced with heavy staccato stomps of military boots wrapped with seedpod leg-rattles; reed pipes melody replaced with a spiritual and more encrypted *sound-poetry*. As if he was observing *nkedi* ensemble, Rampolokeng says, “the human voice can be the world’s greatest musical instrument if used properly” (Rampolokeng, 1993:26). In other word, *nkedi* is the ZCC version of *dinaka* without limmits. In terms of *sound poetry*, *nkedi* is more dynamic than *mpoho* such that it requires rehearsal to balance voices thus it consist of regulated membership. Nevertheless, each performance, within the framework of a rehearsed version, is spontaneously approached depending on, among others, the spiritual intensity of the ensemble or individual members, with unregulated membership. Occasionally, this sound poetry is embellished with random poetic lines.

4.3.5.1. Nkedi attire

Nkedi members wear khakhi t-shirts, the same as those used in *mokhukhu*; khakhi tie; khakhi jersey; brown shorts; brown socks, chocolate leather brown military boots, gabardine blazer, and an authentic Scottish kilt. The kilt is made of woollen cloth with a tartan pattern. Plain brown socks are also like the traditional Scottish hose, “long woollen stockings normally worn knee-high with the upper part of the hose folded back down” (Morgan, 2014:12). *Nkedi* members also wear berets or bonnets made of woollen cloth or gabardine fabric; bonnets usually have an external hatband that passes around the head’s circumference, with a “toorie” (pom-pom) as an optional decoration. The brass band also wears the *nkedi* attire although only twice a year during the major annual pilgrimages. The brass band, however, wears the diced-band Glengarry bonnets traditionally worn by the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

4.3.5.2. Scottish kilt

The Scottish kilt, a historic attire that holds a significance to the rite of passage, is adopted as a spiritual attire of the ZCC, and cultural costume of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa *kiba* practitioners. Among the North West Bakgatla ba Mosetlha, the Scottish kilt is the face of the Diturupa Carnival, which commemorates, among others, the sinking of SS Mendi during World War 2. Apart from Scots in Scotland, the kilt etiquette forms an integral part of traditional wear of the Cornish, Northumberland and Manx (Isle of Man) tartans in various parts of England. Once banned in Scotland as a political stance against the restoration of the Stuart King James II of England to the thrones of Jacobite Kings (Morgan, 2014: 3), the kilt is today not only the face of Scotland, but also a bridge that connects little Scotland with many parts of the world, including Africa. Among Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa and the ZCC adherents, it is known as *maskotšhe/maskhotšho*, a word deriving from Scottish. South African schools such as the 1855 founded St Andrew’s College in Grahamstown adopted Scottish culture as the tradition of the school, which encompasses the kilt etiquette and musical formations such as the group-piping ensemble. To the ZCC the kilt is a serious religious garment.

Mathiba Maria Lekganyane states that the founding Bishop of the ZCC, Bishop Engenas once told them “*go na le seaparo sa banna sa scotch kua moše mawatle Scotland ba raloka ka sona. Jwale re ya go se tšea se tlo ba sa mo kerekeng,*” translated, there is a Scottish male

etiquette abroad in Scotland, they seem to have reduced into a play. Now we are going to take it so it could belong to the Church] (MM Lekganyane, 2010:53). Perhaps what the founder of the ZCC was alluding to is that he wanted to use the kilt as a spiritual garment to stop wars through this highly spiritual performative-prayer, *nkedi*. Bishop Edward used to wear the kilt etiquette traveling going far afield, singing, “*A di ba lome dimpša ba tšhabele Sione*,” meaning, let the dogs bite them so they could come to Zion (EV Lekganyane & GR Lekganyane, 2010:70).

4.3.5.3. *Nkedi* sound poetry

Nkedi sound poetry is rooted in ambiguous and incoherent yet dynamically merged poetic phoneaesthetics, embodying abundance of spiritual experience and evocation. This call-and-respond anomatopoiac words distinctly emulates reed-pipes melody of *dinaka*. As argued under *mpoho*, sound poetry as a traditional phenomenon forms part of the African musical heritage. Notably, in some artforms, sound poetry is employed as a musical embellishment, unlike in *mogobo*, *mpoho*, and *nkedi* where it is the actual marrow of the bone. Sello Galane (2006) reminds us that:

The greatest and most distinct feature of African music, besides its dynamic poly-rhythms, is its use of “phoneaesthetics”. These anomatopoiac words represent an emotional exclamation. “Maweledi welele” is a common poetic phoneaesthetic which is used to express celebratory mood and joy beyond description. It is an expression used in song and praise texts. It is a lofty expression used in formal praise by elderly members of society.

Common sound poems include “Maiyane,” “Sa MaJeremane,” “Sutu Mpara,” and “Tšhuma re tšhabe.” Although *nkedi* dance moves are dynamic and highly rehearsed, sound poems remain what I call well-rehearsed improvisation, in the sense that each time the same sound poem is chanted, the application and choice of these equivocal phoneaesthetics is different. As Galane rightfully pointed out, anomatopoiac words represent an emotional exclamation, thus it is the collection and individual emotion expressed in relation to the current context. It is therefore nearly impossible for the exact collective emotions of the ensemble to be distinctively repeated. Each performance is a unique experience of the same sound poems.

“The poets often make use of the sound and meaning of words to heighten the effect they want to convey” (Joubert, 2004:389). Some phoneaesthetics featuring in the sound poem, *Tšhuma re tšhabe* are anomatopoiac, or corrupt derivations of, words such as “*Tšhuma re tšhabe/Ho gogo/Hamaiyane/Welediwele/Ye gege/Moria wee/Yelewee/Thapelo, hlare sa baloi.*” These are chanted in no chronological order or coordination. As Susanne Langer contextualises, “The arts objectify subjective reality, and subjectify outward experience of nature” (Langer, 1966:12). With sound poetry, *nkedi* poets express spiritual experience outwardly. One can conclude that poems such as “*O apara sutu mpara o sa bereki*” is influenced by secular *kiba* poetry. One further notes its echo in Philip Tabane’s “*Se nkgane ke a bereka*” and “*Mpedi Mpara.*” As much as secular *kiba* poetry influences the ZCC *kiba* poetry, the opposite is also true.

4.4. Conclusion

In the ZCC, to borrow Comaroff’s phrase, “Christianity was Africanized, and Africa Christianized” (Comaroff, 2012:7). Notably, spirituality is the very heart of the ZCC, and the definition of its existence without which the institution cannot function, it is *Kereke ya Semoya* (spirituality driven church). From the spiritual injunction on the formation of the church, the search of the “cow hoof-printed rock,” the subsequent miraculous cosmic event, to the worldwide-peace praying mission; the ZCC is entrenched in spirituality. These include the definition of *Bosione*, its spiritual creed of *Bohlale bja Semoya* (spiritual intelligence), the spirit-based healing, and of course, the “Spiritual Head” of the church. Its growth beyond the borders of the African continent calls for a revisit to some of the former definitions of African initiated churches (AICs), more so, it will be a misnomer to still regard it as a “proletariat church,” let alone to define it through social stratification since it comprises of almost all classes, be it occupation, economic, or social status. About identity, Galeano says, “we are what we do, especially what we do to change what we are: our identity resides in action” (Galeano, 1983:175). The ZCC is indeed distinct from most AICs in its syncretism, which goes beyond ecumenical outlook, that is, the indigenisation of Christianity. The ZCC is outgrowing definitions of AIC as per former classifications, calling for a new classification, and as Galeano rightfully puts it, a classification that will define it based on what it does, its actions, as opposed to its origins.

In this chapter it has been asserted that sound poetry is part of African poetic heritage. The richest synthetic poetic form among the ZCC performative-prayers is *mpoho*, and *nkedi* the most creative *sound poetry*. *Makgakgasa* is laudable for its intonation and symmetrical inclination. Arguably the ZCC did not only save the *kiba* artform, but *kiba* performative-prayers are incorporated into the ZCC identity such that they are a defining factor in the process of acquiring church sites, moreover they are embraced by the church's code of conduct (see, Z.C.C. Constitution, 1961; 1975). Adaptation and variation of original versions is permitted yet the autonomy is reserved for the original version. Ultimately, in performative-prayers, *kiba* poetry is used to communicate, commune, or reflect, among others, individual or collective thought, feelings, experience and most imperatively, spirituality. Certainly this performance is not to entertain.

Although there are exceptional compositions in performative-prayers, due to their functionality, which is outside the performer-audience realm, it will be misleading to evaluate poetry found in them as an overall representation of *kiba* poetry of the ZCC. Contrary to secular *kiba*, the ZCC *kiba* performative-prayers are not weekend recreational activities, but rather day-to-day prime necessities. It is, therefore, accurate that "religious systems are cultural" (Akwanya, 2000:60), but more so, artforms such as sound poetry are religious.

Galane poses important questions: "How do we keep these songs from fading in the dusk? How do we stay with the twilight silhouettes of the communal dancers and praise-singers that disappear over the hillock? How do we keep the dance from slowing down with the scattering feet down homeward paths?" (Galane, 2011). I think the ZCC have been answering these questions since 1910. Archivists will display them in a museum with the sign "Do not touch", so to preserve them in their current state. Performing arts is the direct opposite of this. As a practical art, preserving it means encouraging its day-to-day use. Allowing the people to touch it, break it down, remake it, deform it, remould it, redefine it, and ultimately own it. Most importantly, keeping a copy of the original safe, encouraging its timeous revisit. In its "multicultural, plurovocal, multi-stylistic, and of multilingual nature" (Galane, 2006), the ZCC promoted creative exploration of the original *mpoho*, yet further encouraged its continuous practice in parallel with variations to avoid creative destruction. Although secular *kiba* is

currently facing creative destruction, *kiba* in the ZCC is well preserved for posterity. The following chapter analyses the use of solos in the ZCC.

Chapter 5: Kiba Poetic Solos in the ZCC

5.1. Introduction

Although it has both historic and cultural significance, *kiba* poetry forms part of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa literature, thus it is imperative to probe its literariness, especially to evaluate its quality and creativity. Apart from the fact that they do not regard themselves as poets, *kiba* poets in performative-prayer do not primarily compose for human indulgence. Thus if one needs a true reflection of *kiba* poetry, one should evaluate individual *kiba* poets who partly perform for audience's consumption. This chapter probes three compositions by ZCC *kiba* poets of note, namely Petrus Molelemanane and Motšha Motimele. These three poems feature on the ZCC vinyl recorded in the 1960s. This stringent critique will be based on the three factors suggested by Okpewho (1985), namely context, message, and technique. The first two are self-explanatory, technique will therefore mean three facets, namely: (a) the structure or order in which the poet organises their ideas; (b) the images or mental pictures by which the poet imaginatively creates to make his point effective; and (c) the mood or attitude of the poet (Okpewho, 1985:33-4). Each poem is treated from the first line to the last, so that the message, as one of the evaluated aspects, will not be lost.

5.2. Petrus Molelemanane

5.2.1. Biography

Petrus Molelemanane, a dynamic and most acclaimed ZCC poet, was born in 1907 at the Molelemanane village in GaMolepo. Back then, the place was regarded as GaSehlapelo, until the Molepo polity took over after conquering the Sehlapelo polity. Many know his voice although only a few know who he was. "There are societies in which solo poetic recitation, both spoken and sung, have become social institutions" (Nketia, 1974:177). Petrus Molelemanane's poetry has been part of the ZCC poetic institution for over half a century. He is indisputably the "godfather" of *kiba* poetry in the ecclesiastical realm, the official Poet Laureate of the ZCC (Maahlamela, 2006). Molelemanane was baptized in the ZCC at the age of 30 in 1937. In 1942, he migrated to Moria where he stayed until 1960, returning then to Ga-Molepo. He was the supreme *ntona* (a headman, subordinate to *kgoši*) of the Molepo Tribal Authority, the one tasked of *go apeša kgoši nkwe* (coronation the king/chief).

His decision to convert to the ZCC was interpreted as rebellious since the Molepo and Mamabolo polities initially viewed the establishment of the ZCC as a parallel chieftaincy of sorts that needed to be destroyed. His daughter reveals that even to date, some still recall Molelemane as “Maganagobušwa” because of his independent thinking and decisions he took in contradiction to general conformity (Paulina Molelemane, Personal communication, 28/12/2016). His integrity spoke squarely to his clan praise that connotes a straight-talker: *Molelemane 'a Maloka, Maloka wa go seje sa motho!* (Molelemane of the Maloka who eats no one’s anything).

When asked by his daughter, Molelemane revealed that most of his poems came as dreams that he only interpreted into poetic lines (Paulina Molelemane, *Ibid*). Although he was not a conversational *moporofeta* (prophet), his work was composed prophetically through guidance of visions and dreams. Molelemane was married to two wives. Apart from serving on the Molepo Tribal Authority, Molelemane is known for his role as a political activist, which led to police being regular visitors at his home, but that never stopped him from speaking his mind without fear and favour. Her daughters describe him as “a Christian who would fight when he deems it fit to fight” (Paulina Molelemane, *Ibid*). His conviction is self-evident in his poetry. Molelemane died in August 2002, at the age of 95. He had been a member of the ZCC for 65 years. He was buried at the Molelemane cemetery, in GaMolepo. His poetry has inspired many within and outside the ZCC (see, Maahlamela, 2006), and it continues to do so. Each time the ZCC brass band takes an interval during its performance, it is customary to hear individuals reciting Molelemane’s compositions as brass band interludes.

5.2.2. Available studies on Molelemane

Lesibana Rafapa’s studies include, “ZCC and History” (2011) and “Micro and macro intergenerational oral communication in the Zion Christian Church” (2016). These are the only available studies that probe Molelemane’s *kiba* poetry, focusing on its historic accuracy in comparison with some of “the authoritative historical accounts.” The former article was published in the official publication of the church, *The ZCC Messenger* (no. 81). Rafapa’s findings reveal links between Molelemane’s poetry and the scientifically recorded history, endorsing B.W. Vilakazi’s claim that *thetotumišo* holds historic and ethnological significance in recording genealogy (1938:106). In the ZCC, *kiba* poetry also functions as prophecy, prayer,

song, evangelism, and “musical instrument,” making it an integral part of the medium of spirituality.

Rafapa reminds us that Molelemané’s much acclaimed poetry “was recorded first on vinyl in the 1960s and later on audio tape in the collection ZCC Church Choir Volume 1 & 2 in 1990 performs the praise poem of the ZCC head in the same fashion used in oral literature by praise singers of traditional African leader” (Rafapa, 2016:100). Chances are that Molelemané might have composed this oral poetry way before it was recorded in the 1960s. From the historic context, Rafapa explores the poetic works of Molelemané, which he regards as “two grandly constructed and eminently articulated praise poems praising the head of the church during the premier rendition of the praise poem, Bishop Edward Lekganyane” (Rafapa, 2013:23). Due to the scope limitations of Rafapa’s investigation, he did not explore the literary merit of these poems, providing an expert contextualisation.

5.2.3. Thoko ya Meso

In this poem dedicated to the founder of the ZCC, Reverend Engenas Lekganyane, Petrus Molelemané demonstrates his skill in the synthesizing of rhythm, rhyme, and reason to have such a magical melody of unsystematic sound patterns of both monotonous and flexible musical techniques, mainly assonance, resonance, alliteration and repetition.

1. *Re a go lotšha Morena Lekganyane*
2. *Lekgantšha ditšhaba, Morena wa kganya ya Sione,*
3. *Re re thobela Morena.*
4. *Re re Morena Lekganyane mogolo o golela godimo;*
5. *Mogolo wa go gola re robetše*
6. *Magoši le marena ba re ba tsoga ba hwetša o nabile.*

7. *Ga ke go roriše Morena Lekganyane, o rorile*
8. *O rorišitšwe ke mošomo wa gago.*
9. *Ge e le go thakga o thakgile*
10. *O thakgetše Molepo le Mamabolo,*
11. *O thakgetše le makgowa a mahwibedu*

12. *Mohwaduba'a Maphaka'a boMonare.*

13. *Gola mogolo Ramalala-a-gola, Ramahlwa-a-gola,*

14. *Ramahlwa-a-bolelela-ditšhaba-go-loka,*

15. *Mogoši wa gago o kwetše*

16. *O kwetše mošwa'a mawatle,*

17. *Amerika le Yuropa di ya lla*

18. *Ge e le Jerusalema o gakilwe,*

19. *Maphutha ditšhaba, ke ra Makgoka'a kgokolla.*

20. *E re nka be o be Makgoka wa go kgokela ruri.*

21. *O tla šala le bafe Mokgoka?*

22. *O tla boela gape dithabeng tša Sione*

23. *Go yo rapela, go phutha setšhaba?*

24. *Ge e le mo setšhaba se timela*

25. *Go timela baetapele.*

26. *Re rapelele Morena Lekganyane*

27. *Legodimo le lefase ga di tshwane.*

1. [We hail you His Highness Lekganyane

2. He who glitters multitude, His Highness of Zion's gleam,

3. We salute you.

4. We say grow high His Highness Lekganyane;

5. The one who grows while the rest are asleep

6. Rulers are surprised by how widely spread you are when they awake.

7. I am not praising you His Highness Lekganyane

8. You are praised, dignified by your deeds.

9. As for your kindness, you are indeed kind

10. Kind towards chief Molepo and chief Mamabolo

11. Kind towards scarlet whites

12. Mohwaduba of the Buffalo Maphaka.

13. Grow the mighty one, nocturnal grower, ever-grower
14. The ever-preacher of righteousness
15. Your scream is heard
16. Is heard overseas
17. America and Europe are weeping
18. As for Jerusalem, she is in confusion
19. Oh Mother of nations, you the tier who unties.
20. If only you were the Tier who knots forever.

21. With whom will you remain the Tier?
22. Will you return to Mount Zion
23. To pray and gather nations?
24. Since nations are led astray
25. Even leaders are getting astray
26. Pray for us His Highness Lekganyane
27. Heaven and earth are not tantamount.]

The opening two lines of the first stanza are rich with literary techniques, making them a perfect catching parallelism to commence an oral poem. The meaning and context also enhances the entire opening stanza, admiring the growth of both the ZCC as the church and its leadership. “Growing high” refers to the leadership and “the stretch of his legs” refers to the demographics of the church’s membership. The rate of such growth is said to be rapid, which is suggested by the use of “overnight” and rulers who are said to be set aback by the growth when they awoke, resembles who underestimated the church was such that its growth was unexpected by many. Looking at line 1 and 2:

1. Re a go lotšha Morena Lekganyane
2. Lekgantšha ditšhaba, Morena wa kganya ya Sione,

One notices the simultaneous resonance stemming from “kgan-” and “tšh-” rhythmic and staccato beat which is smoothened by the “-a” assonance and hardened with the ‘Morena’

repetition. One further notices a light rhyme of “Lekganyane” and “Sione” yet it is not as settling as the one in line 26 and 27 of “Lekganyane” and “ga di Tshwane” which is moreover enhanced by the perfect syllables match which creates an additional musical effect. In the same stanza, musicality is extended through the “*gol-*” stem in line 4 and 5: “...*mogolo o golela godimo;/ Mogolo wa go gola re robetše*” which is smoothened by an –o assonance and supportive ‘go’ sound.

Alliteration, according to Heese and Lawton, means initial rhyme and involves a repetition of initial sounds in two or more words (Heese & Lawton, 1992:44). Line 3 and 4 demonstrate alliteration with [word that are spelled the same yet with different meanings]:

3. *Re re* thobela *Morena*

4. *Re re* *Morena* Lekganyane

Repetition of a word, “Morena” strengthens further the alliteration, repetition that is extended even to line 3 and 4. Heese and Lawton contend that repetition creates pleasing echoes akin to rhyme, without the restrictions of regular end-rhyme (Heese & Lawton, 1992:62), a concept Molelemane seem to have understood as early as the 1960s when he composed this poem thus he avoided the systematic rhyme.

In stanza 2, the poet is saying Bishop Engenas’ deeds are self-evident: he remains kind even to those who have been unkind to him. In this context both chief Molepo and chief Mamabolo as part of those who conspired against Bishop Lekganyane; the same holds for the apartheid government whites who declined the ZCC application for registration several times – yet Bishop Engenas continued to hold them in high regard. This was typical of Bishop Engenas as we learn of his return to Tlhabine, a place where he, together with his entourage, was humiliated and assaulted. A similar event is when kgoši Shikwane Matlala slaughtered a cow for him, and he requested that *lehlakore* (side portion) should be sent to Madibong, the chieftaincy that chased him away (Makonyane, 2011:47).

The poet used the colour red or scarlet to symbolize the evil and ruthless deeds of the white-led apartheid government, which neutralizes the political impact of the description yet

loading it with layers of meanings. This then, can be interpreted as euphemism, a milder and perhaps pleasant expression of the ugly. Technically, musicality is maintained through the stem-based resonance that continuously changes, making it unpredictable. In the first two lines of the second stanza, line 7 and 8 *rori-* stem is employed:

7. Ga ke go roriše Morena Lekganyane, o rorile

8. O rorišitšwe ke mošomo wa gago.

Which is subsequently substituted by thakg- stem on line 9 and 10:

9. Ge e le go thakqa o thakgile

10. O thakgetše Molepo le Mamabolo

The word, “*thakgetše*” is then repeated in the subsequent line, i.e., line 11. Line 12 becomes a musical breather, allowing the poet to freely flow. Although the poem is not analysed using the Shakespearean or Elizabethan scansion, meaning the analysis of metrical patterns of verse, but one notices a unique yet distinctive pattern that the poet mastered. This then raises a question on the overgeneralized sentiment by the school of thought which strongly believes that oral poetry is only rough sketches and prosaic in nature.

In stanza 3, both the church and its leadership are urged to grow further, and spread the Gospel wider. Hyperbole is seen in line 15 and 16 where the Bishop’s scream is said to have reached overseas, which in this context metaphorically means the church is known worldwide, and Jerusalem as the Israelite city, is astonished by the discovery or establishment of ‘new Jerusalem’ in Africa. This, according to Rafapa (2011:40), “reveals to us that Israel/Jerusalem and the ZCC/Moria are one at the spiritual level,” a view that somewhat links with the Israeli Ambassador, Arthur Lenk’s remarks that: “For a Jewish visitor from Israel the subtext of the message was obvious – the God of the Mount of Zion is my God! Mount Zion is in Jerusalem, the City that is holy for Jews, Christians and Muslims” (Lenk, 2013:47). Metonymy is used in line 17 and 18 since it is not the physical countries per se which are weeping or surprised, but rather their citizenship. Technically musicality continues to be a strongest façade of the poem, as it can be seen in line 13 and 14:

13. Gola mogolo Ramalala-a-gola, Ramahlwa-a-gola,
 14. Ramahlwa-a-bolelela-ditšhaba-go-loka,

A simultaneous resonance of *gol-* and the alliteration *rama-* suggest that the poem is generally composed in a form of a couplet, paring parallelism. What captivates more is how rhyme, rhythm, and reason are persistently of high quality, without any of the three lacking. The third stanza is then closed with a *kgok-* stem resonance of line 19 and 20:

19. Maphutha ditšhaba, ke ra Makgoka'a kgokolla.
 20. E re nka be o be Makgoka wa go kgokela ruri.

The context of this parallelism can be traced in one of the primordial ZCC mpoho-type *kiba* performative-prayers of a sound poem nature, sang in the *makgakgasa* style, *Di a tsena ke ditšhaba*, with the following magnificent rhyme of equal syllables on each side of the caesura:

Di a tsena ke ditšhaba di a fola di a tšhaba
 (Di-a-tse-na-ke-di-tšha-ba//di-a-fo-la-di-a-tšha-ba)
 [Multitudes are converted, after being healed they flee]

The above means that multitudes of ill people are healed, but backslide afterwards. In line 19 and 20, the poet seems to be raising a similar concern, that he knows that Reverend Engenas has the ability to pray that those who join the church should not backslide, especially after being healed through the church's prayers and injunctions. Observing the growing rate of the ZCC, one can speculate that when one person backslides, hundred of new converts are welcomed. In Line 21 of the fourth stanza, the poet persistently confronts Reverend Engenas, asking him that should all the adherents secede with whom he will remain, if it means he will have to pray afresh for new adherents as he did during the formation of the church. Although the concern can be presumed to be limited to church membership, but considering his political activism and his role as a traditional leader of Molelemane, such a plea could also be interpreted in a political context. This will mean that he was referring to ZCC adherents who

were victims of the apartheid system and its brutality, some who were traditional or political leaders.

To many, it was of course only clearer after 1994 that some of the frontrunners in the struggle against apartheid were the ZCC adherents, a point emphasized by Nelson Mandela during his speech in Moria. If this context is then anything to go by, this will mean the word *“timela”* ambiguously depicts *“go timelelwa ke tsela ya Modimo”* (to backslide or secede: relapse into bad ways) and (2) *“go timelela”* (to disappear, going missing). The poet closes the fourth stanza with an end rhyme of two different lines, lighter and denser. The penultimate merely requests Reverend Engenas’ prayers, whereas the last line abstractly states the obvious in a challenging context: Heaven and earth are not the same.

28. *Re a go lotšha Tebernikele ya Sione.*

29. *Re re e tlile Tebernikele ya Sione*

30. *E tlile e se na sebopego,*

31. *E tla bogwa ke bohle*

32. *E tla bogwa ke meloko le meloko,*

33. *E tla bogwa le ke ngwana wa lesea.*

34. *Taba yena a e ke e ngwalelwe meloko ye e sa tlogo go tswalwa*

35. *Le re go bona: bošego bo fedile ga bo satla hlwela bo e ba gona*

36. *Bohlale bo hloka maelelo ditau di fedile meno*

37. *Kganya e retwa ke bohle, Morena Lekganyane ke molato wa gago*

38. *O tla re ruta go loka, e senga ka bobele le ge e le kgalefo*

39. *Gobane modiša wa dinku ga a bolaye,*

40. *Ka mehla o bofa tše šohlago o bofa a hunela digwahla matolo.*

41. *O kgoka tše šohlago Makgoka, Morena Lekganyane, Thobela Morena.*

42. *Hlaba letšatši le legolo magola a hlaba*

43. *Letšatši magoletša le legodimo, letšatši mahloka sereto;*

44. *Letšatši o senyetša batho boroko*

45. *Mola e se ke ya ba wena batho nka be re robetše,*

46. *Go buša bošego bja ga malala a putuka*

47. *Bošego bja go re bo esa lefsiksi ka katakata ntweng.*

48. *Nto ye nngwe e etla*

49. *Ke nto ye e se nago lebitšo,*

50. *Ke mantšhekgedile wa bošego le mosegare,*

51. *Ke nto ya go ja bana le batho*

52. *Yo e tlogo mo feta o tla ba le lehlogonolo,*

53. *Gobane o tla dula le badimo eupša badimo ba sa dule le motho.*

54. *O ile go e kwa a tlala pelo a lanola dinao, Moroma a gara thogwana*

55. *Ra re ge e le ngaka e ka hlolela re paletšwe;*

56. *Mme a boa a nyamile pelo gobane a hlokile motlatši, mothetši a ditaba*

57. *Tau ya go ja e sa kgore, sebata se se nago boya*

58. *Tseba legodimo ga le a ka la ahlolwa le batho.*

59. *Re a go lotšha Morena wa kganya ya Sione*

60. *Re re thobela Morena*

61. *Marobathota a kgomo Lepelle la Mmamogodi*

62. *Ba ile ba re ge ba go bona ba ikhurumetša difahlogo*

63. *Ba re: Kgomo mma'a ditšhaba o ye tla.*

28. [We hail you Zion's Tabernacle

29. We say Tabernacle is here

30. We say it came formlessly

31. It will be witnessed by all

32. It will be witnessed by generations and generations

33. It will be witnessed even by an infant.

34. This should be recorded for the forthcoming generations

35. A say unto them: The night is over, and it will never ever return

36. Wisdom has none to emulate for lions' teeth are extracted

37. All are praising the gleam. His Highness this is your fault

38. Will you rightfully and kindly teach us righteousness?

39. For the sheep's shepherd does not kill
40. He always tethers trespassing, and [sling] the limping
41. He tethers the astray, the Tier, His Highness Lekganyane, Hail the Highness.
42. Rise mighty sun, the sun that grows rising
43. The sun that grows with the sky, the sun that has no praise;
44. The sun, you disturb people's sleep
45. Had it not be for you we would be asleep
46. The night would be ruling, the night of ending search
47. The night, which upon its end, darkness retreats from the battle.
48. Something is coming
49. A nameless thing
50. Nocturnal and daytime Mantšhekgedile
51. A thing to eat children and adults alike
52. The survivor will be fortunate
53. For he will reside with the dead whilst the dead resides not with the living.
54. After hearing this, the Roman irritably carried his luggage and left
55. He admitted his failure, hoping a divination healer could rescue him
56. Returned in distress he failed to attract any seconder or supporter
57. Lion that eats without being well fed/getting full, the hairless beast
58. Know that heaven is not judged with human beings.
59. [We salute you His Highness, Zion's gleam
60. We say hail His Highness
61. Marobathota of the Cow from Mmamogodi's Ebenezer River
62. Upon seeing you, they covered their faces
63. Said: The Mother-of-the-nation Cow is coming.]

The strength of the first four stanzas of this poem are in its musicality, but a paradigm shift is noted in the fifth stanza, where its strength is more on its imagery, which is unbreakable in

its simplicity. The meaning of the word, *Tebernikele* in the phrase “*Tebernikele ya Sione*,” for instance, is unclear. It sounds more like a borrowed word, if not an invented word, but definitely not an archaic word. In this context, it fits to conclude that it is borrowed from the English, “tabernacle,” which is biblically defined as “a fixed or movable habitation, typically of light construction like a tent used as a sanctuary for the Art of the Covenant by the Israelites during the Exodus.” It is also described as “an ornamented receptacle or cabinet in which the reserve sacrament may be placed in Catholic churches” (van Niekerk *et al.*, 2015:1205).

With definitions above, we will speculate on three possible interpretations, which are, tabernacle in this context might refer to (1) the church leadership, metaphorically; (2) the church structure; or (3) the possible inferred meteor and its symbols in the form of shining stars on the roof of the church and on the mountaintop. Line 32 states that “generations and generations will watch this “tabernacle”” automatically disqualifying the first possibility of church leadership. Line 30 states that the “tabernacle” will “come shapelessly.” This further eliminates the second possibility of a church structure. It therefore makes sense to first contextualize the remaining possibility.

We learn that Moleleman migrated to reside in Moria in 1942, two years before the alleged inferred meteor. Additionally, we learn that the issue of a possible inferred meteor was one secret among Moria residents since a morning service was once cancelled so as to avoid astrologists in their quest for the possible inferred meteor. Through the poem, we know that when an inferred meteor hit the impact area it definitely deforms itself into fragments, sometimes it even deformed itself before hitting the ground. This suggests an inferred meteor which can be “shapeless.” Furthermore, although the possible inferred meteor cannot be seen by “all,” “by generations and generations,” or by “an infant” but its symbol in a form of a shining star on the mountain top or at the church top. This, moreover, matches the line 35 whereby it is said that there will “never be any night-time,” since the symbolic stars will illuminate away the nocturnal darkness.

Alternatively, it can metaphorically mean that the possible inferred meteor will spiritually brighten the church. The latter speculation further matches with subsequent lines since astrologists’ *bohlale* (wisdom) is untraceable which the poet compares with “toothless lions”

while the *kganya* (gleam) continues to be praised by all. Line 37 can be interpreted as a sarcastic understatement. Meaning, had the Bishop allowed the astrologists to extract, things could have turned out differently. The metaphor of a shepherd and his flock is well explored from line 39 to 41, reiterating the concept of a church as a hospital of sinners as opposed to a club of saints, thus urging the Bishop not to punish but rather to nurse and deliver those who go astray.

42. *Hlaba letšatši le legolo magola a hlaba*

The line above opens the sixth stanza with a new technique whereby the first word of the line is repeated as the end word for the same line. Meaning wise, it carries great substance giving a clear picture that the technique was not employed merely for the sake of technique. The mighty sun that it urges to rise is regarded as the ever-riser. The *gol-* resonance in the middle of the line additionally complements the rhyming quality produced by the “*hlaba*” repetition. Here, the metaphor of the *letšatši* (sun) is referred to Reverend Engenas, and is then used as the opening rhyme in subsequent lines:

43. *Letšatši magoletša le legodimo letšatši mahloka sereto*

42. *Letšatši o senyetša batho boroko*

A contrast in line 43 produces a paradox since this heavenly sun (*Letšatši magoletša le legodimo*) is praise-less, meaning it is not held in high regard (*letšatši mahloka sereto*). This suggests that people have not yet realized how special the Bishop is, more or less, it replicates the idiotic expression of a prophet commonly being infamous or overlooked in his own town. The -o assonance at the end of both lines including in “*legodimo*” before caesura, creates an open end that complements musicality. This *letšatši* is then accused of waiting people’s sleep. “*Boroko*” (sleep), in this context, connotatively portrays pleasure from social yet fruitless activities. Both “*boroko*” and “*robetše*” are noun and verb of sleep, respectively. However, “*robetše*” in the context of line 45 denotes sinning. Had it not been for “*letšatši*” (the sun: Reverend Engenas), people would be “*robetše*” (sleeping: sinning), and the world would be governed by “*bošego*” (the night: the devil). “*Bošego bja malala a putuka*” literary means the ever-searching night, meaning ever-resting night, denoting how persistent the devil is. In line

47, human qualities are given to the “lefsifsi” (darkness) which physically retracts from the war at the crack of dawn. This personification is moreover personalized using the preposition “ka” (I), which introduces a change of voice, meaning the line is not uttered by the poet but rather by “lefsifsi” itself. The seventh stanza is highly prophetic and poetically rich with layers after layers of meaning.

48. *Nto ye nngwe e etla*

49. *Ke nto ye e se nago lebitšo,*

50. *Ke mantšhekgedile wa bošego le mosegare,*

51. *Ke nto ya go ja bana le batho*

“Nto” literary means “a thing.” In this prophetic stanza, the poet speaks with a great sense of certainty about the nearing thing that is unnameable. “When the Holy Spirit takes over a member of the ZCC prophesies in both plain and poetic language” (Rafapa, 2011:40). Paradoxically, this “unnameable” thing is named “nocturnal and daytime mantšhekgedile.” Such a smart and deliberate paradox is popular within *kiba* poetry. Although the word “mantšhekgedile” does not exist in the “standardized” dictionary it might derive from, or might be a dialect of, the word “mantšhegele” which according to the monolingual dictionary, means “*koša ya setšo yeo e binwago ke banna ge go thabile; ba e bina ge ba šetše ba nwele bjala*” (Mojela *et al.*, 2007:201). This translates as “a jubilant cultural song-dance sung especially by men when drunk.” Comparing *this thing* with a song, might mean that *this thing* will become a daily talk. An element of harmfulness is introduced by the word *go ja* (to eat), since *this thing* will eat children and “*batho*.” The word “*batho*” literary means “people,” but in this context, it is used as a symbol of “adults.” This means *this thing* will consume the young and old alike. Some strongly believe Molelemanane was foretelling the HIV/AIDS outbreak.

Pauline Molelemanane, Molelemanane’s daughter, however, has a different interpretation. Because the poem was composed around the 1960s, prior the political massacres that subsequently occurred in South Africa, she strongly contends that it connotes the protracted violence and killings that took place in the KwaZulu-Natal and other parts of the country instigated by the Inkata Freedom Party (IFP) and the apartheid regime. She says that she reached this conclusion after she heard of the murder of the entire family whereby an infant

was found surrounded by a “table” of corpses (Paulina Molelemanane, *Ibid*). She links the incident with the line 52 and 53, which loosely denotes, “fortunate will be the one who will survive / or he will reside with the ancestors whereas ancestors never reside with the living:”

52. *Yo e tlogo mo feta o tla ba le lehlogonolo,*

53. *Gobane o tla dula le badimo eupša badimo ba sa dule le motho.*

Another paradox is noted in line 53 of “residing with ancestors whereas ancestors never reside with the living.” If this latter interpretation of Molelemanane’s daughter is anything to go by, then it will mean in this context the word “*nto*” (a thing) will be a corrupt form of “*ntwa*” (a war). Given that, this war by the IFP did not necessarily have a name as compared to, say, the Sharpeville Massacre, or the Soweto Student Massacre; then it validates line 49: a nameless war. Both analytic versions are justifiable, resulting in interpretational ambiguity.

From the prophetic stanza 7, a paradigm shift back to the present is noted in stanza 8 with a focus on local resident’s response to Bishop Engenas’s missionary establishment in the form of a narrative poem. “*Moroma a gara thongwana*” in line 54 can be interpreted as The Roman Catholic missionary has *gara* or *gapa* (herd) a *thongwana* (a cow). The word, *thongwana*, is one of the demonstrations of how rich African languages can be in their African and cultural context. This single adjective, *thongwana*, describes three aspects, (1) type of an animal, (2) gender and (3) colour pattern: a female, black scarlet-spotted, cow. This means the Roman Catholic missionary herded a cow. Listening to the audio version of the poem, the same line sounds like “*Moroma wa gaRathongwana*.” In that case, it will mean Rathongwana-based Roman Catholic Missionary.

We are told that upon hearing about Bishop Engenas’ missionary establishment, the Roman Catholic missionary was convinced that only a *ngaka ya setšo* (divinatory healer) can come to his rescue, thus he herded a cow and paid *ngaka* a visit in an attempt to consult. He unfortunately returned disappointed since he failed to attract any seconder or supporter on his conspiracy against Bishop Engenas. In the olden days, animals such as goat, sheep and cow were used as transactional currency for “*ngaka*” services. However, it seems like no “*ngaka*” was willing to attempt any spiritual attack on the much-feared and revered Bishop Engenas.

In line 57, the poet directly addresses the Roman Catholic Missionary as “*tau ya go ja e sa khore*,” a lion that feasts without getting full, which connotes greediness. He further addresses him as “*sebata se se nago boya*,” a skinless or hide-free beast. The latter referral is a metaphoric synonym of “a wolf in a sheep’s skin,” both connote deceptive pretence. The Roman Catholic missionary is then warned that *legodimo* (heaven) is never judged alongside *batho* (people), an imagery that means Reverend Engenas, a God-sent missionary, cannot by any chance be compared with self-sent, earthly missionaries.

5.2.4. Variations of Thoko ya Meso

There are three recorded versions of this poem, all differently titled. The above-transcribed version of *Toko ya Meso* is of course the original, composed for the founding leader of the church, Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. Although the poem was first recorded around the 1960s, it was composed between 1942 and 1948 when Molelemane was staying in Moria and Reverend Engenas was still alive (Paulina Molelemane, *Ibid*). The second version entitled *Re emetše go Lotšha*, is the same as the first version except for the omission of the last stanza, that is, line 59 to line 63. In my opinion the omission could have been a technical error, especially because even the title “*Re emetše go Lotšha*” is the title of Motimele’s poem and the first line of his poem. Thus, the title should have remained *Toko ya Meso*. The third version, dedicated to the third leader Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, is but a collage of a couple of stanzas from *Toko ya Meso*, a couple of lines from the second leader Bishop Edward Lekganyane’s poem, *Makgoka a kgokolla Ramarumo*, and a couple of newly composed stanzas. The poem begins with a twisted line 13 of *Toko ya Meso*. Instead of:

13. *Gola mogolo Ramalala-a-gola, Ramahlwa-a-gola,*

He says:

13. *Gola mogolo Ramahlwa-a-gola, Ramalala-a-gola*

14. *Ramahlwa-a-bolelela-ditšhaba-go-loka,*

15. *Mogoši wa gago o kwetše*

16. *O kwetše mošwa’a mawatle,*

17. *Amerika le Yuropa di ya Ila*

18. *Ge e le Jerusalema yena o gakilwe,*

19. *Maphutha ditšhaba, ke ra Makgoka'a kgokolla.*

20. *E re nka be o be Makgoka wa go kgokela ruri.*

Then:

1. *Ramarumo Morena Lekganyane*
2. *Anthena ge o re, "ke tla fetoga mmala, ke tla ba leobu"*
3. *O be o e ra ge o fetoga bjalo naa?*
4. *Re go bone Kgomo, ke kgale re go emetše*
5. *Re emetše go yo phetha diporofeto thabeng ya Sione...*

This variant has deep metaphors such as "maswi a kgomo a bolaile namane," meaning, "a cow's milk killed a calf." He continues to paint complex metaphors using simple wording. Echoing the *Toko ya Meso* lines, "*ditaola tša re ditaba butšišang Beibele selo sa go seba/e sebile kgoši Moraswi e sebile Setlakalane, ya re ge e mo seba ya seba le tshwene ya Mmaisibe...*" Perhaps one could speculate that since his first two poems were written when he was living in Moria, the last poem was not composed from the previous spiritual state, thus not fully creative like his former compositions. This speaks to the effect of monasticism in the creative realm.

5.2.5. Molelemané's influence to popular ZCC Music

Oleseng Shuping adopted and adapted Molelemané's perfect rhyme into a title track of what became a platinum selling album *Ha ditshwane* (2006).

26. *Re rapelele Morena Lekganyane*

27. *Legodimo le lefase ga ditshwane.*

The above parallism then became a chorus below:

Re rapelele Morena

Legodimo le lefase

Ke nnete, ha ditshwane.

In fact, this poem alone has inspired three of Shuping's popular songs. The phrase "*Tebernikele ya Sione [Jehofa]*" (line 28 and 29) in the first line of the fifth stanza feature in track 9 of *Hareatla ka Boikhantsho* (2004) album, "*Mopholosi*." Line 39 and 40:

39. *Gobane modiša wa dinku ga a bolaye,*

40. *Ka mehla o bofa tše šohlag o bofa a hunela digwahla matolo.*

These were also adapted into track 8 of *Ke a cha, ke a tuka*, entitled, "*Modisa ha a bolaye*:"

Modiša wa dinku

Ha a bolaye

O bofa tse šohlang

Le digwahla matolo.

This speaks volumes about the merit of this poem, and more so, Molelemane's craft and prophetic wealth which withstands time. His poetic works are forever relevant such that it becomes more relevant today than when it was composed over four decades ago. This demonstrates a relationship of a poem and a song, a relationship that can be mistaken for two terms for the same things. As pointed out earlier, a song is generally words that need to be sung whilst a poem is words that sing. Thus, it is often easy to adapt a well-crafted poem into a song, but the opposite is not always true.

5.2.6. Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane

The following poem is dedication to Bishop Edward Lekganyane, the second generation of the church's leadership. It is highly metaphorical, at times personal, confessional and confrontational. Within the religious margins, black pride and black consciousness reflect in this poetic account of historic significance. As usual, musicality is a thick thread that ties together his rich figurative languages, which does not interfere with the comprehension process. A variety of forms exhibits his literary exposure, but above all, accessibility yet multi-layered, imbued with a deep sense of verse, proving that poetry in African languages is not what poetry in European or western languages is not. "*Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane*" reads thus:

1. *Ge e le ka direkto re a mo phopholetša*
2. *Re re ke Edward ke Morena Lekganyane*
3. *Ke Mohwaduba' Mmaphaka a Monare.*

1. [With praises we merely grope for him
2. Saying he is His Highness Edward Lekganyane
3. He is a Mohwaduba of Mmaphaka Buffalo.]

Molelemane's poem has a humbling soft-start introduction grounded in uncertainty as if he is somewhat apologetic: suggesting that he has nothing unique to offer. The use of a preposition, "re" (we) modestly presumes the poet to be as average as the rest – which is not the case. One notices the sound effect produced by the repeated "ke" preposition. As previously demonstrated, *kiba* poetry often starts with somewhat literal remarks that subsequently bridges into dense poetic language. The last line is not necessarily Bishop Edward's personal praise, but it is the Lekganyane clan's praise. Mohwaduba, as Rafapa puts it, "is a clan name of a broad cluster of Sotho families who venerate the buffalo, whose domestic equivalent is a cattle head" (Rafapa, 2016:99). The subsequent stanzas are in the form of a praise:

4. *Re re a ratana marena bošego a etelana*
5. *A rera sephiring a rera ka lebitšo la gago, Morena Lekganyane,*
6. *Re re ka mahlo ke e bone kgoši e apere lesaka e tšama itiya lenxa*
7. *E re batho re tshwenyegile re tshwentšwe ke pitša ye ntsho mafapanya*
8. *E re fapantšha le batswadi.*
9. *Ke phefo ye kgolo mahube*
10. *Ye e tšamago e kgobakantšha ditšhaba*
11. *Ditšhiwana ga re konege re kokobetše*
12. *Re emetše go phetha diporofeto dithabeng tša Sione*
13. *Gobane re mo dumetše motho o moso Lekganyane*
14. *Gobane ba bašweu ba etlišitše nnete ya mmakgodi 'a kgokgo.*

15. *Re re dumela Morena Lekganyane kgoši maaga a rutla*
16. *O agile sefateng sa Kwenane*
17. *Ke kgahlong ga Molepo le Mamabolo*
18. *O duletše go hloma folaga ye tala ya boRuben Lekgasa*
19. *Ngwana wa boseahlola ka pula le maru*
20. *Re re ahlola Morena Lekganyane mohlala wa pula o go wena*
21. *Re gana phefo fela*
22. *Phefo matšama e roba dihlare makala naga ya šala e apotše*

4. [We say rulers love each other, they nocturnally gather
5. Conspiring secretively, plotting against you, His Highness Lekganyane
6. We say, I eye-to-eye saw a sack-wearing chief whistling sound of disgust
7. Saying: People are troubled, troubled by a conflict-causing, black pot
8. Snatching us away from our pedigrees.

9. The cracking dawn's wind
10. Drifting and gathering nations,
11. We, orphans, do not astray: we are waiting to be testimonies
12. Await the fulfilment of prophecies in Mt. Zion
13. For we believed in Lekganyane, the black man
14. For whites brought candid truth.

15. We say hail His Highness Lekganyane, King that builds and destroys
16. He has built at the Valley of Kwenane River
17. Sandwiched between Molepo and Mamabolo
18. He forever mounts a laurel: green flag of the Ruben of Lekgasa
19. Sibling of those who rule by rain and clouds
20. We say rule out His Highness Lekganyane the trail of rain is in you
21. Only storm we refuse (All we rebuke is but wind)
22. Storms that amputate tree branches, leaving the land naked.]

Assonance in the fourth line creates a special fluctuating sound based on the slightest change of vowel on the second word “*ratana marena bošego a etelana.*” One notes that repetition has a staccato effect that serves more or less like a unique type caesura. This is evident on the recurrent of “*A rera*” in the line 5. Both line 4 and 5 explains who chiefs were that were previous enemies and are now befriending each other and teaming up against Bishop Edward. In line 7, the poet inserts himself in the narrative, asserting that what he is about to say is not based on hearsay but rather an event in which he was an eyewitness, “*ka mahlo ke e bone....*” The imagery that follows in the same line of a sack-adorned chief brings a sense of disparity since a chief is traditionally expected to adorn a tiger hide/skin. “*Go itiya lenxa*” further symbolises irritation thus line 8 reveals that the chief in question was in despair and heavily irritated because of the “black pot” that feeds, and seems to have won, his subjects.

The metaphor of a “black pot” colourfully depicts the complexion of the leadership, a description that echoes the concept of black pride if not black consciousness. Although this particular chief is undisclosed, one can speculate that the description matches that of a conflict the church faced during its formation under the chieftaincy of Mamabolo if not Molepo. If that is the case, it could then make sense that even if he is praising the second leadership of the church, the poet employs the events associated with the first leadership as a point of departure. Musicality is incredibly sustained in the stanza through extended sound of phrases such as “*re tshwenyegile re tshwentšwe ke pitša ye ntsho...*” and “*...mafapanya/ e re fapantšha le batswadi.*” The second stanza is generally in a narrative form, yet a drastic change towards a purely praise form is noted in the third stanza, resulting in tone shift. Bishop Edward had a brother named Ruben, but other sources also claim that Bishop Edward’s birth name was Ruben Talane, it is thus unclear which Ruben is depicted by “*tala ya bo Ruben.*”

The metaphor of “the sweeping wind gathering multitudes” speaks to a drastic increase of adherents’ quantity under the second leadership. Once more, in line 12 “*ga re*” reveals further self-insertion, self-assertion, if not positioning, of a poet in the poem. Black pride re-emerges in line 14, but this time around not metaphorically but rather literally, “*motho o moso Lekganyane.*” Ironically, the poet claims in line 15 that the revelation of who Lekganyane is traced in the very same Bible brought by the Europeans. This further confirms ZCC’s ascription to the Bible in such that it interprets its legitimacy using the same Bible. Perpetual self-

insertion is further seen in “*Re re*” in line 16 can summed into a poet’s conviction the praised. “*Maaga a rutla*” in the same line 16, which means the one who builds and destroys, can be reflecting the exodus of the church from the Thabakgone ruins to the Thobolong ruins, the Podungwane ruins and back to Zion City Moria. Possibly a derivative of Reverend Engenas’s praise *Makgoka a kgokolla* (the tier who unties). Perhaps this is self-evident to two things: (1) that personal praise poems, “[pay] tribute not only to the individual but to the entire clan or dynasty;” (Rafapa, 2016, *Ibid*) and (2) that one “should not presume serial time in dealing with oral traditions of different people” (Prins in Rafapa, 2016:98).

Line 20, “*Ngwana wa bo seahlola ka pula le maru,*” is one of the deeply immersed poetics in the poem which requires attentive analytics and the cultural context, in order to comprehend. It literally means a child of those who judges or rules through rain and clouds. As discussed, the Lekganyanes are said to be rainmakers and star-interpreters. But with the leadership of the ZCC, it seems to be more than that, hence it is confirmed by a melodic observation of the adherents in a song, “*Mo a yang re bona ka maru, mo a tšwang pula e a na*” (Wherever he goes he is accompanied by clouds, and when he departs it rains). Historically, rainmakers were not accompanied by clouds, thus my argument is that perhaps with the ZCC leadership it is more than what is generally attributed to the Lekganyane people: rainmakers and star-interpreters. The line metaphorically means a child of rainmakers, thus the subsequent lines urge him to give them a windless rain. Unlike in line 10, wind in line 22 and 23 is depicted in its negative connotation. Nevertheless, there is still a room for ambiguity in the interpretation of both rain and wind in line 20 – 23.

Similarly, musicality is maintained through unpretentious rhythm created by meaningful diction and of course assonance and resonance such as in “*moaga a rutla o agile*” and “*seahlola ka maru re re ahlola Morena Lekganyane mohlala...*” Additional figurative language is noticed in line’s personification of the “*naga ya šala e apotše*” (the land left undressed). In the process of appreciating the greatness in others, we often note our own faults. In the depth of other people’s eyes lies our own reflection. Stanza 5 is completely confessional, and it tilts attention towards the poet.

24. *Mola e seke ya ba go ja thapo ye ntsho mogolo*

25. *Nkabe re porofetela mangaka koma ya phulega lešoba*
 26. *A re epela dihlare re alafa*
 27. *Ge e le ditaola di gakile barei ba tšona di bolaile namane*
 28. *Pheko ya dithebele e re eyang go butšiša Bibe le selo sa go seba*
 29. *E sebile Kgoši Moraswi, e sebile Setlakalane,*
 30. *Ya re ge e seba ya šupetša marena bophelo*
 31. *Ya re Kgomo e tšwa Leboa, e a getlagetla*
 32. *E phutha se hlotšago le se omeletšego ditho*
 33. *E se bokelela ga Lešaša ga Willie ngwana' Lekgowa*
 34. *Kgomo e buša ka go etiša botle pele.*

35. *Ge ele yena Engenas o bolela ka lentšu*
 36. *O boelela Bopedi Thabakgone go yo phetha dikano*
 37. *Re re Edward Morena Lekganyane*
 38. *Go tla ba lehlogonolo ba tlang go o bona mmušo wa gago*
 39. *Gobane batho re a bitšwa re bitšwa ke lehu*
 40. *Lehu madula a bogwa*
 41. *Lehu nkabe le tlwaelwa nkabe re le aparela dikala*
 42. *Mohlaretloga lefaseng ra lokelela*
 43. *Ra bina kgotso mpogo ra bina koša ye ntshwa*
 44. *Koša ye se nago leepo.*

24. [Had it not been for eating the black rope around the neck
 25. We could have been prophesying to diviners, holing the initiation
 26. Digging herbs for us to heal
 27. As for diviner's bones: have confused their owner, killed a calf
 28. Master bone says go ask the backbiting Bible
 29. The one which backbit chief Moraswi, backbit Setlakalane
 30. Backbit while showing other rulers the well of life
 31. Saying: The Cow is from the North, parading protruded shoulders
 32. It nurses the limping, and those with numb limbs
 33. Gathering them to Willie-the-white-man's Leshasha

34. The Cow putting forth kindness in its reign.
35. As for Engenas, he is speaking in his own voice
36. Reverting to the Pediland in Thabakgone to fulfil vows
37. We say Edward My Highness Lekganyane
38. Blessed are those who will witness your kingdom
39. Because people are summoned, summoned by death
40. The ever-spectated Death.
41. If death were an acquaintance, we would adorn in branches while awaiting its arrival.
42. Pack our baggage upon our last earthly departure,
43. Chant *mpoho*, the new peaceful song
44. A song free from lyrics.]

Handling the stylistic peculiarities of Molelemane's poetry can at times be a momentous task. This, of course, is not because of the old same excuse: the use of archaic words. Complexity of his simple metaphor often requires a high level of analytic vigilance and acumen. Molelemane's metaphors are not always easily discernible, sometimes they resemble the roots of a baobab tree. The fifth stanza starts with such a deep yet simple-worded metaphor: "*go ja thapo ye ntsho mogolo*" literary translated as "eating a black robe through the neck," or more poetically, "scarfing a black knotted robe around the neck." This, in my opinion, can mean restraining from performing spiritual injunctions, particularly those related to spiritual wellness and prophetic purity. In that way, it would mean the poet regrets for not performing such injunctions, which had he performed, he could have already baptized many diviners and who would be his assistants in healing the sick while he prophesied for them. However, Rafapa translates the same line as "were it not for eating and dark string gullet" (2016:108) gullet meaning the passage by which food passes from the mouth to the stomach (van Niekerk *et al.*, 2015:519). Rafapa's translation can still connote the same as the one above.

The perfect ironic oxymoron in the phrase "[*go*] *porofetela mangaka*" in line 25 distinctively protrudes, implying healing the healer. Another notable imagery is "*koma ya phulega lešoba*" (a holed initiation school) signifies the divinatory healing has lost its strength and power. The

cultural context necessary to comprehend the imagery is that the ZCC adherents are prohibited from attending initiation school, thus initiation becomes in this context a symbol for the unwanted within the ZCC. Humour finds its way into this serious poem through line 28 where divinatory bones are depicted to be stranded, unable to palpitate or read through, and calling upon the Bible's rescue. The idiom, "*di bolaile namane*" (killed a calf) illustrates an uncalculated action of divinatory bones which puzzles their owners.

Then he adds personification of the Bible that has "backbitten" chiefs Moraswi and Setlakalane while revealing to other chiefs the purity path. This backbiting, however, seemed to have a positive connotation since it metaphorically means refectory truth. It means that in the Bible there are characters who denied, vilified and conspired about other progressive God-sent saints, as it is currently the case with the leadership of the church. Chiefs Moraswi and Setlakalane are said to be leaders of the Molepo polity, which then reveals why he was depicted as rebellious by that polity for which he was *ntona* (headman). This stanza demonstrates an excellent diction, precise words of various layers of meaning. In my opinion, line 24 – 27 demonstrate poetry at its best: how simple words can be constructed to paint a meaningful and complex picture.

The cosmological context of *ditaola/pheko* (divinatory bones) and the Bible, which are within their respective belief systems viewed as living objects, strips a personification layer of both words within the spiritual spectacles. This means when, "the backbiting Bible" says, in line 41 that "A Cow is from the North," it can "say" as a personified book (object), but on the other hand it can "say" as in The Word of God symbolizing deity (a living being). The same applies to divinatory bones, which in addition to the personified version, can equally be a symbol of the ancestral voice. The word "*getlagetla*" in line 41 does not exist in both the bilingual and the monolingual dictionary, the nearest is "*gitla/gatla*" which means to beat. My speculation, however, is that the word is not archaic, but rather the poet has invented an onomatopoeic ideophone that depicts "*magetla*" (shoulder). If this is then anything to go by, then it could be echoing Bishop Engenas' prophecy that his predecessor will be a "*monna wa magetla*" (broad-shouldered man), whereas "*Willie ngwana*" *Lekgowa*' (Willy, the white child) might be referring to a white person from which the Maclean Farm was bought. As demonstrated below, one is fascinated about the variety of sound techniques integrated and employed,

including the natural use of vowel “e:” producing visible and invisible musicality that holds a poem together. Parallelism is further noted in line 30 and 31:

24. Mola é seke ya ba go ja thapo yé ntsho mogolo
25. Nkabe ré porofetela mangaka koma ya phuléga lešoba
26. A ré epela dihlare ré alafa
27. Ge é le ditaola *di* gakile baréi ba tšona *di* bolaile namané
28. Phéko ya dithebele é re eyang *go* butšiša Bibebe sélo sa *go* seba
29. É sebile kgoši Moraswi, é sebile Sétlakalane
30. Ya ré ge é seba ya šupétša marena bophelo
31. Ya re Kgomo é tšwa Leboa, é a getlagetla
32. É phutha se hlotšago lé se omeletšego ditho
33. É se bokelela *ga* Léšaša *ga* Willie ngwana’ Lekgowa
34. Kgomo é buša ka *go* etiša botle péle.

Molelemané’s poem has distinctive stanzas, which are purely driven by tone, subject, focus, time and form – in spite of definitive conclusions made by some of our eminent orature scholars that traditional African poems do not have stanzas. Even in its oral form, stanza-breaks are noted through meaningful silence as he recites. What is more problematic is not the misconception itself but the misleading perception it paints: that African oral poetry is only one thing and nothing else. Habits of the ignorant pioneer transcribers of oral poetry have been mistaken for Africa tradition. African poetry does not have to be or imitate European or western poetry, but it does come in wider form and perhaps equates more than the two, thus it should not be portrayed as somewhat a stepchild of the two. It is noted that although such misled views generally emanate from a point of ignorance, but at times, they emanate from the need for a deliberate vilification of African cultural wealth.

Although the first two leaders of the ZCC share the name Engenas, it goes without saying that Engenas on the penultimate stanza refers to the founding leader who is perceived not to have died but to have returned to the Thabakgone ruins. This might link to Engenas’ 1947 prophecy that he will make a turn around the mountain, on his return he will be a shorts-wearing, unmarried boy to be disregarded by many (Lekganyane, 2010e). What fascinates even more

is that apart from the fact that the current leader took over the *spiritual* leadership at the tender age of 13, one notes that he shares the swapped initials of the founding leaders: Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane (EB) to Barnabas Edward Lekganyane (BE). The question that arises is, are the two spiritually the same person? Definitely, the question cannot be answered by this literary study within limitations of its scope.

The first four lines of the penultimate stanza contrast two epochs the poet is said to have witnessed: Bishop Engenas' "passed" epoch and Bishop Edward's "present" epoch. He then submits his concern that people are swiftly summoned by death that brings uncertainty if they will live to witness the end of Bishop Edward's kingdom. His creativity is well displayed in how he consistently developed a strong imagery around the concept of death from line 39 to line 43:

Because people are summoned, summoned by death/The ever-spectator Death./ If death was an acquaintance, one would adorn it in branches while awaiting its arrival./ Pack baggage for the last departure,/ Singing *mpoho*, the new peaceful song/ A song free from lyrics. One is dazzled by lively imageries and a very engaging personification of death, a word that is paradoxically an antonym of such alive lines. More so, by the sustained polytonal musicality as seen in, among others, line 40 and 41 parallelism: *Lehu* madula a bogwa/ *Lehu* nkabe **le** tlwaelwa nkabe re **le** apare/a dikala. One further notes a syllabic-equilibrium caesura (//) before the second "nkabe," an approach we identified in line 43: Ra-bi-na-kgo-tso-m-po-ho//ra-bi-na-ko-ša-ye-n-tshwa (8).

45. *Edward Lekganyane*

46. *A o tla re rapelela go yo fihla le wena mafelelelong?*

47. *Ge e le mona re eja ke seja lehu madula a bogwa, Morena*

48. *Ge e le sebe mphapantšha se re fapantšha le wena morena wa Sione*

49. *Ge o re bileditše go loka se re ntšha lešakeng la gago*

50. *Mmušo wa gago morwa' Khutwane re be re o letetše kagosafelego*

51. *Empa ge e le lefase le re thetsitše*

52. *Le re fapantšha le wena morwa' Khutwane*

53. *Re a go rapela kgomo, re boloke ka go sa feleng.*

45. [Edward Lekganyane
46. Will you pray for us unto your end?
47. For have fallen prey to the eater the ever-spectated death, your Highness
48. As for the sin the separator, it separates us from you, Zion's Highness
49. When you call us for purification, it snatches us from your kraal
50. We have always awaited your kingdom
51. The world has tempted us
52. It led us astray from your path
53. We pray unto you, Cow, save us forevermore.]

The last stanza is more confrontational; the poet is no longer talking *about* but rather *to* Bishop Lekganyane. He seems to have lost his patience, taking advantage of his "poetic licence" to put authority under the spotlight. Early scholars have agreed that it is somewhat misleading to call *seretitumišo*, "a praise singer" because his duty is not limited to praising, he can also criticize. What was not said is that he also plays a role tantamount to that of a board of directors; he becomes an accounting authority that publicly holds chieftaincy accountable. Instead of requesting, Molelemanane, poses a public question to Bishop Edward if he will annoint him (and others) so that he can live to see the end of Edward's epoch. He follows his confrontational question with line 47 which echoes line 40's "*lehu madula a bogwa*," a repeat of refrain that incites deep emotions thereby thickening and intensifying the density of the poem's mood.

Line 48 to 52 are confessional, with the poet holding himself accountable, admitting that he failed to uphold his responsibility thus surrendered to the tempting world of sinful detours. He finally concludes with a plea to Bishop Edward, who is respectfully addressed with his totem of a cow, to bless them so that they could live beyond Bishop Edward's epoch. Rafapa, in his study, states that "[t]he praise singer, Petrus Molelemanane, lived from the days of the founder Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, through to Bishop Edward Lekganyane's reign, up to the early parts of Bishop Barnabas's period" (Rafapa, 2016:99). This means that Molelemanane's public request was granted thus in his recent composition, *Makgoka a kgokolla Ramarumo*, he says, "*ke kgale re go emetše*" translated, 'we are awaiting your arrival for such a long time.'

5.2.7. Variation of Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane

There are two recorded variations of the poem, *Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane*, the second which is dedicated to, is entitled, *Edward Lekganyane ke Ramarumo*. One might conclude that Edward in both the titles refers to the same person, but the praise name, “Ramarumo” attests to the fact that the latter refers to Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane. Both leaders share the name, Edward: Bishop Edward Engenas Lekganyane and Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane, yet the former’s praise is Ramapanta, and Ramarumo for the latter. This means both the *Thoko ya Meso* variation and the *Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane* variation were dedicated to the third generation of leadership. Let us interrogate his compositional approach on this variation:

1. *Re re ge e le ka direkto re a mo phopholetša*
2. *Ke Edward ke Morena Lekganyane*
3. *Ke Ramarumo*
4. *Ke Mohwaduba’ Mmaphaka’ Monare.*
5. *Re re a ratana marena bošego a etelana*
6. *Sephiring ke e kwele, ka mahlo ke e bone*
7. *Kgoši e apere lesaka e tšama itiya lenxa*
8. *E re batho re tshwenyegile re tshwentšwe ke pitša ye tala mafapanya*
9. *E re fapantšha le batswadi, phefo ye kgolo mahube*
10. *Ye e tšamago e kgobakantšha ditšhaba*
11. *Ditšhiwana ga re konege rena re kokobetše*
12. *Re emetše go phetha diporofeto dithabeng tša Sione*
13. *Gobane re mo dumetše motho yo ke yo moso Lekganyane*
14. *Ba bašweu ba etlišitše nnete ya mmakgodi ’a kgokgo.*

15. *Re re dumela Morena Lekganyane, Mohwaduba’ Maphaka’ Monare*
16. *Re re a o tla re goga go ba go re fihla mafelelong thabeng tša Sione*
17. *O re hlometše naledi dihubeng wa ba wa re hlomela diphatleng*
18. *Re re ba tšwago Lebowa, ba tšwago GaMamabolo Thabakgone*
19. *Ba feta ba bona naledi*
20. *Etlang le lena ditšhiwana mathaba nageng, mathaba le ile go diša*

21. *Re yo bona naledi Sione GaMamabolo leweng la Mmakubu*
22. *Naledi e dutše fase, leobu le fologile thabeng le fetogile mmala, morwa' Khutwane*
23. *Re a go leboga kgomo, Mohwaduba' Maphaka' Monare*
24. *O re goge ka o sa feleng wena Sebata se bolelago ditaba tše lokilego*

25. *Re re hlaba letšatši le legolo magoletša le legodimo,*
26. *Letšatši mahloka sereto;*
27. *Letšatši o senyetša batho boroko*
28. *Mola e se ke ya ba wena Kgomo batho bana nkabe re ithobaletše,*
29. *Go buša bošego bja ga malala a putuka*
30. *Bošego bja go re bo esa lefsifi ka katakata ntweng.*
31. *Nto ye nngwe e etla*
32. *Ke nto ye e se nago lebitšo,*
33. *Ke yona mantšhekgedile wa bošego le mosegare,*
34. *Ke nto ya go ja bana le batho*
35. *Yo e tlogo mo feta o tla ba le lehlogonolo,*
36. *Ena o tla dula le badimo eupša badimo ba sa dule le motho.*

37. *A wena Sathane o tla thetsa mang gobane rena batho re beile naledi*
38. *Re re re katologe o re fe sebaka re ye go Ramarumo*
39. *Ramarumo o re biletša go loka o re biletša thabeng tša Sione*
40. *Ke kgathong sa magoši*
41. *Leweng la Mmakubu k emo re yago go ikhutša gona*
42. *Re yo ikhutša go Sebata se fologilego lewatle*
43. *Re a go leboga Kgomo Mohwaduba' Maphaka' Monare*
44. *Thobela, Morena!*

The poem is a patch poem, or a collage that consists of four parts. Apart from the additional line 3, lines between line 1 to line 14 are from Bishop Edward's poem, Sereto sa Bishop Edward Lekganyane. Line 15 to line 24 is a newly composed stanza, whereas line 25 to line 36 is a stanza from Bishop Engenas's poem, Thoko ya Meso. Then line 37 to line 44, is a newly composed stanza. Considering his age at the time he composed the variations for the third

generation of leadership, one might conclude that he was gradually losing his creative grip. This approach, however, does not fall under template poet, nor translate to crossreferencing. Both the poems he cited are written by the poet, they are not “passed down from generation to generation.” Apart from age of Molelemanane, environment counts to the poet’s compositional density and intensity. The fact the the two former poems were written in the holy place, might mean his creativity was approached through spiritual intelligence. As André Guillaume Gide (2017) puts it, “Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better.” This means the state of asceticism during his stay in Moria enabled Molelemanane to contribute less to his artistic collaboration with God. Variations were composed during his continuation of his service as the supreme *ntona* and as a political activist, positions that require a high level of spiritual maturity for one to maintain his inner peace and oneness with the Spirit. This then says, Molelemanane has not written this as an original personal poem for Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, and Molelemanane has passed the baton and torch to the new generation of poets within the ZCC.

5.3. Motšha Motimele

5.3.1. Background

Molelemanane and Motimele are the two poets whose poetic works were recorded first on vinyl in 1960s. The latter’s poem, *Re emetše go lotšha*, was an event-based narrative poem and more of a travel account thus its analysis relies heavily on the cultural and geographic context. Motimele’s poem was excluded in the collection that comprised the 1960s recordings. His descriptive poetry is not only a rare heritage wealth, but it offers a historic perspective of unrecorded trips the leadership of the church travelled outside the borders of the country. Just like Molelemanane, Motimele’s first name does not appear on the vinyl, yet in the poem he refers to himself as Motšha. His biographic background creates an immediate scholarly opportunity for researchers of *kiba* poetry.

5.3.2. Re emetše go Lotšha

The following poem is a dedication to Bishop Edward Lekganyane, the second generation of the church’s leadership. Bishop Edward, in the poem, is referred to as “Charlie,” an unpopular, if not unknown name. It is only the phrase, “Morwa Makgoka” (Makgoka’s son) that ultimately confirmed that the poem is dedicated to him. Makgoka is Bishop Engenas’s praise.

Considering other names attributed to him such as Ruben Talane and his Durban pseudonym, “John Molepo,” one could only speculate that “Charlie” could have been one of those unofficial names.

1. *Re emetše go lotšha, re a go dumediša morena Lekganyane*
2. *Ge e le bodumedi ke kahlolo go bohle ba tsebago nnete ya Modimo*
3. *Ra sepela ra fihlela Setele re etšwa fase ga bomorwa Maboela Mokgatša*
4. *Ke moo re hweditšego Mokgatla a bolela sehebehebe*
5. *A re hee Charlie o rutile segole go bula molomo.*

6. *Re fetile Bokgatla ra boela Bokwena*
7. *Ke naga ya lešwana lekitimaphuthi*
8. *Ke lešwana la bommathari’a lesea*
9. *Motse’a Makgabatlane re letše ga tee ra feta,*
10. *Tholo e bua dipuo e re porofetela ditsela*
11. *A re tiišeng go rapela mmušo wa dikgomo o thibile lewatile*
12. *Motho wa Bopedi ke gotše ke tšwella Botšhabela*
13. *Ke Motšha motho wa boMakau wa lewatile.*

1. [We are here to hail, to salute Lekganyane, the Highness
2. As for religion is but judgement to all those who know God’s truth
3. We arrived at Setele from the valley of Mokgatša, Maboela’s son
4. That is where we found a Mokgatla whispering
5. Saying Charles taught the dumb to gape.

6. We passed through Bokgatla reverted via the Bokwena,
7. A green duiker grazing land
8. Greener than a baby-sling
9. Ours was an overnight visit at Makgabatlane’s place
10. Kudu communing issues, foretelling our journey
11. Let’s persistently prayer, cows’ kingdom is overcasting the ocean
12. As for me, I was bred in Bopedi, grew up on my way from the East

13. I am Motšha of the oceanic Makau.]

After hailing his Highness Lekganyane, which is referred to Bishop Edward, the subsequent line swiftly becomes somewhat confessional yet in an abstract and philosophic manner: expressing how by virtue of being a Christian one has no excuse to justify their sins. Taking into consideration line 5, one can interpret line 2 as a poet admitting that he is one of those who already know of the healing powers of the Bishop Edward thus it is based on such knowledge that he will be judged. About limitations of the term, *thetotumišo*, Mazisi Kunene (1970:13) reminds us how exchangeable are the words, praise and condemn, that *seretitumišo* “praise socially approved acts, but [also] condemn socially repugnant ones as well.” Narrative mood is then noticed from line 3 where a poet describes a long trip from the land of Mokgatša (Maboela’s son) to Setele, in Botswana, he travelled as part of Bishop Edward’s entourage. He further speaks to conspiracy that resulted after he healed the dumb.

In the second stanza, his account is descriptive and he paints a picture of the rich wildlife of Botswana with the word “*lekitimaphuthi*,” showing the free sprints of duikers as a resemblance of tranquillity of both Bokgatla and Bokwena (Land of the Crocodiles). He then reports a miracle witnessed during their overnight stay at Makgabatlane where a kudu prophesied to them, predicting their way onwards. In African languages, including Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa, an animal’s name can be employed in four contexts: literally denotation, metaphoric connotation, and as a totem or a praise name. At times more than one connotation can be ambiguously used. A kudu in line 10 can, therefore, literally imply (1) a kudu crossed their way and they interpreted it as an omen saying something about where they are heading. It can metaphorically mean (2) someone with a stature of physique that resembles or can be compared to that of a kudu, or lastly (3) that a person whose totem is a kudu, or (4) whose praise name is kudu. Although the poem is in Sepedi, a borrowed “*boa dipuo*” mimics the language which “kudu” of (in Botswana) was communing in, i.e., Setswana. He therefore encourages other adherents to pray harder since the realm of the cows (totem of the Lekganyanes) overcast the ocean. This metaphor reflects the earlier prophecies that the ZCC will outgrow the Africa boaders.

He concludes the second stanza with a self-praise, explaining that he is from the eastern Bopedi, he's Motšha of the oceanic Makau, legitimizing himself through the marine metaphor which suggests how related or relevant he is to the Lekganyane realm which is going to overcast the *ocean* and he is himself a relative to the *oceanic* Makau.

14. *Ga ke rete ke a rapela*
15. *Le ge ke bitša thaba ya Mmakau'a Bokgatla*
16. *Le noka ya mmu o montši Pelane*
17. *Ya noka madibeng'a Bokwena*
18. *Mo gona ke ganne ge ba re yo yena ke motho wa hloba marena boroko*
19. *Empa nna ka re re mmitša Charlie thaba ye kgolo*
20. *Kgomo ya go rwala megono*
21. *Re a go lotšha Mabuša ka boswa Morwa Makgoka mošikara thupa diaatla*
22. *Ke Mogolo godumo meetse a Mogobe mahlatswa ditšhila*
23. *Ge e le yena tšhaba di mo hloile*
24. *Mme ke nyenyena morwa mathea ka meetse le mollo morena Lekganyane.*

14. [I am not reciting, but rather praying
15. Although I call upon Bokgatla's Mt. Mmakau
16. Calling upon a soil-filled Pelane river
17. A crocodiles-infested river
18. I disagree when they alleged him for a troublemaker hooligan
19. I said I call him Charles the mighty mountain
20. A peaceful cow
21. We hail you who governs afresh, Makgoka's son the ruler
22. The mighty Mogodumo River of sin rinsing water
23. As for him, he's hated by many
24. He is indeed the Lekganyane's legatee, the one who fish through water and fire.]

Although the poet gave a narrative and descriptive account on Botswana Mountains and rivers, he contends that his is not a narrative poem but rather a prayer. Similar to secular kiba poets, he rejects the poet title by calling his poem a prayer. Those who conspire about Bishop

Edward, the poet claims, depict him as a hooligan of sorts, yet contrary to this the poet knows him to be might-mountain still, a peaceful cow (totem) which governs afresh, a rightful ruler who purifies like the great waters of Mogobe River. He concludes that no matter how reviled Bishop Edward may be he remains the father of water and fire, connoting that he remains the one spiritually chosen.

25. Mola a Charlie nna re a go rapela o tshetše noka ya Mmila motšeela ruri

26. Ke modubedube ke modubakantšha ditšhaba

27. Hee Charlie ke moduba wa go tseba godimo

28. Motho ona ke motho wa go lwa le sebe bošego

29. Marobathota a poo mošola wa Marotheng

30. Gobane Legodimo le a bula re bone o bula Thabakgone

31. Tše ke taba tša sephiri re dio seba lena Mailakolobe.

25. [Charles we beg of you to cross us over Mmila River the great sweeper

26. He is the kneader he agitates nations

27. Oh Charles the agitator who knows the heaven

28. This person is a nocturnal sin-wrestler

29. Bull of the Marobathota across the Marotheng

30. The establishment of Thabakgone testified that heaven is about to open

31. These are whispered secrets about you, pork-abstainer.]

The fourth stanza leaps from narrative to pure *thetotumišo* form where a direct praise is made without elaborate referrals to particular events. The Mmila River as a metaphor of difficulties is employed, and Bishop Edward is assistance in overcoming what it is that is requested. This is followed by an excellent parallelism of line 26 and 27 which explores the assonance resulting from extension of a verb into a noun and description: “Ke *modubedube* ke *modubakantšha* ditšhaba/ Hee Charlie ke *moduba* wa go tseba godimo” with an effective caesura in line 26 after “modubedube,” creating a staccato rhythm that enhances its seasonal musicality. Parallelism, according to J.A. Cuddon is “phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other” (Cuddon, 1999:637). He

further identifies Langland, T.S. Eliot, D H Lawrence and Walt Whitman as some of the poets who often uses this technique.

In line 27, Bishop Edward is said to know heaven. This can, to an extent, be linked to the 1932 event of “Mokgalabje Madiga” who returned from heaven where he met Reverend Engenas who was the “*Mminintšere*” (Manager), and went to Thabakgone to narrate this before he could finally rest the following day (Masenya, n.d.). Furthermore, in 1947 Reverend Engenas Lekganyane said he will take a trip to heaven and on his return the church will have three times its then strength. This might mean that Bishop Edward too was accustomed to heaven, but the poet suggests on line 31 that this might be a spiritual revelation to a poet thus he loudly “whispers”.

32. Mokgoši wo o lla go o lla o bega Mohlala mogakabadiša, tabogamadibogo

33. O bega motho wa Bobopedi moapara makgobe

34. Ga go tsibišwe Mamabolo goba gona mminakgomo o sekela borena nageng

35. Ge e le mongadi o ngadile setulo o kgethile lerole.

32. [The sounding yell announces Mohlala the headers-puzzler, the early sprinter

33. It announces a person from Bopedi, custodian of a tiger-skin

34. Inform Mamabolo that Cow-venerate is trailed for leadership

35. The short-tempered left the throne for dust.]

In the fifth stanza the poet reverts to a narrative form where he narrates an event whereby chief Mohlala confronted chief Mamabolo that the crux of the allegation against Bishop Edward is but a leadership one and nothing else. He however reports that Bishop Edward has forsaken his throne and needs to start afresh. This still re-echoes the leadership dispute mentioned in the third stanza. However, it can ambiguously reflect the conflict between chief Mamabolo and Reverend Lekganyane, which partly led to Reverend Engenas’ migration.

36. Nna re thabela bana ba mminakgomo

37. Mohwaduba o theile ka naka o phalafadisha mokokotlo

38. Sekopo sa bona ge se lla se re tiiša matswalo

39. *Ke bana ba thakga bja mahlo tshega*
 40. *Gabo mahlo ka bogela ka tlogela koma nageng*
 41. *Mahlo ke boga mollo wa kganya mogotšwa ke badimo le batho*
 42. *Ke badumedi batho ba pelo dinolo*
 43. *Ke pheku mothiba marumo mokakatelela thapo marung*
 44. *Leru la duma pula e na ka go sega.*

36. [We are grateful for children of the cow-venerator
 37. Mohwaduba who is strengthened by spine-shivering steel-pipes
 38. When pounding their drum, conscience is shaken
 39. Kids whose beauty tickles the eye
 40. Or if seen by the eye, one leaves initiation in the field
 41. Watching the gleaming fire prepared by the living and the dead
 42. These are religious and so soft are their hearts
 43. The sacred bone, spear-shield, the one holding a rope at the sky
 44. Should the cloud thunder, cutting rain might fall.]

The sixth stanza has a historic reflection further attesting to Prins' view (Rafapa, 2016:98) that one should not presume serial time when dealing with oral tradition of different people. The ZCC brass band (pipes) is depicted using the epoch of Reverend Engenas when it was played predominantly by his children whose musical expertise are highly acclaimed by the poet, especially the drum-beat that spiritually fingers the soul. Line 41, "*Mahlo ke boga mollo wa kganya mogotša ke badimo le batho*" re-echoes line 24, which regards Bishop Edward as '*mathea ka meetse le mollo*'. The concept of "water and fire" speaks to two foundational events, which is the Reverend Engenas' vision to establish the church, and the possible inferred meteor. The vision spoke of river-baptism church, whereas the star's gleam is brighter than fire.

45. *A re mo lotšheng ke hlare setala se a tuka*
 46. *Ke legala lefsiša moswari motliša ditaba*
 47. *Motšhaba dibe ipolele mola re tlile thaba ya Moria serollong sa mafelelo*
Thabakgone

48. *Ke thaba ya sephiri ya ga Mamabolo.*

45. [Let us hail him he is an aflame green tree

46. The alight amber, red-hot coal that burns the messenger

47. Sin-hater, confess, here we are at Mt. Zion the last cornerstone of Thabakgone

48. A scared mountain of Mamabolo.]

The poet, in line 45, claims that Bishop Edward is what is deemed by many to be impossible. The metaphor of an aflame green or wet tree emanates from the biblical burning tree seen by Moses (scripture). Line 46 speaks of how uneasy and challenging being a spiritual messenger can be, a good example being of prophets who before conveying prophecies they are usually “burnt” by an unpleasant pushing desire that if not attended to can result into negative physical consequences. Moria as a sacred cornerstone is, in line 47, a place that requires purity. More like the biblical River Jordan that requires confession before being crossed; in the context of Moria, Jordan is the River Kwenane, which according to the general practice within the church, confession is required before crossing the Kwenane, a river crossed before entering the Zion City Moria. In the article, *Navigated by the Star of Mount Zion*, Lesiba Matlala argues that we are “imperfect descendants of Adam” and “[n]one of us is immune of temptation, and given the right situation you and I are capable of any sin.” Thus “[i]t is because of the degree of human error that God requires us to confess whenever we behave in whatever way that deviates from pure ministerial expectations.” “Confession,” he therefore concludes, “restores our relationship with God” (Matlala, 2009:38).

49. *Hleng motšhetšha tšhemo o a itšhetšhele*

50. *O tšhetšha a goletša mollo majang*

51. *Mootlwa o se wa nhlaba hlokamaatla*

52. *Dumela gee mmuša ka boswa morwa Makgoka senamela sephula naga maroba*

53. *O nametše selo sa maoto a go gabagabetša*

54. *Ge a feta Polokwane tau le phiri di thekgile mego*

55. *Khomišinare ya bala menwana*

56. *A re re tla ba ke ge Charley ka letsogo o swere legodimo*

57. *Wa feta ka go fetša letswalelatsela*

58. *Mola Sione ga re a tla go bonwa le ge e le go bogwa*

49. [Why is it that the cleaner of a garden is cleaning for themselves?

50. Cleaning while fuelling thier own fire with grass

51. The strength-barren thorn meant to pierce me failed,

52. Then hail Makgoka's son, the new governor, and earth holing rider

53. Drifting on a wheeled thing

54. While passing at Polokwane a lion and a jackal where holding tears

55. The Commissioner counting using his fingers

56. He said they are shocked that Charles is on his palm holding the heaven

57. When you pass through, you close the road

58. In Zion we are not here to be seen or to be arrogant.]

The following parallelism of line 49 and 50, and their *tšh*- resonance is of high literary merit, "Hleng mottšhetšha tšhemo o a itšhetšhela/ O tšhetšha a goletša mollo majang." This might also speak to the concept of "*go kgopela merapelo ya matsogo*" (to request blessing through offering volunteerism) which in this context means when one offers his volunteerism to the church, in return they reserve blessings for themselves. Thus, the poet acknowledges protective blessings he himself received, resulting in "*mootlwa o se wa nhlaba hlokamaatla*," meaning what was meant to hurt him failed. "*Senamela sephula-naga-maroba*" interpreted as "earth-holing-rider" and "a wheeled thing" refers to a vehicle Bishop Edward owned. Metaphor of lion and jackal on line 54 depicts apartheid police and army members who witnessed the ZCC collapsing the anti-ethnic-interaction vision of the apartheid system through multitudes of multi-ethnic pilgrims converging to the ZCC, multitudes whose high quantity is depicted by the Commissioner counted using fingers and subsequently admitted that Bishop Edward "has heaven in his palm." The Zion City Moria pilgrimage, the poet cautions, is a festivity of glorification of God and not a social get-together.

5.4. Conclusion

Molelemane's poetry is the epitome of poetry at its best. From technique, form, and content, he is indisputably unmatched. His epoch-making poetry is timeless, answering as to why it remains the poetic face of the ZCC half a decade after its composition. His work is highly

metaphorical, at times personal, confessional and confrontational. Within the religious margins, black pride and black consciousness reflect in his poetic wealth of historic and religious significance. The poet occasionally inserts himself into the narrative. He generally did not employ codeswitching yet he employed borrowed words from other languages such as *tebernikela* for the English, tabernacle. His religious content and context is nothing short of socio-political relevance. Molelemane's poetry explores real events, historic facts, and prophetic dreams, not *aleatory* lines as already generally argued about praise poetry in African languages. His work is free from *amphiboly*, that is, ambiguity produced either by grammar looseness or by double meaning. Self-reflection is evident in his *thetetumišo, kiba* poet's functionalities include holding himself accountable. A public prosecutor who first prosecutes himself.

Molelemane's rich metaphors are not always easily accessible, sometimes they are complex. Handling such stylistic peculiarities can at times be a momentous task, especially with limited context. Complexity of his simple metaphor often requires a high level of analytic vigilance and acumen. The essence of his poetry is, however, in all its multiple layers, both the connotation and denotation embodies an independent and unique beauty such that even without grasping the connotation, one can still enjoy a poem on its denotation level. Even the most obscure of connotations has a layer of face-value richness in its denotation expression, especially in the artistry of how words lay or lean on each other, and the musical effect they produce. Meaning and message, therefore, are not limited to the decoded world of figurative language. His message is generally uncensored, he intuitively responds to general and personal concerns, expressing his subjective views unapologetically. Although they are in the religious realm, his poems challenge and commend the nature of socio-political issues, especially the earlier tension between AICs and other social structures such as the missionary establishments, chiefdoms, and political movements.

In terms of literary techniques, Mohlala is unmatched. Out of all poets I explored, he remains distinctly unparalleled. He does not employ techniques merely for the sake of technique; every featured element speaks to the other. Visuals of his imageries are concrete and of high resolution to the mind, sometimes descriptive, if not symbolic or evocative. He employs extraordinary imageries of "out-of-this-world" metaphors yet artistically imbuing them with

tangible lived-experience which feel in the most unpretentious and authentic. His dense and condensed lines of diction holds the elegance of his compositional style, mainly enriched with compound words and praise terminology. Incomparable is Molelemané's musicality and prosody, falsifying the fallacy that oral poetry in African languages is limited and predictable. This poetry is a perfect synthesis of rhythm, rhyme, repetitive melody and reason, producing a magical harmony of unsystematic sound patterns of both monotonous and fluctuating musicality, generally rooted on a creative application of resonance, assonance and alliteration. What captivates more is how rhyme, rhythm, and reason are persistently of high quality, without any of the three lacking in intensity. The flexible syllabic scheme produces a moving staccato beat, especially with occasionally featured syllabic-equilibrium caesura. Musicality is incredibly sustained throughout each poem. Paradox and oxymoron are coated with humour if not irony, and personification is a common feature as shown in this chapter. Metaphoric humour finds its way into serious poems. His lines are sometimes idiotic and ambiguous, sometimes lyrical and applying the art of not naming. His heavy mood is often lightened by euphemism.

The practice of monasticism is a source of creative retreat that inspires prophetic and unmatched soulful poetry of high density. Martin Marty in D Jeffrey Bingham says, "Christians found many ways to express their separation" and "[f]or some, holiness was to be found in the attempt at complete isolation and removal from the world" (Bingham, 2002:54-5). Notably, it was only during Molelemané's stay at Moria, the ZCC pilgrimage, that he produced his best poetic works. Although he was not a complete hermit or anchorite, but Moria has a sense of disconnection from the rest of the world, resulting in asceticism or a solitary effect. Monasticism is a retreat that put more concentration of spiritual re-birth. As observed by Ora Grodsky and Jeremy Phillips, such a retreat aids one to, "find a compelling purpose" (Grodsky & Phillips, 2012:2) and "bring out the best thinking" (Grodsky & Phillips, 2012:5).

There is no evidence of Petrus Molelemané's compositional methodology. It is, however, problematic to limit definition of oral form to "what is composed in rather than for performance," due to its exclusion. Even those who compose for performance use the same intuitive approach in their preparatory process. Albert Lord's exclusive definition might lead to an assumption that orality and improvisation are two words referring to the same thing.

His poetry was not, by any chance, handed down from generation to generation since it speaks of specifics, starting from the first generation of the ZCC leadership. Subsequent poems are only influenced by the previous since they speak to individuals who descend from the “previous.” The only commonality in *Thoko ya Meso* and *Sereto sa Bishop Edward* are praise names: “Mohwaduba’a Maphaka’a Bomonare,” “Morena Lekganyane” and “kgomo” totem, the rest remain independent and innovative. Although this might look like an oeuvre of Molelemane’s work, there is still a lot to be explored about him and his work, thus further scholarship on him is encouraged. Given all these, it is then safe to claim that artistic quality and creativity of Petrus Molelemane’s poetry were not only exceptional, but they still outshine the written poetry by some of those regarded as the forerunners in the poetic fraternity today.

The most complex of Motimele’s lines are tight on both the denotative and the connotative level. There are parts that require contextual background for one to gain meaning to the specifics, especially when he narrates journeys he embarked on with Bishop Edward. Like any strong poetry, its essence is not limited to meaning, or specificity. The aerial grasp of motions and actions is poetically vivid so that one can still put colour to the picture without exact details. His metaphors are occasionally scattered like crackers, exploding this way and that. Sometimes he makes it clear that his poem is not necessarily meant for an audience but rather for the subject, deliberately keeping particular information discreet and following it with a disclaimer that the information is meant to be decoded only by the poem’s subject, saying, “*Tše ke taba tša sephiri re dio seba lena Mailakolobe*” (line 31). His poetry is partly testimonial, partly confessional, and narrative with a larger part being *thetotumišo* that is nothing short of socio-political remarks. He also cites the Mamabolo polity conflict. His narration has multiple voices that are somewhat dramatic. His flow and rhythm has a rap-like approach, with long sentences before taking a breath, sometimes adding a strategic staccato beat. When he narrates about their stay in Botswana, he occasionally codeswitches to Setswana. Scenic descriptions and graphic narratives in Motimele’s poetry is exceptionally exquisite.

This chapter has presented *Kiba* poets and performers in context, as well as an in-depth analysis of their poetry in relation to the ZCC. The chapter that follows provides a general conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter 6: General Conclusion

Decolonisation, the African Renaissance and the revival of Afrocentric aesthetics come with both societal and individual responsibility to restore that which is lost or to guard that which is under threat. As Thabo Mbeki rightfully asserts, the African Renaissance can only be realized through, among others, mainstreaming of indigenous artistic assets and heritage of the continent. The African Union's African Aspirations for 2063 include development of a "strong cultural identity and common heritage," which speaks to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's SDG 11, Target 11.4 also stipulates the pressing need to "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage." This can only be achieved if, and when, attention is given to the micro-level areas that eventually form the ultimate. Scientific intelligence, as already argued by other scholars, will not bring society together. "Culture is embedded in a language" (Maahlamela, 2014), more so, literature embodies, represents and projects people's language and culture.

Slow development of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa language and its literature emanates mostly for overreliance on others, instead of constituencies taking conscious responsibility to recover, treat, nurture, intellectualize, and preserve literary and linguistic heritage. As business propositions, both the publishing and recording industries were never in the business of growing literature and languages, but in the business of branding names and labels for commercial exploitation, the business of king-making thus, and door-keeping has always been an effective tool in guarding the ideal and monopoly capital. The Parliamentary Review Committee needs to realize that the pending status of the Sepedi vs Sesotho sa Leboa dispute (as presented in chapter 1 of this thesis) is more detrimental to the language development than the dispute itself. As pointed out in the study, both names are illegitimate thus, a resolution should be taken on the basis of what is best for the future of the language. The language's interest should, therefore, supersede the individual's or particular groups' interest.

The oral poetry of Matlala on England's Queen Elizabeth II reveals that Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry was never limited to "local knowledge," meaning, to "people's conceptions and perceptions of themselves and their situation in society and history" (Coplan, 1988:337). This, however, is the epitome and essence of *kiba* poetry, which is not only an egocentric reflection,

but it also pushes language and cultural frontiers to the limits in incorporating and accommodating acculturated development and growth. Although no direct contrast was done due to limitations, one can speculate that at its best *kiba* poetry is richer than written poetry in the language. In fact, the written is inspired by, borrows from, or is enriched by, the oral. A deliberate cultivation of *kiba* poetry will, therefore, influence and support the growth of the written.

The poetry of Petrus Moleleman and Johannes Mohlala presented in this thesis is epitome of poetic excellence. This means in addition to cultural and historic significance, *kiba* poetry holds the competitive wealth of artistic and creative merit. Both Moleleman and Mohlala's poetry attests to the fact that "praise poems [and other indigenous poetic forms] have all the qualities of European poetry" (Moloto, 1970:21), which is not to suggest that African poetry is an extension of European poetry. Johannes Mohlala and Petrus Moleleman have given to poetry what O.K. Matsepe has given to prose, a new face.

Furthermore, it embodies, among others, poetic genres rarely explored in the South African poetry milieu such as *sound poetry* and metrical schemes yet the latter is not necessarily a defining factor and essence of *kiba* poetry. *Kiba* poetry's artistic wealth is elaborate and explored in this thesis, including its distinctive features for which *sound poetry* is the most incredible and absent in the South African poetry milieu. This poetic genre is irreducible to a written form because the same sound's meaning can vary with variation in mood, tone, expressions and so forth. *Sound poetry* of *mpoho* and *nkedi* does not embellish a song with idiophone. Unlike in their various applications where idiophones mostly fill up rhythmic gaps, in *mpoho* and *nkedi* idiophones are the essential aspect that holds the venerated poetic body together. The venerated poetry highly relies on the rhythmic pattern and a steady clapping tempo for its intensity. It is, therefore, improper to evaluate one independently from the other.

Kiba poetry constitutes a cultural system, yet it stretches further beyond sheer entertainment or conversation between the living. In its Afrocentric religious context, it is a prayer, prophecy, healing tool, more significantly, a language to commune with the unworldly Supreme. Through spiritual intelligence and spiritual power, *kiba* poetry is able to be at one with the

Supreme, a process that physiologically closes the cleavage between self and the Supreme, conscious and subconscious, or arts and religion. *Kiba* poetry permeates spirituality of Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa in all its forms and mediums, thus spiritual density sometime reflects in a poet's creativity and artistry since spirituality by definition, means additional sources beyond one's cognitive capability. *Kiba* poetry holds spiritual significance, distinctly illustrating that poetry is not religion, yet it realizes its unlimited efficiency in religion where it serves as a highly mystical vehicle that transcends beyond the worldly horizons. It is therefore accurate to say that what is regarded as the (secular) arts is in fact spiritual language tamed, hence its absorption into the spiritual ZCC as outlined in this thesis.

Poetry as spirituality is not a new phenomenon in the South African oral poetry trajectory, although it was somewhat depicted to be limited to African Traditional Religion. In written Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poetry, there is insufficient expression of religion. If, and when explored, it is mostly as a symbolic, exclamatory referrals, or metaphor. Spirituality is rarely expressed in its totality as an entity on its own. Conversely, oral poetry, *kiba* poetry in particular, is rooted in religion, not as an abstract façade but it is explored in its specificity. Mapaya (2013) and Rafapa (2016) have demonstrated that *kiba* and *kiba* poetry exists in the ZCC. I took it further to demonstrate the extent of its functionality. Mutual influence between secular *kiba* and the ZCC *kiba*, attest to the fact that the *kiba* artform is actually a societal bridge as opposed to a societal demarcation. This then demystifies the floating hypothesis that the ZCC views *kiba* as a pagan artform, but more so, it attests to the fact that without *kiba* the ZCC is indeed incomplete. Notably, AICs in general, and the Zion Christian Church in particular, are indeed cultural pillars and reservoirs of endangered ancient artforms, thus for one to achieve holistic findings of any community's cultural mapping, AICs need to be considered.

In *Bohlale bja Semoya* (spiritual intelligence), we learn that a person who have mastered *Bosione* (spiritual maturity) leads as a servant leader. The same attribute reflects in *kiba* poets who generally avoid the title of a poet, remaining ordinary in the face of their extraordinary artistry. There is, in fact, a shared ideological outlook of humanness and modesty between *kiba* poets and *Bosione* in general. The environment contributes to the muse of a poet, more so, the poet's chief inspiration is in nature. Spiritual intelligence plays a defining role in one's

creative process. As seen in Molelemane's case study in this thesis, his creative impulse was incredible when he was in monasticism in Moria where he composed two evergreen poems that became, and continues being poetic anthems of the ZCC. Conversely, his afterward compositions after he left Moria did not match the standard of the former.

Three crucial areas that require attention in the expansion of poetry in Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa is transcription of oral literature, nurturing women poets, and growing the art of translation. The creative and artistic impulse of *kiba* poetry comes from the rural hinterlands of Limpopo. In addition to digitalization and transcription of *kiba* poetry at the SABC library and ILAM, there is a tenacious prerequisite for a transcription flagship of current *kiba* poetry in the rural areas such as GaMolepo, Moletji, Bochum, Botlokwa, GaModjadji and various parts of GaSekhukhune. If matriarchies, not patriarchies, are organic clan poets, then deliberate efforts should be taken to unearth women *diretitemišo*. If the 1940-born Kgoto Welminah Masemola, a Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa poet, has become the first ever woman poet countrywide to open the National Assembly Chamber since 1994, surely there are many other Masemolas awaiting developmental platforms. Translation is a pivotal tool in intellectualising a language. Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, for instance, was originally written in Bengali, and it is its translation that positioned him to finally be the first non-European recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

For any culture to grow and prosper, one has to borrow from, or emulate other developed cultures, yet in the process, maintain their original identity. This study demonstrates this point through the three case studies that are presented. The written Sepedi poetry has been a realm led by purism, where borrowing was deemed to indicate a lack of authenticity. This has mainly led to lack of innovation, resulting in paucity of leisure readership. Conversely, the secular *kiba* artform allowed and encouraged borrowing, but in the process, the original version was neglected, resulting in *kiba* creative destruction. Thirdly, creative variations of *kiba* performative-prayer in the ZCC were encouraged yet stringent measures were taken to maintain the original form, as a result, there are more than twenty *mpoho* variations yet autonomy is still granted to the original version.

The study proves that Bapedi/Basotho ba Leboa benefited immensely from eclecticism, and that acculturation is not all evil as generally depicted in African studies. Parallel to illuminating unexplored areas of *kiba* poetry, the study offers a critical perspective that acculturation becomes an enemy when it is, directly or indirectly, imposed; when it takes place at the expense of the authentic original, and when it does not empower the authentic original to flourish and expand its horizons. In the process of eclecticism, defining elements of the original culture need not be bastardized. In the context of *kiba*, exquisite *kiba* poetry should not get lost in lofty and sublime language.

This thesis shows that the *Kiba* artform is a multidimensional and cohesive intersection that, among many, combines cultures, languages, and spirituality. Acculturated German autoharp, Scottish kilt, and its multilingualism is further complemented by the actual synergy of cultural expressions inclusive of other national artistic practises. Overemphasis on labour migratory aspects of *kiba* might intuitively depict a monolithic functionality, which is to “combine modern work-related sources of identity with apparently backward-looking celebrations of traditional behaviour” (James, 1997:475). More so, the *kiba* artform is not “a primitive dance done by uneducated people only” (Kruger, 1999:143), but rather a cultural medium of communication, which entails societal impression and self-expression. It is therefore an insult to African culture, and ourselves, to reduce *kiba* artform to a Heritage Day window-dressing. The importance of this tradition is now embedded in human spirituality as shown in this thesis.

Since this study did not aim or claim to be exhaustive, further investigations are recommended, especially regarding the untreated poetry of Johannes Mohlala, or other aspects of Petrus Molelemane’s multidimensional poetry. Of most significance could be exploring uncultivated works of pioneering *kiba* poets such as Mokgwadi, Rammutla or Malamba, and their successors such as Alex Mathunyane, Mokone, Ramatlhodi, and so forth. One can also narrow it to *kiba* poetry in *dinaka* groups of a particular place, this can include the vibrant *kiba* movement of various parts of Gauteng. Philip Tabane’s transcription also remains untreated. New transcription could give insight into possible new trends. Capable institutions should partner with the SABC in digitalising *kiba* poetry and the other wealth of oral tradition which is about to corrode at the Polokwane SABC library. The same holds for

Hugh Tracey's collection at ILAM in Grahamstown (although this is now being digitalised), and Percival Kirby's collection at the University of Cape Town. There many untreated *kiba* poetry research projects to advance, broaden and sustain this field of study and to add a meaningful contribution in the growth of poetry in this "nameless language."

This thesis presents an attempt to contextualise the Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa *kiba* tradition as one that is worthy of original intellectual study, as part of the literary intellectualisation of African languages. This thesis suggests that if this is not done, then South Africa's rich literary tapestry will forever be incomplete.

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