

**The Dialectic between the West and Africa: A Deconstructive approach to  
Ntšeliseng 'Masechele Khaketla's works.**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

I wish to thank my supervisor Professor Moleleki Moleleki for guiding me untiresomely with regard to this study. Second I thank my parents, Blandina 'Makose and Lazarus Sehlabo Monyakane for their encouragement and undying support throughout my studies. I also dedicate the study to my son 'Maseribana Duncan Tšepo.

### **Acknowledgement**

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to show that the writers of Sesotho literature works would like to promote either Western or African views at a time. However the underlying reading of the works of Sesotho literature demonstrates the unintended interpretation of the Western or African views. The Mosotho author might intend to explore the Western views in a Sesotho literary work. However the readers could possibly find Western and African views that are opposed to each other existing in the Sesotho work of literature.

The missionaries printed and sold *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* Khaketla (1954) because it promoted the Western beliefs in the form of Christianity. The practice of praying is an example of Christian ways in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. Nevertheless, the underlying reading about praying in this work of literature reminds Basotho readers of their original Sesotho ways of praying. Secondly, when the Oxford University Press published *'Mantsopa* Khaketla (1963) in the apartheid era, the intention was to print the language which had simple interpretations like jokes for the Basotho school children. These would help them learn simple reading and writing because they are part of their language. The underlying reading in poems like “Sekotompana” is that the character ‘Sekotompana’ depicts the practice of discrimination between the poor and the rich in a society. This idea reflects a political Western ideology.

*Sedibelo sa nkgono* Khaketla (1996) in the post-colonial era attempts to reassert the qualities that make up Africans and their culture. But the Western culture resurfaces in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Purpose of the research

Writers and publishers promote Western or African views in different eras of the development of Sesotho literature.

The aim of this study is to find out whether Sesotho literature reflects Western or African views that the writers and publishers promoted in different eras of its development.

There are previous studies on the above topic in Sesotho literature. These find expression in Selepe's (1997) "Some implications of Media, Policy and Ethics in Literary Production: A Preliminary Survey of Sesotho"; Darthone's (1975) "African Literature in the Twentieth Century" and Swannepoel's (1985) "Evolution of Genres in Southern Sotho literature". The contribution of this literature mentions in passing either the Western or African perspectives that the publishers and writers promote in Sesotho literary texts. The present study will focus on Khaketla's works: *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* (1954), *'Mantsopa* (1963) and *Sedibelo sa nkgono* (1996) to further discuss the present topic.

## 1.2 Necessity of the research

There is a broad overview study of the African / Western opinions that the Sesotho literature shows from the missionaries to the post apartheid eras. Instances of such studies are Grobler, “Creative African Language Writing in South Africa: Writers Unshackled After Apartheid?”(1995) and *The politics of book publishing in South Africa* (2000) edited by Monica Seeber and Nick Evans. The studies focus on the entire African languages literature development. This literature at best accords Sesotho literature a cursory treatment. It discusses the equivocal Western/African views depicted in African languages literature without the thorough treatment of a specific language. The ordinary everyday use of ‘equivocacy’ means the double meaning of a word. This study wishes to extend this meaning to refer to the African/Western connotations that cohabit within Sesotho literature in general and specifically Khaketla’s work. A closed reading of many Sesotho works (that is a reading oblivious of the existence of predecessor texts) is likely to suggest that African writers (publishers by implication) would like to propagate either Western or African ideas without any attempt at harmonizing the two. But it is a contention of this work that in actual fact Western and African ideas co-exist within a single text.

It is the argument of this study that the Western/African equivocacy in Sesotho literature should be given more attention and investigation. This study will use *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*, *'Mantsopa* and *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. The choice of these works for this topic is determined by their privilege of being published during the missionaries, the apartheid and post apartheid eras respectively. Khaketla’s works provide a sample of the chronological development of the Sesotho literature since its beginning by the missionaries until now.

They reflect a trend in the nature/ characteristic of Sesotho literature. The Western and African opinions that the works reflect help to make an unfolding pattern of Sesotho literature obvious.

### **1.3 Focus of research / Hypothesis**

The focus of this research is on Sesotho literary works during the missionary, colonial and apartheid eras. My hypothesis is that whilst these works seem to propagate Christian as well as other Western views, they also propagate the world view of the Basotho. Seemingly the Sesotho worldview is not expressed intentionally as it appears to be relegated to the subconscious. Thus as the Sesotho literature works in the postcolonial era foreground the African views, the Western sentiments also reappear unauthorized in the text.

### **1.4 Research design**

The study will use deconstruction as put forth by among others, Jacques Derrida.<sup>1</sup> It will demonstrate that the influence of the Western and African views reveal themselves through a deconstructive reading. The intention of the author or the publisher is to have one worldview of either African or Western ideas. Their purpose depends on the category of views they want to encourage in Sesotho literature with regard to missionaries, colonial/apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

The study argues that anything that is man-made is a construct. It is on the basis of different meanings assigned to a work of art that a publisher will find such a work

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<sup>1</sup> The precursor of deconstruction theory is Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is based on the claim that, "the meaning of the text remains 'open' to different meanings," (Abrams 1988 p.203).

acceptable to him/her. Through a one-dimensional assignment of meaning to a literary text, a publisher might find a work of art acceptable and publish it. What the publisher through his/her evaluator might see is not necessarily a true picture of what one might find through a deconstructive reading. The African renaissance in the present era encourages African literature to reflect Africa's indigenous religion, customs and norms. Some publishers developed awards that the African titles will win if they demonstrate an achievement of promoting African culture. Maskew Miller Longman awarded African Heritage Award to *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. But a deconstructive reading of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* shows that the Western culture has long been embedded into the Sesotho culture. The study sometimes finds interpretations in *Sedibelo sa nkgono* emphasizing the Western views. Secondly, readers decontextualise meaning outside the text and bring it into the text. The missionaries published Khaketla's *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* (1954) most probably because according to Bethuel Sekhesa, in an interview: (7 April 2001) *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* promoted the Christian theme. The missionary publishers might have accepted the manuscript on the basis of its closed reading. A deconstructive reading suggests that a Mosotho author whilst attempting to explore Christianity to a vantage point of Sesotho culture, in essence and unintentionally the author seems to attempt a reconciliation of both Christian as well as Sesotho culture. This shows that, the meaning is not contained in the text. Although the publishers might want readers to only consider a closed reading or the surface message, readers are at liberty to decontextualise other meanings outside the text and bring them into the text. There is likelihood that Oxford University Press (OUP) recommended *Mantsopa* (1963) for school readers on account of its poetic devices. When the study makes a deconstructive reading with regard to this text, the colonial/apartheid stalwarts might not have been aware of the clash or the uncomfortable marriage of the two cultures.

### **1.5 Details of the preliminary study**

The first chapter is introduction composed of the study's aim, the necessity, hypothesis, research design, and the value of research. The following chapters that are namely two, three and four, analyse the equivocacy of the debate between the West and African views in Khaketla's works. The second chapter discusses *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* (1954). Chapter three discusses *'Mantsopa* (1963). The fourth chapter will deliberate Western/African issues in *Sedibelo sa nkgono* (1996). Chapter 5 is the conclusion. It will examine whether the hypothesis formulated at the beginning is true or not, in respect of the arguments put forward in chapter 2, 3 and 4.

### **1.6 Value of research**

The present preoccupation by the contemporary South African writers and publishers is to write and publish literary works that reflect Africanness in the postcolonial/apartheid era. Mpe (1999:108) argues that African writers should try to bring back into their works of art with regard to their African identity, black cultures and folklore in order to assert their heritage.

The current writers and publishers in South Africa have a task of putting in writing literary works that show African culture within the present period after colonialism and apartheid. They should consider inscribing African values, religion, ritual aspects, norms and values into the African literature works. The issues that they should consider are: What type of

Africanness is envisaged in the literature to be published? Is it Africanness in its purest form? Is it Africanness, as it might have existed prior to the advent of the West or Colonisation? Is it really possible to recreate such Africanness? Simply because to most of us if not all, that Africanness only exists in our receding memories as we have a very deem understanding of whatever it was. So if publishers and writers want to recreate it as it might have existed or as we remember it, can it really be termed true Africanness? In other words let us not deceive ourselves, let us be realistic and keep in mind that the Africanness we earn can only be Africanness that we wish, not Africanness as it used to be.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena (1954)*

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter intends to pursue a deconstructive analysis of *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. It will indicate that the missionaries published Khaketla's work because its surface themes portray Christianity to the readers. The first printing press established in Lesotho belonged to the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS). Their aim was to propagate Christianity through the printed works. As a direct result, the first works written by Africans focused on Christianity. The missionaries wanted to promote nothing else but Christianity even through the works they encouraged their students to publish. Understandably, the works that were published through the missionary press were those works seen to be promoting the Christian views. *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* like the publications that received approval from the missionaries was supposed to push forth and foreground the Christian teaching.

However, a deconstructive reading of *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* does reveal that there are other teachings in the book which most probably negate the Christian views because they are grounded in what the missionaries regarded as 'pagan'. These teachings seemingly 'pagan' to the missionaries were allowed to go through because the missionaries could not discern deeper than the surface. Their reading, their understanding of the text was simply on superficial ground. It was simply on the surface. They did not go to the basis. They did not have tact to do deconstructive reading. According to Swannepoel (1989: 145 - 153)

the theories of literature came much later as tools for analyzing works of literature. Furthermore a deconstructive reading of any work would need grounding in the language, which the missionaries did not have with regard to Sesotho.

Firstly, we focus on the religious and ritual aspects in the form of the concepts 'Molimo' (God), 'sin' and 'prayer' as reflected in Khaketla's work. Seemingly, the missionaries associated the three concepts with Christianity whilst a deconstructive reading suggests that the Basotho's understanding of the concepts is grounded on their culture.

Secondly, it is our argument that the missionaries adapted the existing Basotho customary norms such as the preparation of traditional food, Basotho chores and folklore. It is the argument of this study that the missionaries adapted the existing Basotho customs and norms as a vehicle for the dissemination of Christianity. The study shows that despite the missionaries attempt to harmonize the Basotho customs and norms into Christianity through *Mosali eo u `neileng eena*, they unintentionally depicted the Basotho cultural themes through their own printing press.

Lastly, *Mosali eo u `neileng eena* seemed to have introduced the Christian and Western themes such as education, chastity and abstinence, respect, courtesy and modesty to the Basotho. In actual fact a deconstructive reading reveals that such values are inadvertently inherent in the Basotho.

## 2.1 The Deconstructive reading of religious and ritual aspects in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*

Molema (1989: xxxviii), Lenake (1981:91) and Maake (1992: 158) show that the first written Sesotho literature work was the Bible. It was written by Thomas Arbussert, the first missionary to bring Christianity in Lesotho. Arbussert sought to understand the Sesotho language in order to disseminate Christian themes as the first missionary and a member of Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (P.E.M.S.). He then published *\*Bukianiane ea \*apelo le ea sekolo ka puo ea \*Basuto* (A Little Book of Prayer and school through the Language of the Basotho) (1837). Swannepoel (1989:123) observes that Arboussert's work has "incorrect use of concords, and obscure orthography." Thomas Arboussert was European but he was probably the first person who committed Sesotho into the written word. He made the first attempt to transcribe Sesotho language for written literature purposes with regard to his abovementioned work. The words 'prayer', 'school', 'language' and the 'Basotho' reflect the purpose of the missionaries. Their aim was to turn Basotho into Christians and they used the written literature in Sesotho for this purpose. Arboussert later added the Sesotho version of New Testament, *Topollo e entsoeng ke Jesu* (Redemption Through Jesus Christ) (1839) to his written work of literature for the Basotho.

The presence of the Bible as a prop in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* encouraged the missionaries to publish it. Khaketla's work became the extension of Arboussert's books. These were the first works of Sesotho literature, which in addition their aim was to use Sesotho language in order to christianize Basotho. The missionaries were aware of

Khaketla's expression of her experience as a Christian in the two incidents of her work. 'Mathato is seen reading the Bible as a representation of her Christianity in page seventy-one. Her daughter (Thato) also gives Tseleng a Bible (present) for her marriage as a Christian gesture. The two events in this work of Khaketla show that the missionaries were concerned about the writing and reading of the Bible in Sesotho language in order to attract Basotho converts.

On the one hand, the deconstructive reading shows that Basotho embraced the Bible because it reinforced morality, which they already had in their culture. In analogy to Machobane and Manyeli (2001:102) study, the missionaries were surprised by some of the similar features of the Basotho religion and the Bible's Jewish Hebrew culture. It was vice versa for the Basotho experiences. They enjoyed reading and circulating the Bible because it encouraged their religion, which was similar to that of the Jewish contexts and culture present in it. The following conversation with Bethuel Sekhesa (7 April 2001) in an interview shows that apart from the missionary school children, the book had other readers – among them not necessarily Christian orientated readers – for example the miners from the Basotho communities. So when this study refers to the Basotho readers with non-christian intensions of reading the book, it refers to such readers. Bethuel Sekhesa is a former publisher at Morija and a first Mosotho publisher at the depot after the missionaries. He obtained a promotion of being the Morija publisher in 1962 after serving as a teacher in the missionary schools. Sekhesa (7 April 2001) had these to say in the interview that I held with him:

Sekhesa: As far as I remember the book did well. I say it did well because we didn't sell the book in Lesotho only, it was sold in the Republic of South Africa.

Myself: which book in particular?

Sekhesa: *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*.

Myself: Which categories of the society did you sell this book to?

Sekhesa: It's difficult to tell because booksellers made orders....

But besides the books that were prescribed in schools, as I say people in the mines definitely read the books. [In those days] I cannot say that the people in the mines are not enlightened but I think – I also went to the mines myself – they are a little bit behind.

In other words Khaketla's acknowledgement of the Bible in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*, must have subconsciously emanated from her indigenous Sesotho religion that was present around her as she grew up.

The missionaries also linked the Sesotho concept “Molimo” to the Christian idea “God”<sup>2</sup>. “Molimo” meant the supreme being of the three persons – the father, the son and the Holy Spirit who is hierarchically followed by the angels and saints. Tseleng's conversation with Thato on page thirty-nine depicts Khaketla's Christian understanding of God/“Molimo” that the missionaries admired and published. Tseleng mentions that God (Molimo) is the Creator of man like herself. Tseleng's conversation alludes to the book of genesis in the Bible where Christians are told of how God took six days to create the world including man. Tseleng also trusts in God/“Molimo”/“Mopi” that he shall rescue her from the tyranny induced to her by her aunt because she is an orphan. The missionaries disseminate the information that Christians should trust in God through Tseleng.

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<sup>2</sup> Molema (1989) says, “traditional Basotho and Christians alike believe in a supreme, all-powerful, all-knowing God who has always existed of himself and who is the creator of the universe and all the things in it. But whereas for the Christians the only way through which the living can approach God is Jesus Christ (who Himself a manifestation of the supreme Being), for the traditional Basotho this way is through the ancestors, of whom there are two types: ancestors who died long ago and who exist in the memory ... undifferentiated group; and the ancestors who, by virtue of their recent death, are still fresh in the memory of the living and are still remembered by name. Thus traditional Basotho say, when they pray: “Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale....” (new ancestor pray to the old one....) The hope being that both types of ancestors will put a combined supplication on behalf of the living before God ”

The deconstructive reading of “Molimo” (an equivalent of God), is that the concept ‘Molimo’ means a supreme being which is neither male or female, a Creator, originator and the cause of all things like the Christian “God”. What eludes the missionaries is that Khaketla’s Sesotho culture background that she shares with her non-christian readers like the miners above considers “Molimo” as having no hierarchy of angels and saints. According to the Basotho indigenous religion, all the people that die become our representatives to “God”/Molimo. At this juncture the Basotho religion acculturate the missionaries concept of God into their religion. The missionaries are aware that the Basotho saints (balimo) are not exclusively the good souls that go to heaven when they are dead like the Christian saints. They discard the concept of balimo from their Christian definition of Molimo when they publish Khaketla’s work. But they are not aware that it rears its head whenever the Basotho read about Molimo in *Mosali eo u ’neileng eena* and talk about the presence of God/Molimo. The deconstructive reading shows that the concept “Molimo” has always been amongst the Basotho for their indigenous religious belief, which is not preferred by the missionaries. It reminds Basotho readers of the inextricable relationship of God and the “dead” who all become Basotho “saints” despite their weaknesses when they read it in *Mosali eo u ’neileng eena*.

The concept of God is carried on in *Mosali eo u ’neileng eena* through the notion of the mysteries of God amongst the Basotho. The evidence is the story about Fimphane, one of the residents of Thato’s village (p.29).

The story goes that Fumane used to insult and disrespect people. One day when she was in the Free State to work on a maize farm, she had a heated argument with one of the co-workers. She continued insulting the woman until night. The woman was older than her and she got hurt. In the process, she bad-wished Fumane.

Later on Fumane lost some parts of her body to an unknown sickness. She acquired the name Fimphane (shapelessness) among the villagers.

The missionaries accepted to publish the story of Fimphane. They used it as a teaching aid to show the Basotho society that God punishes people like her for being rude. The deteriorating health of Fumane and her loss of body parts was a mystery of God for Fumane and the readers, in terms of Christian orientation. One can also associate Fumane's predicament to the way the church views the problem of HIV/AIDS pandemic today – the killer disease that the church regards as mystery of God because it cannot be cured normally through medical treatment.

Khaketla's acquisition of superstitious beliefs from the Basotho culture subtly refers to Fumane's plight as a myth that nobody could explain its cause. Its purpose is to give moral lessons to the society of the Basotho with no religious connotations related to God/"Molimo" whatsoever. The miners and other Basotho buyers of *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* with less interest in the missionary matters might have enjoyed the story just solely on its reference to the Basotho superstitious background. At this juncture Khaketla offered Fumane and people like her as an example to the Basotho society. The lesson was that people should not be the bad examples in the community or otherwise they will fall into the same predicament.

Another aspect of belief in God portrayed in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* is prayer. It is the tradition of Sello family to pray before they sleep. We see Thato and her mother praying for several times (c.f. p.56). The missionaries use *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* to demonstrate that Christians have to pray to God through Sello's family. However the

concept of prayer in Sesotho language alludes to the deconstructive reading of the pre-missionary said prayer to “Molimo”:

Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale  
 (New God pray to the elderly God)  
 Re rapelle ho o moholo Jere  
 (Pray for us to the elderly God *Jere*)  
 Molimo a k’u utloe rea rapela  
 (God hear us we pray)

This prayer is a non-denominational prayer, which has been passed down verbally from one generation to another, in the Basotho society. Unlike the missionaries perception that they brought prayer through Christianity to the Basotho (in the form of Anglican, Wesleyan, Catholic and Evangelical denominations), the above prayer to “Molimo” shows that the Basotho were able to say prayer before the arrival of the church.

One of the commandments in the Bible is to avoid using the name of God in vain. Khaketla observes this commandment due to her Christian perspectives that she acquired as a student at Morija institution, and at her home. She repeatedly uses “ka sebele” (verily so/it is so) instead of using “ka ’nete” (truly) in her work. Mathato among other characters is very fond of the expression “ka sebele” in the play (*Mosali eo u ’neileng eena*). It is because Mathato is the wife of a staunch Christian teacher who was close to the missionaries at Morija. Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (P.E.M.S) taught Khaketla that in terms of the evangelical church catechism, the word “’nete” (truth) alludes to Jesus Christ. Hence Khaketla designs her characters in the manner that reflects her Christian ideology. The missionaries are happy to publish her book for their purposes

in the process. The idea of regarding the word ‘truth’ as Jesus Christ emanates from the passage in the Bible when Jesus said “I am the way the truth and life.” The missionaries therefore think it is a vain attempt to express reality or surprise by using the word “truth” because it is equivalent to “Jesus”, one of the three persons in God. The allusion to God’s commandments and catechism in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* encourages the missionaries to publish it.

The deconstructive reading alludes to the already existing Basotho taboo consideration of avoiding calling particular names or words because of their significance in their lives. For example, the daughter-in-law cannot call the name of her father-in-law and the words related to them in order to show respect to the elders. *Mosali eo u`neileng eena*’s allusion to taboo in this regard answers the question why Sesotho language accepts the availability of strange vocabulary. Basotho use special words that they do not use often in everyday language when they avoid to call the names of their elders that are similar to everyday common language. A Mosotho young woman would call a cow “tjepa” for “khomo”. This would be because her father-in-law’s name is Khomo. They also say “manyabolo” instead of the standard word “metsi” (water). The Basotho readers who are not so much interested in the missionaries promotion of religion in the book might have considered the strange way of saying “truly” as “ka sebele” instead of “ka`nete”, as an extension and promotion of Basotho taboo culture to respect the name God (Molimo) whom they also regard as their elder.

The last feature present in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* with regard to belief is sin (sebe). According to Manyeli and Machobane (2001:26-27), the missionaries correlated the Christian ethics to the following Sesotho vocabulary; “bobe” (ugliness), “sebe”(sin), “molato” (debt) and “tšito” (damage). In the analysis, the missionaries used the

vocabulary to clarify the meaning of sin (sebe) and committing sin. According to the missionary principles it is wrong to sin. The common Christian belief is that people go to hell because they have sinned against God. `Malitaba in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* is an epitome of sin/sebe. Khaketla's Christian perspective abhors `Malitaba's rudeness, insults and cruelty. We hear from Thato's conversation and her mother that `Malitaba hates her nephew, Tseleng because she is an orphan (pp.25-26). There is a deconstructive reading with a different meaning in line with Khaketla's upbringing as a Mosotho. She unconsciously alludes to the Basotho conscience about disapproval of unlikable deeds. It is a moral not acceptable in the Basotho communities and their ethos to be insulting, rude, hateful, and cruel like `Malitaba in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena*. The common practice of the Basotho is to take people to "Khotla" (court) for actions, which emanate from such traits.

## **2.2 The Deconstructive reading of the Basotho customary norms in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena***

This section argues that the Basotho customary norms depicted in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* for Christian purposes also contributes to its deconstructive reading.

The preference of the surface Christian reading of *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* renders the missionaries to appreciate and acculturate the Basotho traditional food into Christian contexts. The missionaries appreciated food available in the Basotho communities such as traditional drinks (seqhaqhabola, motoho), sorghum beer (joala), "qhubu" (boiled grains), "lebese" (milk), "borotho"/ "bohobe" (bread), "moroho" (wild vegetables) in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena*. The missionaries' agreement to publish the Basotho customs and norms with regard to the Basotho food and its preparation emanates from their intention to adapt it to the Christian way of life. According to Franz (1930:149), missionaries encouraged

crude literal translation where there were no equivalent words in Sesotho for Christian concepts. The implication of Franz's statement is that the missionaries welcomed the use of the Basotho culture such as the customary norms, if it is in line with Christian ethos. The missionaries could compare `Malitaba's daughter gathering of wild vegetables in the veld – a practice liked by the Basotho people, to the gathering of manna by the Israelites. When they talk about the land of milk and honey in the Bible Khaketla's conscious or unconscious Christian perspective compares it to the milk from Basotho cows. The missionaries and Khaketla could also draw an analogy to the Israelites Passover meal of bitter herbs and bread with the Sesotho "bohobe" (bread) and moroho with regard to the ingredients and methods the Basotho use to prepare them.

Like Machobane and Manyeli (2001:21-22) the Basotho language vocabulary is also laden with the Basotho beliefs and their religion. Khaketla implements this observation in *Mosal eo u `neileng eena* traditional food of the Basotho is connected to the "gods" (Balimo) that the missionaries dislike. Basotho people pray to their ancestors (Balimo) to provide them with food, prosperity and fertility. The missionaries do not like this practice because it undermines the Christian God. Yet the missionaries publish *Mosali eo u `neileng eena*. Furthermore according to the deconstructive reading, the Basotho readers are able to identify with Khaketla's Sesotho cultural background of promoting different traditional dishes and they learn about their preparation and significance in the process. Sometimes these readers are oblivious of their reference to the Jewish culture depicted in the Bible.

Another aspect of the customary norms that the missionaries used to propagate Christianity through *Mosali eo u `neileng eena* is the Basotho chores. According to catechism of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, church began at Morija in Lesotho

of which Khaketla was a member, work is prayer. The missionaries admired the activities of the Basotho in Khaketla's work. The Basotho could grind mealies, make fire, refine sorghum mixture for "motoho" (ho nepola), smear floors and walls (ho lila). Basotho also go to the river to wash their clothes (ho ea nokaneng), look after their animals and others. The Basotho different chores relate to the Bible's saying that a person is not supposed to steal, but will have to toil in order to provide food. The missionaries publishing of "ho haila" (grinding mealies), "ho ritela" (to brew beer), gathering wild vegetables and other traditional chores in *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* is the way of demonstrating and preserving the Basotho customary norms in the form of traditional technology, continuity and sustainability of the past.

The story of Thato's family sojourning amongst other Basotho groups different from their own Sotho people in order to help the missionaries spread the gospel in South Africa is of great importance to the missionaries. We hear from Thato in her conversation with Tseleng that her father (Mr. Sello) has taught in mission schools. First he taught in Lozi (Barotse) schools (pp.20-21). Later he became a teacher in the mission school at Bopedi (Northern Sotho) in the Mphahlele area at Ha Ramapulane. Thato's family met and befriended Kxomo's family in this area. 'Kxomo' is a Pedi (Northern Sotho) noun equivalent to Southern Sotho (Sesotho) Khomo (cow). The difference is just the variation of orthography with the two Sesotho dialects. It turns out later that Sootho, who has grown up in Lesotho, married there and is now a minister, is a member of Kxomo family. The significance of publishing this sub-story for the missionaries is to promote an interest in the Basotho Christians and teachers to join the ministry and spread the gospel amongst the Basotho groups and beyond like the missionaries. The story also has another sub-dimension of the missionary aims. The missionaries' goal was to use schools in order to

educate the Basotho. In the process they produced high quality elites who could help them disseminate Christianity. Some of these elites became teachers like Thato's father.

The deconstructive reading of the abovementioned story seeks to show that the Basotho groups are interrelated. The story reminds the Basotho that the 'lozi' people are part of the Bafokeng lineage by referring to them. They fled to Zambia with their chief Sebetoane from the Free State during the Lifaqane war. Furthermore in the story we learn that all the Basotho groups originate from the great Mopeli on page eight. These antiquity stories help the Basotho to realize their relationships with other groups in the Southern African region, instead of encouraging them to be ministers and teachers who disseminate the word of God (Bible). They promote the Basotho awareness about their origin and everyday life experiences in terms of their interrelationship with other nations around them without the missionaries' intension.

Another customary norms aspect that the missionaries used to promote Christianity through *Mosali eo u `neileng eena* is the Basotho oral literature. In this study the oral literature refers to legends, folk-tales, idioms and proverbs. The missionaries adopted and published the Basotho legends in *Mosali eo u `neileng eena* to teach Christian lessons. The following story is given on page thirty one.

Once upon a time there was a great man in his nation. One day his colleagues in the civil service decided to kill him because they were jealous of him. They won his best friend on their side. When it was time to kill him, they let him come to *khotla* (a traditional court where men gather) as usual. They held the court proceedings and conversation as usual. Later on their leader directed them to attack him. The man fought vehemently against them. He could have won

the fight, but after some time he saw his best friend also fighting against him. He gave up the fight and they were able to defeat him.

Mathato tells the story to her daughter. She heard the story from her teacher Mr. Akime while she was still at school in Morija. The surface imagery of associating Mathato to "Morija", a missionary institution which its aim was to disseminate the messages of the Bible when she was told this story shows that Khaketla is driven by her Christian upbringing and the influence that Morija had given to her. The missionaries might have thought that by publishing *Mosali eo u`neileng eena*, the legend above might be a teaching aid for the Basotho converts and their prospective counterparts to understand the life of Jesus Christ. The legend alludes to Jesus' story in the Bible. One of his disciples (Judas) betrayed him and people did not believe that he helped them because he was the son of God. One can also make an association of the "Khotla" in the story to Pontius Pilate court proceedings with regard to Jesus. Another connection is that of the man's friend and Judas Iscariot, the disciple of Jesus who betrayed him in the Bible. The deconstructive reading of the legend refers to the Basotho folktale of "Moshanyan'a Sankatane". It is the story of a man-child who later became famous and powerful among his people. This man-child cut out kholumo-lumo's bowels and tongue to free people and animals it ate. The people he freed later killed him. "Moshanyan'a Senkatana" also alludes to Jesus Christ, but the underlying message is to provide pure moral lessons to Basotho people that relate to their culture without the Christian connotations.

The missionaries acknowledge the given surface reading of the plot of *Mosali eo u`neileng eena* which emanates from Khaketla's Christian background through publishing it. Tseleng marries a dumb person (Sootho). Later Sootho regains his ability of talking and

becomes a minister. Further than this Christian message, the deconstructive reading of this event hints to the folktale of “Masilo le Thakane”. The elders tell the story amongst the households of the Basotho people in the evenings including that of Khaketla as a little girl. Thakane’s brother (Masilo) wants to marry his sister Thakane. But the Basotho custom, does not allow it. He decides to remain at the initiation school and refuses to come home because he now wants Thakane to bring him a special blanket that his family makes from a skin of “nanabolele” (an animal that lives in the river falls). During all this time he does not want to talk to anyone. He only agrees to come home and talk after Thakane has brought him a *nanabolele*’s special blanket and shield. Sootho begins talking after marrying Tseleng when they are in Bopedi (at his home). Sootho ceases to be considered as Tseleng’s brother as he was known in Lesotho (at Tseleng’s home), during his amnesia span. But ultimately without being aware of the underlying message, the missionaries publish the work despite the oral literature message of incest. Such a message disagrees with the church ethos. The surface reading that reflects Christianity – that of Sootho regaining his minister position after marrying Tseleng, carries the missionaries away.

The missionaries also adapted the Sesotho idioms and proverbs (*maele le maelana*) to portray Christian messages. Khaketla makes an allusion to the idiom, “u se ke ua otlela toeba sehong”. This idiomatic expression is a warning, which means “do not raise up the child gingerly”. Tseleng’s aunt hated her and relegated more difficult chores to her than her daughter. Tseleng drew water, grinded mealies, prepared a traditional beverage “motoho” and beer in a day. On the contrary `Malitaba’s daughter responsibility was to gather wild vegetables from the veld and going out for games. Sootho (the minister) chooses to marry Tseleng instead of the spoiled daughter of `Malitaba. The sub-story of Tseleng and her cousin sister also evokes the proverb that regards Tseleng’s sister as “Mokotla o mahlo mohlohloa o rapame” (which means a lazy person). It warns that

people should not be ‘able-bodied bags with eyes’, in other words it abhors laziness. The missionaries seek to broaden the Sesotho proverbs and idioms meaning and include Christian interpretations in *Mosali eo u `neileng eena*. According to Christianity, not raising a child properly like `Malitaba and being lazy like her daughter are sins. The missionaries are also encouraging the book of proverbs in the Bible through the publication of the proverbs and idioms in this play. But the Basotho readers who are less interested in the missionary interpretation of Khaketla’s work might look up to it as portraying the moral lessons that have been amongst them even before the arrival of the missionaries. The Basotho use “maele” to council themselves in order to be aware of the immoral actions.

### **2.3 The Deconstructive reading of values in *Mosali eo u `neileng eena***

The missionaries intended to instill certain Western values under the cover of the dissemination of Christian beliefs. These Western values are also reflected in *Mosali eo u `Neileng Eena* below. However the irony is that their underlying message depicts the Basotho values.

The missionaries publish Khaketla’s work because it has an element of respect, as a Christian value. Tseleng agrees to marry Sootho who has a strong Christian background, although she is just an ordinary person. She respects and takes care of her husband. She makes him a decent man due to her politeness with him. Khaketla’s inclination to her Christian background is depicted in her interview with Maphala (1986). She says that she has written *Mosali eo u `neileng eena* because she wants to show that women are not always sources of trouble. Sootho thanks God for the woman he has given him. Here the missionaries and Khaketla are unable to allude to Khaketla’s Sesotho cultural background of marriage arrangements that are also part of respect. This culture of arranging a marriage

has trickled into *Mosali eo u`neileng eena*. Tseleng and ironically Sootho (the minister) have conceded to a marriage that has been arranged by Tseleng’s aunt and uncle, a Sesotho tradition that the missionaries abhor. The evidence of their dislike of marriage arrangement is available in Reverend Germond’s letter to the high commissioner in the 1800’s:

To His Excellency Sir H. Lock K.C.B  
Governor & High Commissioner  
Cape Town

Thabana Morena  
Basutoland 12 Jan 1891

Sir,

.....  
Since the Paris Mission Society began war among  
the Basuto, now nearly sixty years ago, it had to  
struggle against two National customs  
“circumcision” and “arranging [marriage] with cattle”  
.....

I remain, sir  
Your Excellency’s most  
Obedient servant

[sgd] P Germond  
Chairman of the Conference of  
the Missionaries of the Paris Evangelical  
Missionary Society. (Manyeli and Machobane  
2001, p.197)

The letter is an appendage to Manyeli and Machobane's *Essays on religion and culture among Basotho: 1800 – 1900*. The chief's wife acts as a surrogate mother to Sootho. She pays lobola for him and later on Sootho marries Tseleng. Yet the missionaries of Evangelique des Paris (P.E.M.S) published Khaketla's work without hesitation.

Another value that the missionaries wanted to inculcate in Basotho is civilization. The insinuation of the missionaries endeavour to civilize Basotho is found in Thato and Tseleng's conversation. They say that it is uncourtesy to eat bones during meal times. Furthermore one should avoid being choked by food because that shows greediness. Khaketla must have learnt such table – manners from the missionaries while she was at the boarding school at Morija College in Makhoarane. The missionaries wanted to civilize the Basotho people in terms of Western Education without realizing that Basotho still appreciated civilized behaviour prior the missionary's arrival in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. Khaketla must have subconsciously wanted to express the Sesotho etiquette, that girls were warned that they would be disgraced if they get married with such bad habits. This even produced myths that it would snow during their wedding day amongst the Basothos.

Additionally the missionaries expected Christians to be modest. Khaketla experiences of the missionary schools rendered her to abhor fighting amongst girls and this is shown in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. She punished Tseleng's sister with bruises because she is the one who started a fight with her fiancé's girlfriend and she called her names. However, Khaketla sub-consciously refers to the Basotho ritual. Modesty was something that was honoured even before the missionaries arrived amongst Basotho. Most of the time modest

girls were the ones that were married in the society, as opposed to the ones who had bad manners.

Missionaries also thought they are teaching Basotho to help each other by publishing Khaketla's work. This is depicted in Tseleng when she helps an elderly person (Nkhono Nthibisi) in her community (P. 7-8). However, for the deconstructive reading, helping and caring about other people is what the Basotho people have been living for ages. However the missionaries do not publish *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* because the attribute of help and caring is a shared aspect between Christianity and the Basotho culture, but by publishing it, they also publish Sesotho culture.

Another value is that the missionaries are attracted by the element of chastity in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. "Malitaba (p. 46), marvels at Tseleng and her husband (Sootho). She says they do not act like man and wife because they have not consummated their marriage, although they stay together after their traditional marriage. We learn later that Tseleng and Sootho began acting as husband and wife after they were married in church. The missionaries published Khaketla's work to raise awareness of the importance of the Christian marriage amongst the Basotho and perhaps to undermine the traditional marriage. Yet the deconstructive reading ridicules Sootho and Tseleng's behaviour. According to Sesotho tradition they are a newly married couple and they are supposed to perform the conjugal rights. The Sesotho culture questions their balance of mind through Lisebo.

## 2.4 Conclusion

- ❖ Whilst through their missionary teachings and printed material, the missionaries made their intentions of printing Christianity abundantly clear, some of the content they allowed through their works, propagated values and philosophies contrary to the teachings they made.
- ❖ The selected Basotho cultural religion/ritual aspects, values and customary norms, used by the church to inculcate the Christian ethos refused to be subsumed under the Christian load. They seemed to gain clarity and hence become foregrounded in their new context. The new text (Christian) was parasitic on the predecessor (Sesotho) text and in return the new text gained clarity.
- ❖ In addition to narrowing the sense of existing words the missionaries strategically extended the meaning of existing words. For example the word 'sebe' which in Sesotho normally meant just a simple bad thing abhorred by Basotho was extended to cover a range of actions that referred to deviating from the ways of God in the Bible. Evidently a person growing within a Sesotho culture would now and then unconsciously revert to the cultural meaning of the word 'sebe'.
- ❖ Whilst the meaning of the existing Sesotho concepts was to shift to the newly acquired Christian meaning, the broader meaning of such concepts could not be excluded altogether. The case in point here is that of Molimo which traditionally includes connotation of Balimo within hierarchical order and yet the missionaries meant it to signify only God the trinity, (the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit). Up till now it is not

uncommon to hear a Mosotho say, “ke tla rapela Molimo le Balimo” (I will pray to God and the gods). Deconstructive reading reaffirms the Africanness and not what was important to the teaching of the missionaries but what was brought through mythology of the Basotho.

- ❖ Folktales, legends and proverbs covertly embraced in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* were unknowingly propagated and disseminated through the missionary press. In this regard *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* could be viewed as the preservation and perpetuation of the Basotho customary norms, religious/ritual aspects and values. For instance, quoting myths like Fimphane’s story in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* reminded the Basotho that they had myths that taught moral lessons in their culture when they read it. In the deconstructive reading of *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*, the Basotho readers could associate the cultural texts that the missionaries published to their non-Christian cultural background.
  
- ❖ Basotho values similar to those of Western culture were unintentionally reinforced. The missionaries appreciated the elements of modesty and courtesy depicted in *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. On page eighteen, Khaketla abhors the woman who prepared food with her breasts uncovered through the tale by Setofolo. Probably the missionaries have instilled such values in Khaketla while she was at Morija College. It is not upsetting to suggest that what was being instilled in the mind of a Mosotho is that in actual fact there were points of convergence between her cultural values and those of the West. It might therefore have been confusing to her to hear the missionary say she must ditch her heathen culture in exchange for the Western culture that was surely to salvage her from the bondage of paganism (c.f. to Germond’s letter above).

However, the missionaries could not control the interpretation of the literature texts like *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena*. In terms of deconstructive reading, Basotho readers and Khaketla's cultural backgrounds could acculturate foreign ethos such as the Bible to enrich their own culture. The Basotho were happy to read the Bible (c.f. 'Mathato) because the Jewish culture in the Bible reinforced their indigenous cultural background with its similarities.

- ❖ Deconstructive reading renders *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* equivocal both with regard to significance and meaning. It is significant in that it reinforces traditional African culture understood by a Mosotho. Nevertheless, on the other hand it propagates Christianity. Furthermore the missionaries assigned their new meaning to *Mosali eo u 'neileng eena* which they thought was different to that of the native speakers. However the deconstructive reading found out that the meaning is attached to the native speakers at another level.

Khaketla, the author was evidently an embodiment of her cultural upbringing and at the meeting point of Christianity. She seemed incapable of completely abandoning that which defined her in exchange for what was being promoted and disseminated by the missionaries. The deconstructive reading renders her not typically a Mosotho nor Christian. She was always astride with the incapability to reconcile the two.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *'Mantsopa (1963)*

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The argument advanced in this chapter is that there can be no authorial intention in as far as interpretation is concerned.

Hatchten (1984:174) mentions that the South African government prohibited the overt protest literature. Even though the government might have tried to control the interpretation of prescribed literary texts by putting demands to publishers to screen manuscripts intended for publications, manuscripts which went contrary to this requirement of the apartheid government did find their way through to the prescription lists of the South African government.

The study will discuss the following three points. Firstly that the Oxford University Press (O.U.P) sees the Basotho religious and ritual aspects that are embodied in the collection of *'Mantsopa* as being innocent of any protest intentions.

The readers cannot put the poems according to Oxford University Press interpretation or authorial interpretation to any use to criticize the government. However both the government and Oxford University Press seem to be unaware that the very innocent vehicles might be read and used effectively to achieve opposite intentions.

Secondly the customary norms such as the oral and historical narratives which run like a threat throughout *'Mantsopa* could not according to Oxford University Press be employed to discuss the immediate experiences of the Basotho oppression caused by apartheid. But the deconstructive reading in this study shows that the Basotho readers could associate their then contemporary problems with the past events narrated in *'Mantsopa*. In this regard, the readers could find suggested solutions to their problems in the history that is preserved through the writing of *'Mantsopa*.

Thirdly this chapter will also consider moral issues and values in *'Mantsopa*. Apparently Oxford University Press is convinced that the collection of poems in *'Mantsopa* do not suggest any deviation from moral issues and values as stipulated in the publication act. Van Rooyen in *Censorship in South Africa* (1987: 7) says the act meant that a literary text published in South Africa should not criticize the government through mockery and finding fault. Furthermore it should not encourage interracial marriages. But a deconstructive reading of *'Mantsopa* suggests that the moral issues and values explored by the poems in fact would not stand the scrutiny of the publication act.

### **3.1 Deconstructive reading of religious and ritual aspects in *'Mantsopa***

The argument of this section is that the Oxford University Press appropriated and published the Basotho rituals or religious aspects and humour from myths in *'Mantsopa* poems collection with the hope that they do not contravene the publication and Bantu Education Act. Gerard (1981:207) mentions that this act wanted the medium of instruction for the African child to be her native language. The black child should only learn English and Afrikaans to communicate with the Europeans while s/he receives instructions at the

world of work. The policy implementers, namely, Verwoerd said blacks should get simple education, reduced to essentials permitting the child to learn all that will be useful for him or her to know in his humble career as a farmer or artisan. This will ameliorate the natural and social conditions of his or her existence. Mphahlele (1987:48) observes this act when he mentions that its aim was to prevent higher levels of thinking among the blacks. The implication of the act is that writers should not address problems of the country like the low modicum of education the government gives to blacks. This would be the violation of the Publications Act. The poems in question with regard to this chapter are “Mofapa-Hlooho oa Meutloa” (A crown of Thorns), “sekotompana” (Funnily Short Person), “Mokubata”(Spinster) and “Mohlolohali”(Widow). Although the Oxford University Press thought the poems could hold on to messages that can determine the apartheid era’s *status quo*, the underlying messages of these poems do not comply with the entertainment and publication act of 1963 or the Bantu Education Act.

I intend to contextualize and recontextualize the torture interpretation of the ‘crown of thorns’ symbol in “Mofapa Hlooho oa Meutloa” which the publishers intended to publish. The obvious reading of “Mofapa Hlooho oa Meutloa” discusses Jesus Christ wearing a crown of thorns on the crucifix during Easter time. In relation to this reading, Khaketla the Christian discusses the Easter period through the events of Jesus Christ crucifixion. The apartheid publishers publish the poem because its surface reading has nothing to do with destroying the government’s *status quo*. According to the authorities, Khaketla only reminds the readers about the ritual of the Easter period when Jesus was tortured by the Jews for questioning their authority in the Biblical setting of the Middle East that does not apply to the South African Situation.

However, the study decontextualises the Bible context of “Mofapa Hlooho oa Meutloa” and recontextualises the poem to the torture imposed upon the black majority by the authorities of the apartheid government. The scenery of torture by the authorities in “Mofapa Hlooho oa Meutloa” is a parasitical presence, which can be transferred to the apartheid situation. Examples of such a torture that emanated from questioning authorities are the Sharpeville massacre in the early 1960s, the SOWETO upheaval in 1976 and later the execution of figures like Steve Biko in 1977. These incidences were discussed in the literature that was forbidden by the South African government, but it eluded the Publication Appeal Board (P.A.B.), which implemented the Publication Act that they can be symbolized by “Mofapa Hlooho oa Meutloa”. The readers can compare Jesus torture for questioning the authorities to the incidents that affect them in their every day life situations during the apartheid era. Such a possibility of readership eluded Oxford University Press and it published the poem because of its surface reading.

Furthermore the South African government took for granted the publication of the jocular poems, “Sekotompana”, “Mokubata”, “Mohlolohali” by the Oxford University Press. The web site [www.encarta.com](http://www.encarta.com) gives a definition of “joke” in the following manner: “joke or jest, funny story, anecdote, or piece of wordplay that gets passed round and repeated”. The exemplary presence of a “joke” context is April fool’s day. The story-tellers persuade people to believe unreal and fictitious stories and go on pointless mission just to make fun of them. In analogy, Khaketla employs a jocular approach, which emanates from her Sesotho background in the above poems. It seems Oxford University Press published the poems because they are meant to make people laugh, as a result do not violate the publication act. However, the deconstructive reading below which emanates from the underlying messages of the texts- beyond their jocular surface reading proves otherwise. “Sekotompana” is a jocular poem about a short person with regard to its surface reading.

Some of its stanzas and lines are derived from the Basotho everyday conversation and songs of which Khaketla is a witness such as the popular “Chifona” song “Bokhutšoanyane bo kile ba nkholo” (shortness has really impeded me). Although Khaketla in an interview (20 December 2002) says that she had not been very keen about evening songs (chifona/serobolela) in the Basotho society due to her Christian background, her awareness of their fun motives trickle into the poem she creates. The monologue of the persona in the poem who would like to be tall and dignified conjures ridicule in the mind of the reader in a jocular manner. The short person is a joke. (Sekotompana) is heightened by the jeering vocabulary “Kakachelana”(a short person named after the way s/he walks) and “mauthoanyane” (somebody without dignity)- Basotho, as a matter of fact deriving the name from non-quality clothes s/he wears. This scenery of “mauthoanyane” creates a joke that s/he would like to associate him/herself with the king in Matsieng and be considered important. This surface reading is in line with the Bantu Education and publication Act. According to the authorities pupils can read “Sekotompana” for cartoon purposes and poetry techniques without violating the prior mentioned acts.

However the deconstructive reading of “Sekotompana” is a complaint about the status of the poor. It is epitomized by the metaphors that depict Sekotompana’s appearance in contrast with the king’s at Matsieng. The theme of discrimination in “Sekotompana” can be deferred to other texts of African literature presented by writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and other African writers who dealt with class discrimination in a society. De Lange (1997:138) observes that the South African government through its instruction in the form of publication Appeal Board banned the African Writings like *The grain of wheat*, *Things fall apart* and many others for carrying messages about discrimination and corruption. However, the theme of the complaint about the discrepancy

between the poor and the rich welfare flowed into “Sekotompana” that the O.U.P published. The discrepancy of welfare between the poor and the wealthy was evident in Lesotho at the time Khaketla wrote the poem. It was in the form of the rich colonialists as against the poor Basotho natives. The deconstructive reading of “Sekotompana” suggests that the similar situation was taking place in South Africa and the implementation of the apartheid system from 1948 in South Africa promoted it. However the O.U.P goes ahead to publish the poem and mistakenly calculate the impact of the poem with regard to the ability of conscientizing the readers about racial discrimination as only pertaining to the culturally jocular Sesotho character “Sekotompana”.

“Mohlolohali” and “Mokubata” are poems based on popular Basotho jests at a surface reading preferred by the publishing authorities. Both of them are teasing titles and the people called by such titles are regarded as a mockery in the society. Khaketla in “Mohlolohali” explains that when a woman’s husband is dead, friends stop visiting the family, especially male friends. The community creates a myth that other women become apprehensive that a widow will have affairs with their husbands. In the end they isolate her.

“Mokubata” is a Sesotho jeering word for an unmarried woman who has passed the married age. According to the context reading of poem, it is believed that such a woman is suitable for mature men who are widowers amongst the Basotho and in the poem itself. This study learns from Khaketla’s background that it was unheard of for a Mosotho young woman to remain unmarried; hence the reason to jeer such a woman in a society. Parents also become worried that their daughter is not married. During the apartheid era, the literature critics such as Mphahlele (1987) regarded such literature as not serving the society because it did not address the oppression that blacks were encountering. But the

deconstructive reading shows that such literature was still useful in the society. This study decontextualizes the jocular attitude of Khaketla towards 'Mokubata' and recontextualizes it to the complaints about issues that she does not appreciate in the Basotho society. She conscientizes Basotho about their bad habits amongst which are women abuse, their oppression and nagging. The Oxford University Press is oblivious about Khaketla's endeavor to discourage bad taboos and beliefs amongst the Basotho readers. What they care for is that the surface reading of "Mohlolohali" and "Mokubata" do not contravene the publications and Bantu Education Act. The 1949 – 1951 "Report on Native Education" in Gerard (1981: 207) states that the rationale behind the Bantu Education Act was that the black child should be taught only to talk to Europeans "about his work and subjects of common interest". According to the publishers the above two poems ("Mohlolohali" and "Mokubata") are simple poems in every day language. They will not pose a danger to the publishers of being against the government's Bantu Education Act.

### **3.2 The Deconstructive reading of the customary norms in '*Mantsopa***

Apart from the religion and ritual aspects, the customary norms in '*Mantsopa* also depict the double meaning which shows that publishers (and writers) cannot fix on the messages of a literary text they print. Oxford University Press published oral history and Basotho games in '*Mantsopa* because they thought it complies with the publication and Entertainment Act. It was convinced that the recordings of the past do not address the issues related to the immediate experiences of oppression under apartheid. According to Gerard (1981:207) the South African authorities regarded the past history of Southern Africa as a tribute of the past adventures that were not a reality to the prevailing situation of the oppression of blacks by apartheid laws. The Oxford University Press was also following the Publication Appeal Board (PAB) decision on the kind of literary texts that

the publishers should print. At one time De Lange (1997: 138) mentions that black writers had difficulty in publishing their work if it had the figurative speech which was exceedingly in abundance and showed some interpretations that were beyond ordinary issues in everyday life.

This study will show that the deconstructive reading of the customs and norms in *Mantsopa* proves the opposite of what the authorities believe. This section will examine “Ketelo ea Khosana Lesotho High School” (The prince Visit to Lesotho High School), “Peho ea Mofumahali oa England”(coronation of the queen of England), “Motlohelo” (the Name to Khaketla’s Son), “Seakhi” (the Basotho Song), “Khakolo”(the opening), “Masole a Heso a Taung” (Soldiers from My Area Taung), “Le Tsohile Joang?” (How are you?), “Ebenezer” and “Botle ba Naha” (the Beauty of the country).

According to the publisher’s perspective “Ketelo ea Khosana Kolong se phahameng sa Lesotho” is an equivalent of a journal entry. Khaketla reminisces of Prince Bereng Seeiso’s visit to the school in which she taught. The poem is a personal experience according to its surface reading. Khaketla cherishes the day the prospective king of Lesotho rubbed shoulders with her while he was visiting the Basutoland High School. The Oxford University Press is attracted to publish the poem because its content has nothing to do with the South African experiences (of apartheid that might offend the country’s authorities) through its publication.

At a surface level the poem is a praise poem like narrative. It can be equated to Z.D. Mangoela’s old *Lithoko tsa marena a Basotho* (1997). In analogy to South Africa critics such as Mphahlele (1987) the authorities encouraged Mangoela’s text for school readership. Khaketla’s poem gives an account of prince Bereng Seeiso’s visit to Lesotho

High School on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1947 where his then prospective queen Tabita 'Mamohato(Nee Mojela) attended school. Prince Bereng was a prospective heir of his father (Chief Seeiso Seeiso) and is a great grandson of Moshoeshoe I. Bereng's great grandfather is the founder of the Basotho Nation in the territory, which covers Lesotho and the Free State amongst the lineages in Southern Africa. Like in old "lithoko" (praise poems), Prince Bereng is compared to his chieftaincy relations. But he becomes a metaphor to show that he is a great person amongst the authorities in South Africa with regard to Free State. According to the surface reading khaketla's (mini praise) poem about Prince Bereng seems to pose no harm to the question of the confiscated Basotho and their land with regard to its contents. It does not mention that Prince Bereng might also be a prospective King of the Free State like his predecessor Moshoeshoe 1, hence undermines the apartheid policies.

The journal entry approach of Khaketla's poems mesmerizes the publishers at Oxford University Press and they fail to read the underlying messages of the poem. Like in 'Lithoko' there is a mention of Thabo Mojela in the poem. He is a relative to prince Bereng. He is one of the great Basotho chief's son and a prospective relative-in-law to the prince. Prince Thabo is a company to prince Bereng's visit where his niece (the prospective queen) was to attend school under the tutelage of the poetess.

The deconstructive reading gives a different view to the one advocated by the South African publishers with regard to their surface reading of the poem above. The indirect reading provides a safe culture and custom. "King Moshoeshoe" and his predecessors are rulers for the entire Basotho nation regardless of the political artificial boundaries set amidst their territory by the authorities. The Publication Appeal Board and the publishers miss such a possibility of the Basotho that falls under the protest literature because they

lack understanding of the Basotho culture. Dowling (1997:36) observes that the ‘lack of shared experience between whites and blacks meant that [messages] were differently interpreted’. His observation can be transferred to the different perspectives about the customs and norms amongst the Basotho and the Afrikaanders.

Historically the Basotho established their kingdom to unite their lineages and tribes during the “Lifaqane war” in Southern Africa. This established was prior the coming of the whites. Oxford University Press is not aware that they are promoting unity of the Basotho nation, which the South African authorities do not regard as an existing entity through the publication of the poem. The mentioning of Moshoeshoe evokes the question of unity amongst the Basotho. They hope of having another Moshoeshoe through the prince Bereng, who will make it possible to reunite the Basotho regardless of the political boundaries.

The prospective Moshoeshoe visits Basutoland High School (presently Lesotho High School) in the person of prince Bereng. He becomes an epitome of hope for Basotho unity as a nation in the presence of the future King instead of just an icon, with regard to the substratum context of the poem. The story/text of a traditional monarch visit to a modern school opens up to the context aspect of Basutoland High School. The publishers are oblivious that they are encouraging a high modicum of education through publishing the poem about Lesotho High School. Such a degree of education would allow the Basotho nation to exercise control over politics and economy in Southern Africa. Yet Maake (1992:173) and Gerard (1981:207) say the Southern African authorities were to ensure that the publications should promote and enable “the Bantu child...not [to] be taught more English or Afrikaans than necessary.” Furthermore s/he is supposed to “follow oral or written instruction and to carry out a simple conversation with Europeans about his work

and other subjects of common interest”. But the message of the content of black empowerment is portrayed by promoting Basutoland High School in the poem. According to the plaque of this school, its purpose is to ‘develop a character and the pursuit of knowledge.’ In other words the Basotho are encouraged to gain literacy that is not expected by the South African authorities or the Bantu Education Act.

The Oxford University Press regards the surface reading of the poem about the queen of England (“Thoeso ea mofapa-hlooho oa Motlotlotlehi Elizabeth II Morena oa Engelane le mosireletsi oa Lesotho ka la 2 Phupjane 1953”) as the given reading. The poem discusses the coronation of queen Elizabeth of England after the death of his father. The context of the poem opens up to the British National anthem “God save the queen” that the Basotho sang in honour of England as their protectorate. The deconstructive reading accepts that the Basotho from Lesotho could praise England’s authorities because they are Britain subjects. In retrospect the South African authorities had accepted the idea of Lesotho being an independent territory from the Free State. The poem also re-emphasizes the South African government as owning the Free State. However, the deconstructive reading goes further to recontextualise the poem into the history of how the protectorate came about. The poem serves as an imagery that jogs the Basotho readers’ memory about wars they fought with the Boers until they sought protection from England to avoid apartheid rule. While Oxford University Press dismisses the deconstructive reading as the history of the past which has nothing to do with the South African situation of the apartheid rule, the reading give suggestions of war to overcome apartheid and seeking international assistance to do away with apartheid.

Another aspect of the customary norms that is published by the Oxford University Press comes from Khaketla’s personal life. The context of “Motlohelo” tells the readers why

the Khaketla family decided to give the name to their son. “Motlohelo” opens up to Sesotho culture. The Basotho give such a name to a child after his/her birth according to the events that are prevailing at that time. In this study these events become the surface reading of the poem. Khaketla’s son name is ‘Motlohelo’ because he comes after his siblings who passed away. His brother ‘Matsoso’ and his cousin with the same name passed away (Khaketla: Interview). According to deconstructive reading, Oxford University Press publishes this poem because it does not influence the society to rebel against apartheid. It does not care about the culture that “Motohelo” instills amongst the Basotho nation.

Khaketla continues to discuss her personal experiences in “Khakolo” and “Koli ea Malla” (dirge). The surface reading of both poems shows that they are a lament for the loved ones. Khaketla mourns the death of her son in “Khakolo” (dedication). She grieves about her friend who died in “koli-ea-Malla”. Oxford University Press overlooks Khaketla’s experiences in the two poems as having nothing to do with the discussion against apartheid system and they publish them. The publishers are happy that they will not be persecuted by the Publication Appeal Board for publishing an undesirable material in *Matsopa* through the publication of the two poems. However, the underlying message of Khaketla’s poems introduces what Gates (1986:12) calls the “tradition of black difference,” which is an aspect that is overlooked by the Publication Appeal Board. She asserts her Sesotho culture sense of history. She writes in a literary style that would serve to recall oral tradition. In this regard she elevates oral tradition beyond the publishing authorities’ expectations. Khaketla transcribes a Sesotho dirge as an indication of Sesotho cultural norms beyond the Bantu Education System of just publishing African languages literature for the purposes of study aids that teach Basotho how to read simple instructions in order to serve the employer.

Furthermore, the study uses “Masole a Heso a Taung” to show that publishers (and writers) cannot decide on the meaning of a literary work. The context of the poem emanates from its surface story. The poem is about the Bataung lineage soldiers. Khaketla is a Motaung herself and she recalls how the Bataung along with Moshoeshoe I of the Bakuena lineage joint hands in world II. The context of the poem creates scenery of the Bataung soldiers in uniform and guns telling their Afrikaaner masters that they should not be surprised about their absence at work in the farms. They tell their masters that they are going for world war II. This apparently calls for Oxford University Press to publish the poem.

When the study decontextualizes ‘the Bataung potential to fight’ from the world war II, the poem becomes protest literature with regard to apartheid situation in South Africa. The poem shows that the Bataung soldiers pose a danger to their white masters – yet the Oxford University Press is oblivious of this message and they publish the surface reading of the poem. The Bataung soldiers scenery is a demonstration of hope that one day the Bataung will free themselves from slavery of being the servants of the Afrikaaner farmers, through their excellent ability to fight war.

The study finds out that “Le Tsohile Joang?” surface reading relates to messages that are approved by the Publication Appeal Board and the Oxford University Press. The poem addresses the British government’s hesitation to give Lesotho independence. The poetess is questioning the Britons’ intention on providing Lesotho independence that will be controlled by them. But she is optimistic about Lesotho gaining absolute independence. When the context of the poem is decontextualized from Lesotho and recontextualized in South Africa, the publishers reading of the poem having nothing to do with South Africa

becomes questionable. According to the underlying message of the poem, it also relates to the dispute of the oppressed Basotho and other black lineages in South Africa who would like to participate in governing the country. Yet the Oxford University Press is oblivious of this message.

The study further discusses aspects of history in “Ebenezer”. The study shows that although Oxford University Press kept an eye to the contents that they wanted to publish in the poem, they also published the messages that they did not want to publish. According to the context of the poem, the church “Ebenezer” in Maseru is built in memory of the fallen soldiers in world war II. Oxford University Press reads the poem as just a simple message of a monument church. But an underlying message in the poem brings it closer to the South Africa experiences. “Ebenezer” can be read as a lament for those who die in the struggle for freedom from apartheid in South Africa. But such a reading possibility in “Ebenezer” escapes the Oxford University Press publishers and they publish the poem.

Another poem in *Mantsopa* proves beyond doubt that the publishers do not always publish the messages they want to publish in the contents they choose to publish. The study finds out that Oxford University Press was happy to publish the beauty of nature depicted by the surface reading or “Botle ba Naha Hlabula”. Critics such as Mphahlele (1987) also relied on the surface reading of writings like the poem. They labeled such literature “art for art sake”. The critiques questioned the contribution of such literature to the struggle of freedom in Southern Africa with regard to the apartheid. The underlying message of the poem discovered by this study is that the poem encourages the Basotho readers to admire their country and hence be patriotic to it. The admiration of a country indicates that the Basotho – wherever they are (in Lesotho and Free State) will learn to

love their country due to the hidden curriculum embodied in the language of the poem. As the result they will consider themselves as part of the country's citizens unlike the authorities who encouraged black people to consider themselves as second citizens of South Africa.

### **3.3 Deconstructive reading of values in *'Mantsopa***

In this section, the study continues to elucidate the problem that the deconstructive reading suggests an opposite reading to the one implied by the surface reading of a text. Since the publishers rely on the surface reading only, they are not aware that they publish issues they do not want to publish. The study is trying to show that no one can decide on the interpretation of the content of a publication she or he creates.

This section will debate the issues related to values in *'Mantsopa*. The Oxford University Press believed that the Basotho values in Khaketla's work do not infringe on the publication and entertainment act. They therefore published "Nthabiseng" (Rejoice with Me), "Molelekeng" (Send him/her away), "Potantši" le Chitja" (A Round Button), "Bo mo hlakohile Borena" (Chieftancy has been Taken Away from Him), "Ha ho Hlaku Lepe" (Non Rewarding Task), "Banna ba Mehla Morao" (Men of the Present times), "Tichere" (A Teacher), "U Lehlanya Motšoane" (Motšoane You are Mad) and "Tanki ea Mosotho" (A Mosotho Thank You).

Khaketla's experiences of her husband's encounter with the colonial masters in Lesotho are reflected in the surface reading of "Nthabiseng" and "Molelekeng". The authorities expel her husband from Basutoland High School. According to Khaketla (Interview: 2002), her husband owned a newspaper called "Mohlalani" (a soldier at war). He used it

to criticize the colonial government in Lesotho for failing to treat Basotho and the colonialists as equal benefactors of Lesotho economy. In both poems, the situation forces the poetess' husband (Makalo Khaketla) to leave Lesotho and work in the Republic of South Africa. One of the prominent Basotho women from a chieftancy lineage (Matheakuena 'Makoali Molapo) discussed in "Nthabiseng" became supportive to her. She explains to Khaketla the repercussions of being politically active about the issues of fighting colonialism. The poet is pleased that at least there are people who can see her problem.

The Oxford University Press publishes the poems because they promote South Africa as economically viable country as opposed to Lesotho. Its surface reading seeks to show that Basotho get better salaries in South Africa. The Oxford University Press publishers are oblivious that Khaketla is one of the pioneers of biographical and "Jim comes to Town" themes. The critics later recognized these themes in the 1970's and 1980's (C.f. Maake 1992, 2002 and Gerard 1981: 91-93). The publisher is not interested to see the contribution of Khaketla to the development of Sesotho literature. What the publisher is interested in is to have the reading material that is not against the ruling government with regard to ideas. This study finds out that Khaketla made one of the first attempts to create a biographical theme by relating her problems in a (poetic) genre. Her endeavour develops the Sesotho genre by increasing the number of themes. Such an important attempt is looked over by the South African publishing authorities. Khaketla had aimed at the development of Writing skill that benefit the development of a genre in Sesotho rather than the aim of Bantu education to use Sesotho books to learn rudimentary writing and reading. As a result the deconstructive reading of the poems is more than what the Oxford University Press thought it was publishing.

The surface reading explains the way gold and money is found in “Potantši le Chitja”. It mentions that although people die enormously due to the digging of gold, people still go to the mines to get some money. According to the message that the publishers read, in the poem it is dangerous to go underground as people are sometimes maimed. The Oxford University Press publishes this poem because the surface reading supports the acceptable literature by the authorities that the blacks should be discouraged as much as possible to be in places like Johannesburg hence show some modicum of civilization (c.f. Malan 1987 and Maake 1992: 172). However the deconstructive reading advises the Basotho mine workers to take care of themselves in the quest of gold where they get money. The substratum message reminds the workers that lack of carefulness might result in maimed bodies. Furthermore the message regards money as the representation of the workers’ exploitation, and warns the workers not to forget about the exploitation when they get paid.

The context of “U lehlanya Motšoane” is based on the character called Motšoane. Motšoane is likened to ’Mantšo’s role in the poem. Tšoeute is different, he is unlike Motšoane and ’Mantšo in his treatment. He is given all the things that are denied Motšoane and ’Mantšo. The poem presents different images of Motšoane, and their sceneries. Motšoane is at his home looking at his parents’ cows being milked by a stranger. Definitely this is a Lesotho situation at a surface reading. When he asks the stranger for some milk to mix his porridge, the stranger tells him that he is mad. Later Motšoane is in the scenery where the strangers are preparing meat; he tells them that his children are hungry. He then asks for some piece of meat. Again the stranger tells him that he is mad, but the stranger treats Tšoeute differently. Motšoane is also denied education or to work for himself in the mines. He is told to look after the animals by the strangers (the

allies of Tšoeute) instead. The context of the poem is a folktale like narrative, and provides the surface reading.

Khaketla's direct experience of the unequal treatment of blacks and whites in the Southern region becomes a deeper reading. In terms of deconstructive reading, "Tšoeute" refers to whites that are treated better than the blacks in the form of "Motšoane" or "Mantšo". The publishers of *Mantsopa* fail to see such a reading because they cannot co-ordinate the proper names "Motšoane" and "Mantšo" to the adjectival stem /-tšo/ which relate to the colour black. Furthermore they fail to see that "Tšoeute" is a proper name derived from the adjectival stem /-tšoeu/ (white). This study finds that the message of racial discrimination – that of the whites giving themselves a better treatment than blacks because of their authority slips away from the readers through the aid of white publishers beyond their expectation.

At another deconstructive reading level the study regards Khaketla's writing of the poem as a form of writing back to the colonial rule. Like other African writers (c.f. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe), Khaketla satirizes the oppression of the blacks. Khaketla considers that it is bad for the white colonials to use the wealth of the country to enrich themselves while the blacks cannot do likewise. But because the publishers do not understand Sesotho – probably because it is not their first language, they continue to publish this message that is against them.

Another poem that is related to racial prejudice is "Bo mo Hlakohile Borena". Its open reading is a story about the Batswana prince (Seretse Khama). He failed to become a king because he married a white woman (Ruth Williams). The publishers are happy to publish this poem because the apartheid system prohibited mixed marriages. But Seretse Khama's

experience can be decontextualised from the surface reading of the publishers and recontextualise to the question of the morale of racial discrimination. According to the deconstructive reading of the poem, it is against human rights to decide for people whom to marry.

The surface reading of “Ha ho Hlaku Lepe” maintains that people cannot survive in isolation. This is in relation to the Basotho values that people are there to help each other. Khaketla warns that, if people have a tendency of keeping apart from each other, the society weakens. Oxford University Press publishes the poem because of its surface message. The recitation of the communal qualities of the Basotho does no harm to the publishers’ expectations under the apartheid rule. But the recontextualisation of the poem interprets it as a teaching of solidarity amongst the Basotho. It conjures the picture of hoping to reunite the Basotho with other lineages in Southern Africa.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

- ❖ Publishers such as Oxford University Press and authorities like the government’s Publication Appeal Board (PAB) selected and promoted the works that showed that the African Languages should only be read in order to teach its Basotho readers how to read and write. However, the publication bodies could not control the content matter of the works they published to support only their intended suggestions to the readers.
- ❖ They chose to publish works on Basotho culture in the form of rituals, religion, values and the customary norms with the belief that they did not reflect the political messages against the practice of the apartheid system. However, these Sesotho texts had the hidden anti-apartheid messages.

- ❖ The jokes, jests and other entertaining stories in *'Mantsopa* provided different interpretations caused by their double reading. Oxford University Press published jokes in “Sekotompana ” and “Mohlolohali” as oral stories of the Basotho thinking that they did not have any political suggestions. The intention was to amuse the pupils. Furthermore, the jokes and jests would teach them the simple skill of reading and writing without exposing them to literature that might evoke their questioning of the different treatment of blacks and whites that was caused by the apartheid system. However, there were hidden interpretations about the discrimination between the poor and the rich colour bias or gender in these poems. The satire and the irony in the poems provided the very reading that the publishers avoided. Sekotompana’s deeper reading is an epitome of the political messages that the apartheid system did not encourage.
  
- ❖ The interpretation of the works of literature defeated the authorial intention because it depended on the orientation of the reader, not only on the surface reading appreciated by the publishers. The publishers of *'Mantsopa* and the government authorities had not acquired Sesotho as their first language. They failed to understand the underlying messages in *'Mantsopa*. They published the messages that the Publication Appeal Board prohibited in *'Mantsopa*. It did not occur to the authorities minds that the Sesotho proper names like “Mantšo, Motšoane and Tšoeute” might be applied to the questioning of racial parity in “U Lehlanya Motšoane”.
  
- ❖ The messages of the works of literature change with time. The apartheid stalwarts believed that they could use the past stories in Sesotho literature to teach the Basotho how to read and write in order to do their instructions at work, not for their political

empowerment. For the publishers during the apartheid era the past stories did not relate to the everyday life of the Basotho, it referred to their antiquity. But the study has found out that readers could use the messages from the past history like “lithoko” (praise poems) to solve the problems that were prevailing in their contemporary time

- ❖ The publishers were oblivious that the Sesotho literature produced during the apartheid era would not only produce people who knew how to read and write in order to carry on only with the manual tasks in the ranks of the society. They were not aware that Sesotho literature would inform the Basotho and promote their customary norms amongst themselves. Khaketla shared the value of naming children according to the Sesotho culture in the poem “Motlohelo”. Children are named after the incidences that happen amongst the community in Sesotho to mark valuable things like major incidents in the country, date of birth and historical events.
- ❖ The Sesotho literature during the apartheid era also promoted and informed the Basotho about everyday norms. Khaketla shared her perspective with the Basotho readers about the value of money as a new phenomenon in the lives of the Basotho in “Potantši le Chitja” (Round Button). Furthermore she encouraged them to help each other in “Ha ho Hlaku-lepe”.
- ❖ The themes created in the apartheid era promoted the development of Sesotho literature beyond the state’s expectation of teaching the Basotho how to read and write. Khaketla wrote the biographical poems about her family as part of the Basotho nation. She quoted that her husband once moved to South Africa where most of the Basotho go for greener pastures or better payment. This became a new theme and hence the development of Sesotho literature.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Sedibelo sa nkgono (1996)*

#### 4.0 Introduction

There is an assumption that post-apartheid published materials tend to reflect the African worldview in its unpolluted state. But here I am going to argue that the purported African culture inherent in the post-apartheid literature cannot be a true reflection of what it was as it has been diluted over the years.

The post-apartheid published materials are evidence, which shows that the publishers cannot determine the interpretation of the materials that they print. They cannot provide the reading materials that are purely either African or Western. This chapter intends to find out the extend at which Maskew Miller Longman (MML) produced materials that were in line with the post-apartheid language policy of the South African government. Thiatu Nnemutanzhela (2/3/00), an African languages publisher at Maskew Miller Longman held a seminar that discussed the publishing of African languages in the post-apartheid era. He argued that the new South Africa demands the press to produce quality African languages literature that is equivalent to that of Afrikaans and English. In this way South Africa declares the status of previously marginalized languages official like that of English and Afrikaans. Mpe (1999: 108) argues that this can be achieved when the contemporary writers produce literature texts that promote culture and oral art forms such as idiomatic expressions, folktales and proverbs. The Maskew Miller Longman republished the already self published *Selibelo sa nkhono* (Khaketla 1995), from a Lesotho orthography into a South African orthography *Sedibelo sa nkgono* (1996). The

Maskew Miller Longman publishers in 1996 under the auspices of Nnemutanzhela found that Khaketla's writing meets the demands of the post-apartheid language policies. They chose *Selibelo sa nkhono* (*Sedibelo sa nkgono*) as the winner of the African Heritage Award. Mpho Hlabela Ncedana, an editor of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* (1996) mentioned in an interview (2001) that previously the publishers at Maskew Miller Longman gave the price to the best African literature in English text among the titles it had published. In the post-apartheid era Maskew Miller Longman includes the African languages literature category for the award. The study chooses *Sedibelo sa nkgono* (1996) because it is the first African languages text to be recognized as one of the books that meet the criteria of the publication of African languages literature in the post-apartheid / colonial era.

The implication of the arguments above is that *Sedibelo sa nkgono* represents a pure Sesotho culture. The Basotho oral literature such as idiomatic expressions, folktales and proverbs are engraved in it. It is a masterpiece of Sesotho cultural values and beliefs in writing. But the study will show that the Basotho culture had an influence from the European culture overtime. Couzens (2005:231) gives an account that Miss Cochet introduced the Christmas celebrations to the Basotho in the 1800's. The influence came through the embracing of Western religion, colonialism and education in Southern Africa. Opinion influencers (such as MML) cannot interpret the post-apartheid Sesotho literature as embodying purely African culture.

Firstly, we will argue that the publishers might have believed that the traditional religion of the Basotho presides over the Christian beliefs in the play. However, the hidden interpretation of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* shows that the very mentioning of the Christian/Western religion amongst the Basotho in the play, acknowledges how it has permeated and continues to pervade its active presence in their culture.

Secondly, the chapter will discuss the customary norms in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. It will also show that the dialectic between Basotho culture and Western/foreign cultures constitutes the pivot of the work. The author (Khaketla) portrays her characters through the use of more native idiomatic expressions, and figures of speech rather than foreign words adopted into Sesotho. However the very mentioning of the foreign words in the play is symbolic of intrusion as well as presence of the Western culture in Sesotho cultural milieu.

Lastly, the study will focus on the equivocal values in Sesotho culture with regard to *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. Examples of such values are the discouragement of pre-marital sex, the encouragement of chastity and parents' obedience. The reader gets an impression that these are Basotho values in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. However, the study will show that there is another underlying reading of the play, which shows that these values also reflect the Western culture.

#### **4.1 Deconstructive reading of religious and ritual aspects in *Sedibelo sa nkgono***

This section is going to provide a deconstructive analysis of the Western/African equivocacy of the Basotho religious and ritual aspects in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. It is to argue that Khaketla's cultural background shows that God has always been the concept that was amongst the Basotho with regard to their tradition. However a deconstructive reading also shows that the Basotho accepted the Western cultural concept of God amongst them. Furthermore the section will discuss the equivocal nature of the superstitions, rituals and religion in the play. It will look into the rights of passage, bringing up of children and the myth of a spinster.

Khaketla foregrounds the message that the concept "God" has always been part of the Basotho religion. Khaketla uses the Sesotho word "Molimo" throughout the play. Our point of departure here is that this text which has been published during the post-apartheid period is

expected to be grounded in the African world view and according to what was expressed by the publishers or their representatives, it is supposed to be a good example of an attempt to find true Africanness. Now the argument advanced here in this work, is that the text is equivocal especially in as far as the concept ‘Molimo’ is concerned. One character in the text uses ‘Molimo’ in the modern sense which is a reflection of the Western world because according to her ‘Molimo’ is God, the trinity – it is the Christian God. It is the concept, which excludes the hierarchy of ‘Balimo’ where ‘Molimo e moholo’ (elderly God) is supposed to occupy the upper rung. This is the sense in which one character uses the concept ‘God’ and I have here an example to illustrate:

Keneng:...Haeba Molimo o ntheretse lenyalo, o tla mpha monna ea khethiloeng ke eena. (If God has planned marriage for me, he will give me a partner). (Khaketla 1995, p.15)

Then I have another character that now uses the concept clearly in the sense of the basic and pure traditional concept of religion, where now ‘Molimo’ is part of a hierarchical order of the ancestors. Tlali replies to his friend Moseli who wants to know why he does not love Keneng anymore. Moseli thought Tlali was going to marry Keneng. But Tlali answers him as follows:

Motho toe oa ha Molimo a k’u khaohane le ’na hle!  
(Please leave me alone, you God’s person!). (Khaketla 1995, p.20)

The Sesotho idiomatic/proverbial expression “motho oa Molimo” (God’s person) reappears again on page 41 when Pulane – one of Keneng’s friends expresses shock upon learning that Keneng has passed away, probably through stress caused by Tlali not marrying her. Its

appearance as an old Sesotho expression (idiomatic/proverbial) implies that from time in memory – before the Basotho met with the concept of “God” as Western they already understood that he is present and called upon him in their hour of need.

The use of adoptives or foreign words is suggestive of the Western world from which there should be a shift from which the African culture has to be detached completely. So these words in fact suggest the links that cannot be broken easily between African and Western culture. This also indicates that Western culture permeates African culture not only at the cultural level, that there is an inclination to think not only through African culture but to think through Western culture.

Khaketla rarely portrays the Christian foreign words, which Sesotho language acquired from the Western Religion. In spite of the author seemingly trying to push an African line of thought, here there is a sudden change to embracing what evidently appears to be Western religion so that the moral attitude is inconsistently consistent. There are only two incidences where the word prophet (porofeta) appears. It appears on page 11 where Konosoang tells Keneng to stop predicting about Keneng’s future life as a married woman. Furthermore Motšeo uses this word on page 46. She is one of Keneng’s friends and she is trying to come to terms with the death of Keneng. Its occasional use indicates that Basotho do not depend so much on the foreign words. They might have alternatives in expressing their religious feelings without foreign words. In the second incidence, the words “Bibele” (Bible) and Jesu (Jesus) are found in one single act of conversation. Molupe tells a story that the Bible is a foreign text that originates from Jewish culture. Khaketla’s tendency to demonstrate “God” as part of Basotho culture and beliefs rather than a borrowed concept from the West brings up the idea that long long ago – the Basotho prayed God on their own before the coming of the missionaries.

However, the readers learn more about Christianity amongst the Basotho in the last scene of the play. The stories around Keneng conjure the Western religion ethics and Christianity scene. Keneng's grandmother is a staunch Christian. Her friend Mpho calls this old woman "Mosali oa Merapelo" (A woman who beliefs in prayer). Khaketla refers to the title "Bo-'M'e ba merapelo" (Women of Prayer) that the Basotho society sometimes refer to them as "Bo-'M'e ba Seaparo" (Uniform Wearing Church Women). Thobea (Interview: 23 May, 2005) and Fr Morallana (Interview: 6 May, 2005) used this terms alternately when they referred to women societies formed in the missionary orientated churches. Khaketla shows that she does not attach so much importance whatsoever of Christianity to Basotho lives by mentioning in passing 'Bo-'Me' ba merapelo / Seaparo'. She just mentions once that Keneng's grandmother is 'Mosali oa Merapelo / Seaparo'. This mentioning in passing of a Western religious aspect evokes the African view, which Khaketla and her publishers want to foreground in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*.

The reading that agrees with Khaketla's intentions evokes legendary stories like that of Puleng, a woman from Maliele in the outskirts of Roma valley in Lesotho. Puleng becomes the first catholic woman convert in an incident that happened about a century ago when the Roman Catholic priests arrived in Lesotho. She enters the church and feels she has the spirit that has forced her to come to church and become a convert. From there on, the story gives us a very colourful appearance of Puleng in her Sesotho traditional attire instead of focusing on her devotion to Christianity – hence one of the first 'Bo-'M'e ba Merapelo'. The study would compare her to Phyllis Wheatley, the first African woman writer with regard to willingly embracing the Western culture.

However, the catholic priests / missionaries (perhaps among them Fr Joseph Gerard, the first Catholic missionary in Lesotho) are entranced by Puleng's appearance. She is wearing a closely knit tassled (inner) skirt (thithana). She put on a very soft cow skin skirt which is longer at the back, than the front, showing respect for a Mosotho Woman. The front of the longer skirt showed the meticulous craft of thithana. Since it was summer according to this legend, the upper part of Puleng's body was bare except for the colourful jewelry made of beads which dangle from her neck. When the reader's mind links the story of Puleng, the first woman convert to Khaketla's mentioning of 'Mosali oa Merapelo' – the reader learns a great deal about the Basotho norms than Christianity, hence fulfils Khaketla's aim of foregrounding the traditional aspects of the Basotho in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*.

However, "Mosali oa Merapelo" resurfaces again as still taking a huge part in Basotho lives with regard to evoking Christian ways of life amongst the Basotho. Thobea (Interview: 23 May, 2005) in an interview sees such women as belonging to a kind of religious group:

This uniform wearing mothers simply mean to me sort of association – they belong to one group. They see that through their uniform. Besides that for them to be wearing a uniform is not just an association. It means something more which marks the holiness .... They see themselves somewhere in the strands of holiness to an extend that one would behave differently from the behaviour we have learned or seen in this person. Some go to the extend of speaking differently.

In other words, instead of thinking that the mentioning in passing of 'Basali ba Merapelo' would undermine the Basotho as being involved in Western religion or Christianity, other interpretations show that the Basotho society see women like Keneng's grandmother as agents

that would disseminate the Christian ethics. Puleng's colourful and meticulous attire might have brought into Fr Gerard and other missionaries' minds the idea of special clothes that are even dignified in terms of Western ethics in that they cover the whole body for different groups of women. According to the Interviews I held with Thobea (23 / 5/2005), Fr Morallana (6/5/2005) and Sr Alphoncinah 'Mofu (4/05/2005) the missionaries must have observed the Basotho's attachment to clothes. The missionaries are bowled over at the spectacular appearance of Puleng. They decided to assign the different colours and clothes to different groups of Christian women. This is particularly obvious with the first women groups in the missionary churches. The Wesleyans wear red, black and white attire, the Catholics purple and black and Evangelicals white and black.

Keneng's grandmother brings up Keneng who later follows in her footsteps. Keneng's friend Mpho reminds Motšea and Pulane (Keneng's other friends) of Keneng's pilgrimage to Israel. Keneng had a chance to visit Francis of Assisi's chapel in her tour. The readers learn about Francis of Assisi's saintness through Mpho's discussion about the pilgrimage of Keneng. This is instilling admiration of the Western religion. Mpho goes on to tell Motšea and Pulane how Saint Francis understood the language of birds and animals. Furthermore, the roses that he cultivated did not grow thorns. The implication is that he had faith in God and hence the heavens gave him extra ordinary powers.

Keneng's grandmother also compares her with an ointment that anointed Jesus feet. In this case she refers to the usefulness of Keneng within her community as the projects initiator and a teacher. The old woman's conversation conjures the story of the washing of the feet with regard to the Easter season amongst readers. Before Jesus died on the cross, the apostles had washed and anointed his feet. The act of going into depth with regard to the discussion about the entrenched Christian values or Western religion amongst the Basotho later in the play

shows that Christianity came much later in Basotho lives. It undermines Christianity in the daily lives of the Basotho. The life in the play has been going on without the characters referring deeply to the Christian values, amongst themselves as Basotho. However, the underlying Christian message that the play reveals later undermines the implied publishers view that Basotho look at Western beliefs as remote from their culture. The minute reference to them highlights their importance in being part of the Sesotho culture and Khaketla's attempt to avoid it.

Apart from religion the study focuses on the rights of passage as one of the religious practices in Sesotho culture that Khaketla portrays in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. In analogy to the Maskew Miller Longman's recommendation of contemporary Sesotho literary works it might have been attracted to *Sedibelo sa nkgono* by its discussion of this practice. The reader learns from Keneng's speech that a right of passage is a tradition that is inherent in the Basotho culture. Keneng imparts the following conversation to Moseli when he asks her as to why she does not marry his friend Tlali:

Keneng: Ha ke re joale `m`a monna o tla be sa le a ntšupa liphoso, a rorothela mora ka mohofe ona oo a tlohileng a tla u kenya lapeng la hae, a nts'a nyatsa ....(My husband's mother would always complain, see fault in me and grumble to her son for bringing a woman with poorverty background in her home, she is always going to criticize me). (Khaketla 1995, P.27)

Keneng refuses to pursue and actualize her marriage to her long time boyfriend. She is afraid that her mother-in-law will ill-treat her. She has found out that Tlali's mother is expecting a different young woman (another chief's daughter) to be her daughter-in-law. Tlali himself tells the story on page 20. But the rights of passage do not happen to Keneng as she just talks about them. Khaketla in this regard portrays a dubious nature of the post-apartheid literature

publishing recommendations that Thiatu Nnemutanzhela (2/3/00) articulates above. The representation of the rights of passage as the culture and ritual that is peculiar to the Basotho nation is undermined by its mentioning in passing with regard to *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. It seems Basotho have adopted another culture – that of opting not to get into marriage as Keneng seems to be inclined to do so through the analysis above.

Motšeo, Moseli and Pulane do not approve of Keneng's decision of leaving her long time boyfriend (Tlali). Immediately one refers to the boyfriend, it is something of the new culture, not the old one. In the old culture marriages are arranged. Even if they were not pre-arranged with regard to two individuals, they were prearranged between two families. Even if some form of liberty was given, it was liberty under guidance. The parents would tell their offspring that they will marry or get married in the family that they like. If their child does not agree they chose another family for them. It was restrictive. But this one of individual choice is something new and it comes with Christianity which emphasizes the individuality of an individual because life is of the individual. Yet African culture affirms that you can only be a human being if you are part of a larger whole. The reverse as far as Western culture is concerned seems to be true that the larger whole can only be a community because of an individual existence. It is the question of 'because we are therefore I am', that is the African sense. But in the Western sense it is 'because I am therefore we are'.

The implication is that Keneng will remain a spinster, a status that is abhorable in Sesotho culture. *Sedibelo sa nkgono* includes the oral traditional story like the one of the myth in order to reassert its proper African literature status. Mpe (1999:108) discusses about the development of African literature today. He agrees with *Sedibelo sa nkgono*'s stressing on the depiction of oral tradition like the spinster story. According to Mpe writers are trying to "assert their sense of history, which differs from the African history of colonial discourse".

The Basotho believe that a spinster is not worthwhile because she does not bring wealth into the family. The family and society resent her. She does not bring lobola, which will sustain a family.

But Keneng's achievements through her Western education question the Basotho belief that Maskew Miller Longman is trying to portray. The substratum message is that Keneng takes care of her grandmother financially and helps in the community projects because she is a spinster. Her involvement in the development and caring of homes questions the feasibility of the spinster myth as an unproductive person in Basotho society. The author here seems to be engaging herself as a split personality. She seems to externalize herself. Perhaps the external part seems to have inclinations towards Africa and perhaps the remaining part has inclinations towards the West.

But then again even though Western culture is definitely foregrounded and it hovers above African culture, the argument is not balanced. The argument is based upon selective facts. It does not take into consideration the fabric of society, which could attend to such cases of poverty and other matters, where the society itself had mechanisms in place to attend to such issues. It was through communalism, not through individual community endeavours. So Keneng would be expected to be married because she was going to be part of a larger whole, where she is involved in an economic engagement in order to participate in an economic plan.

She seems to be weighing the two sides in as far as outlook upon the world is concerned. Is it the West or is it Africa? Not by looking at the picture holistically but taking isolated incidence and contradicting some of them. It shows the way in which the scales are tipped. If the argument makes sense in favour of one or the other it means that the author's inclinations will towards something that is more positive and not negative.

So there is a veiled condemnation of African culture and its values. It is not overt but it is veiled. It is rubbed in through a symbolic demonstration of how Western culture can be successful because now this individual, this spinster ceases to be an individual but the spinster becomes the symbol of Western thought. That Western thought in fact is superior to African thought. If the spinster can be so caring, have so much time for others, prove to be someone passionate, then what about an African, where is she?

But again the reader can compare Keneng's caliber to a traditional female of the paternal family (Mosetsana). According to Sesotho culture when a woman leaves her family and marries into another family, she still continues to support her family. She does not stop taking care of her elders and siblings. Furthermore she is still consulted in the ritual events and other family projects when the members need her material help and verbal advice. This becomes another dimension of deconstructive reading. It is not true that she is supposed to die in her marriage home. This is just said because she is just physically going to be buried there. She is not going to be buried at her paternal home. However she will be coming back to her paternal home and even her maternal to support her relations.

Finally, Basotho believe that the first child in the family should not behave badly because others are going to follow suit, is mentioned in the play. When Moseli tells Keneng that he would be an agent of her elopement with Tlali (p.27), Keneng replies as follows:

Keneng: Uena u batla ho nkekeletsa moroalo, ke se ntse ke jareletse hakanana: Ke hlompholle batsoali ba ka, ke be ke etse hore ngoana e mong le eena a etse joalo .... (You want to increase my

burden while I am stressed: I should dishonor my parents, even motivate my other sibling to follow suit). ( Khaketla 1995, p.27)

Elopement is another format of marriage according to Sesotho customs. Two lovers escape to the boyfriend's home with the intention of getting married. Sometimes the girl does not know that she is then getting married. Upon arrival the young woman's lover leaves her at some distance in his village, goes to his house and tells his parents that he has brought his girlfriend to his home. The prospective mother-in-law fetches the girl and brings her to her house. The young man's mother sleeps with her prospective daughter-in-law. The following morning a sheep is slaughtered in order to welcome this young woman to her new home. The young man's parents and relations send a message to the girl's home to make them aware that their daughter has been married into the young man's home. They announce to the girl's parents and her relations that they are going to negotiate lobola with them.

In the analysis, Keneng says that she does not want to marry Tlali because she sees the possibility where she will come back home from a married life. She says that this will prompt her brothers and sisters to lead a promiscuous life. However, the substratum message is that the readers do not see her siblings in the book and how they react to their sister's example. Their sister however has sacrificed her prospective "bad" marriage because of them. The first point that has to come to the fore is the practice of elopement. The author here evidently is not in favour of it. If it is through eloping that Keneng is going to set a bad example to her sisters, the author already sees eloping in a very deem light. Here in a very oblique sense the very author who is supposed to set the tone for the search of the African self is the one who is criticizing aspects of what she is searching for. So the question becomes what is she really searching for? What types of African values or practices is she looking for? If at any stage when she is confronted with a value or a practice, the practice is shot down, so what will

remain? So what is now emerging is the picture gravitating gradually towards the West. Furthermore in the gravitation towards the West, what will it be that such an individual will be taking over to the West? Will it be an individual emptied of everything that defines African, and embrace everything that defines Westernization?

#### **4.2 Deconstructive reading of the customary norms in *Sedibelo sa nkgono***

Gates Jun. (1986:11) appositions Nnemutanzhela's propose above by mentioning that 'accused of lacking history, blacks published history of blacks in Africa to posit both the individual 'I' of the author as well as the collective 'I' of the race'. Nnemutanzhela (2/3/2000) suggests that Maskew Miller Longman was happy to publish the customary norms of the Basotho in *Sedibelo sa Nkgono* in order to restore African literatures identity. Gates (1986:12) likewise explains the customary norms as "history" that Africans need to assert in their literature.

Maskew Miller Longman then promotes an aspect of chieftaincy through the publication of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* in order to encourage reassertion of history in the African languages literature. Tlali, a chief's son, leaves his longtime girl friend Keneng to marry another chief's daughter to fulfill the wishes of his parents in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. Maskew Miller Longman helps the reader to learn that it is the Basotho tradition for the chief's son to marry the chief's daughter. Furthermore it helps the progression of chieftaincy. It published *Sedibelo sa nkgono* because chieftaincy is a form of governance that remains ever present until now in Basotho society. Evidently this is in search of a history of blacks in Africa to posit both the individual "I" as well as the collective "I".

Other topics that Maskew Miller Longman promotes with regard to the original Basotho culture and the customary norms in *Sedibelo sa nkgono* are the oral literature and the Basotho games. Nevertheless, the underlying reading of the play shows that the Basotho the customary norms that have been passed on from earlier generations that Khaketla depicts are not totally exonerated from encouraging the Western norms.

Tlali marries a chief's daughter although he does not love her because Bakuena /chieftaincy tradition expects him to do so. On page twelve Konosoang pursues Keneng to win back her steady boyfriend (Tlali) from the young Mokuena woman who has just arrived at the university. However, Keneng counter argues:

U se k'a lebala hore Tlali ke ngoan'a morena, 'me marena h'a nyallane le bafo , (do not forget that Tlali is a chief's son, and chiefs do not marry peasants daughters). ( Khaketla 1995, p. 12)

The readers do not meet the chief's daughter in the play; they only hear other characters talking about her. The chief's daughter's meeting with Tlali, the process of their marriage or life thereafter does not fully develop in the play. An account of the chieftaincy marriage is too curtailed for the tradition, which reflects the real African culture amongst the Basotho in the post-apartheid era. This period of time is expected to expose the original or real African culture void of the Western culture.

However, the account of Tlali's marriage evokes another tradition that *Sedibelo sa nkgono* promotes the prearrangement of marriage (peheletso) in Sesotho culture. Tlali's father and another chief vow to marry their children after helping each other with regard to the gun war

between Lesotho and South Africa. They later have children and the two families decide to continue with their plan. According to the underlying reading of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* the perpetuation of expressing the traditional processes of marriage in passing renders them to the problems of doubting whether they still add value to the nature of the Sesotho culture today. Perhaps the author is trying to constitute order in her text through selectivity that which is of minor significance is omitted. Now the suggestion here is that what is left out is not of major significance. This is now the lesson we are getting; *Sedibelo sa nkgono* reflects only the Basotho cultural aspects that need attention. The work does not even mention the areas of culture that need to be forgotten. Perhaps the author does not do this inadvertently but it is a fact that this is happening. However, one would have expected the author to highlight especially that which is in our receding memories in the true spirit of African renaissance. This would have enlightened our past and given us its significance, to hold it in front of our eyes such that we do not only see it but also understand it better. However, she has not given us any benefit of how we understand our culture by simply dropping some of its aspects. Now it is as if the author is saying in a very indirect sense, 'if you forget about it the better, because I attach no significance to that. I do not need even to mention it'. Yet the marriage proceedings are so modified such that we are no longer aware of 'the real', because of the many modifications of marriage proceedings. So one would have expected the author to be a social being. A social being that pulsates with the blood flow of the community. Who is aware of the concerns of her community and articulates its needs. Nevertheless, in this sense the author seems to be out of step with the needs of the community.

The richness of the language used in *Sedibelo sa nkgono* might be one aspect that motivated Maskew Miller Longman to publish the book. The standard and nature of language used in the text happens to be one of the requirements for proscription for schools by the South African government. In some cases, the language used seems to create an atmosphere, to paint

a picture typical of true Sesotho setting. However, while this might be true, the intrusion of encroaching English language is also noticeable. The question that arises is: Is the author trying to salvage the African culture of the past in terms of language? Alternatively, is she simply saying that it used be this way but today it no longer is, because of the liberal use of the foreign tongue? Whilst having a deep into the past the author is also painfully aware of the present. Trying to reconcile the two is a difficult task, which she too cannot successfully address.

The text shows that chieftaincy cannot be rooted out of the Basotho society. The friendship of Tlali – the prospective king of Lesotho and Moseli – a Mosotho South African shows this. Moseli was born and grew up in South Africa where the Basotho chieftaincy does not take presidency. But Moseli is a friend to the prospective king of Lesotho. He would also like to be an advisor to the king. In other words, both the Basotho in Lesotho and South Africa owe allegiance to the king. But the underlying reading shows that Moseli as an advisor to the king is a potential agent who can change culture and chieftaincy to be in line with contemporary civilization away from the Bakuena culture. Moseli advises Keneng to marry Tlali while Tlali's father would like him to marry according to Bakuena/chieftancy/Sesotho tradition.

Moseli finds out that his friend Tlali, would like to marry his long time girl friend Keneng, but he is prevented to do so by his parents' decision of choosing a daughter-in-law for themselves. When this situation troubles him, he tearfully confides to his friend Moseli :

Tlali: Ha ke hloke ke be ke u joetse hore mofihli enoa ke ngoana ho `na; motho ea lekaneng hore e ka ba mosali oa ka ke Keneng, `me u paki ea hore ke mo rata ka botho bohle ba ka. Lenyalo la rona le enoa e mong le reriloe ke batsoali ba rona re e so be teng. (I don't need to tell you

that this newcomer is a child to me. A person I am supposed to marry is Keneng. You know how much I love her. Our marriage with this other one was designed by our parents before we were born). (Khaketla 1995, p.20)

Moseli tries to convince Keneng to try to protect her affair with Tlali and end up marrying him. He suggests elopement to avoid parents' interference and prevention of their happiness. This is a suggestion that his friend should marry without the parents consent, in order to have a good marriage. In other words, his friend should be liberated from the cares of oppressive chieftaincy and culture system. In this regard he says to Keneng:

Moseli:.... Hao, nthoan'e kaa ka uena! Ke ne ke tla u akhela lehetleng mona, ke koebele ka uena, ke be ke fihle ke u hlahlele, `mate a u behe letšoao, e be ho felile. (Such a small thing like you! I would just strap you across my shoulder and bring you to my friend. Then it would be the end.) (Khaketla 1995, p. 27)

Moseli's conversation here is a pictographic suggestion of an elopement event. Elopement is one of the modes of marriages by the Basotho. The modern inclined Moseli opts for it compared to a prearranged marriage. This is indicative of some of prior culture inclinations suitable for contemporary society while others are fading. Young partners would rather choose partners for themselves instead of allowing parents to choose spouses for them.

Khaketla suggests that oral literature is an aspect, which sustains the culture of Basotho in the play that carries a pre-arranged marriage as a central theme. She provides a liberal usage of idiomatic expressions and Sesotho proverbs in the play. The purpose is to highlight the theme of pre-arranged marriage. There are expressions such as "Molimo ha a fe motho ka letsoho"

(God does not give a person by a hand), “o se nkile moo bete li rekoang teng” (He took it where courage is bought) and “ho opa Khomo lenaka” (To speak the truth). However, pronouncements like “truth is stranger than fiction”, “old flame” and “that’s pretty obvious, surely” rear their head whenever one continues reading the play.

Khaketla also offers reference to folktale as part of the Basotho genre. Keneng becomes a legend amongst her peers and community. Furthermore, Moseli gives an account of how his grandmother was able to tell him about Peli and Tharo. However, the underlying reading of the education provided by the folktale for Tlali’s predicament does not sustain the practices of the Basotho with regard to their tradition of a pre-arranged marriage.

Furthermore, opinion initiators like Maskew Miller Longman further promote the Basotho indigenous games in order to expand the horizon of the customary norms of Basotho in African literature. Maskew Miller Longman wants the Basotho readers to appreciate their original games such as playing houses (*mantloane*) and rope hopping (*khati*) that they expose to them when it publishes *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. However, there is a dubious verification of whether some cultural practices such as some of the games have always been the original Basotho customary norms. Furthermore whether they are not universal practices of life. Tim Couzins in *Murder at Morija* (2005:231) explains that Basotho have adopted some of the customary norms from the missionaries that came from Europe – namely the French and English. Mrs Jacottet, the wife to Reverend Jacottet of the Paris Missionary Evangelical Society introduced the gesture of showing happiness through throwing a party. Her Easter parties were the most famous amongst the Basotho. Rope hopping and playing houses are also games played by the European children. However, Keneng reminisces of the days when she and Konosoang used to enjoy these ‘original’ Basotho young girls pastimes.

### 4.3 Deconstructive reading of values in *sedibelo sa nkgono*

The last segment of the analysis of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* will discuss the Sesotho values in it. Keneng who is the main character in the play seems to be the epitome of good behaviour according to Sesotho culture. The Basotho community in *Sedibelo sa nkgono* prefers her. Keneng refuses Tlali's unsustainable marriage proposal to her. She predicts that Tlali would leave her for the chief's daughter because she is a commoner (c.f. Act 1 scene 2 and 4). She says that Tlali's lineage does not approve of the situation where their subjects marry their sons. All attempts to win her into this marriage fail. In the end she becomes an epitome of abstinence and chastity, which are valued by the Basotho nation. However, the deconstructive reading of Keneng's good behaviour is Western. She detests the monarchy and chieftaincy practices of the Bakuena lineage. She decides to sacrifice her possible marriage to her longtime boyfriend because he is a chief's son.

Keneng becomes a legend in her community due to observing her Sesotho culture with regard to being of help to her community and practicing chastity. However, deconstructively these are also Western inclinations. She pioneers Western culture orientated projects such as stoves and sanitary facilities. She creates jobs and money transactions within her community. Furthermore she organizes water taps connections in the village.

Another value that is taught the Basotho readers through *Sedibelo sa nkgono* is respect for parents. Tlali's parents prearrange a marriage for him. He obeys his parents and marries the girl they prearranged for him. He marries the girl he does not like in terms of the hidden interpretation (deconstructive reading). He sacrifices his marriage to Keneng and marries the

chief's daughter for the sake of obeying his parents. Keneng's death is due to anguish for not marrying her long time boyfriend. This death is judgment of what is right and what is wrong. When we meet someone who dies and we look for the cause, the cause can never be looked at as something good and it can now give us the sense of what is regarded as evil. So the pre-arranged marriage seems not to be taking into account the feelings of other people. It rides short over the feelings of other people to the extent of causing death. So this is not necessarily the death of someone who is a partner to the chief's son. It might be symbolic of the death of the individual that one does not have any individual choice but the choice is made for her. So the individual personality is trodden upon. It no longer exists. In a person exist other people, as a result the death is symbolic. Therefore, there is a question of the promotion of the validity of the prearrangement of marriage in contemporary Sesotho culture.

Maskew Miller Longman promotes the value of an extended family through the publication of *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. The publishing company anticipates the strengthening of the extended family in the post-apartheid era. *Sedibelo sa nkgono*'s open reading represents this kind of a family with Moseli's grandmother ability to tell her grandson folktales as he grew up. Keneng's grandmother also brings her up. Grand children also take care of their grand parents in return. When Keneng is now a qualified teacher, she stays with her grandmother in order to take care of her. Nevertheless, according to the deconstructive reading Keneng and Moseli are not always with their grandmothers. Sometimes they spend a lot of time at school. Whilst one can yearn for the past when the family used to be cemented together, when the grandparents used to be part of the education system of the young. Reality is that education system is no longer entirely relevant for today's lifestyle. Some aspects of it might be relevant, but it is not in its entirety, that it can replace the present system of education with all its benefit to the present way of life. It fitted the peasant way of life where economic activities revolved around ploughing of fields, hoeing, going to harvesting, hunting and so on. However, today's

economic endeavours are such that they depend on individual skills and those individual skills cannot be acquired from a home situation alone. They have to be acquired from experts. So it is dubious as to what the author would like to say here, it is clearly a question of approach avoidance, wishing to embrace the past but reality dictating otherwise.

Finally, the open reading of *Sedibelo sa nkgono* propose the resurrection of eating habits of the Basotho. Moshe and Modupe mention that Basotho do not encourage hazardous drinking. This has led Basotho to produce beer out of sorghum. Basotho detest the modern beer from the Western culture because it is more of a poisonous spirit than food. Modupe and Moshe say that people should eat first before they consume the modern beer. Moshe and Modupe are talking about the traditional beer now but the readers do not see them drinking it. This is an indication that such liquor is temporarily scarce. The conventional liquor is now the modern beer, which the Basotho do not know how to prevent it from harming them. This is a Western/African fusion of culture which renders Basotho to remain wondering whether they possess Western or African expertise with regard to their cultural background. Any cultural artifact, any produce of any culture even food is related to the level of development in the life of the people. As discoveries are made even lifestyles change. The Basotho cannot be expected to have stagnated in the past while the modern discoveries much on. So it is so baffling that one would expect the Basotho to cling to what is supposed to be 'their food'. That was supposed to be the best that they could make that time in comparison to what they could make today for the sake of indulgence to live in the past.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

- ❖ The post-apartheid era's publication *Sedibelo sa nkgono* is a third and final example to show the equivocacy of the African/Western culture in Sesotho literature. The publishers promoted 'uncorrupted' Sesotho literature but the Western culture that the missionaries and the colonialists introduced while publishing Sesotho literature resurfaced. The Sesotho literature remained adapted to Western cultural aspects against the publishers' purpose.
  
- ❖ *Sedibelo sa nkgono* has fallen short of solely providing the interpretations that the publishers wanted for the purpose of endorsing the language policy of the post-apartheid era. According to the policy the Sesotho literature would maintain and participate in the oral literature of the Basotho only. The post-apartheid publishers were looking for and publishing Sesotho literature that is devoid of the Western religion, customs, norms and values. But the Western culture refused to be shaken off from Sesotho literature. It would not be emptied out of Sesotho literature texts.
  
- ❖ The Western culture has added a new dimension to a Sesotho literature text – that of developing and promoting the Sesotho literature texts. The post-apartheid publishers tried to express the Sesotho customs, values and religion liberally in the post-apartheid Sesotho literature and constricted the expressions of the Western customs, values and religion. But the very inclusion of the Western culture gave the Sesotho literature a shape of an impure African literature that the publishers did not want to print. The mentioning of the foreign words 'Bible', 'Jesus' and 'prophet', although scarce indicated the acknowledgement of such vocabulary in Sesotho literature texts – where

Basotho could not find the equivalent words to the concepts they embraced they brought in new vocabulary hence the new extended Sesotho literature text. This text was different from the pure Sesotho literature that was available before the coming of the missionaries with their Western ways and colonialism.

- ❖ The Western interpretations that the Sesotho words gained in the colonial period, could not be dislodged from the Sesotho literature texts easily Tladi uses the word ‘God’ to reclaim the pure Sesotho expression of the word ‘God’ who is surrounded by the gods. He utters the Sesotho idiomatic exclamation “motho oa Molimo” (the person of God) to Moseli. But at one incidence Keneng used the word ‘Molimo’ (God) in order to reflect to her Christian upbringing by her grandmother.
  
- ❖ The publishers could not just uproot the Western views and ideas acquired into Sesotho overtime. Keneng was a tortured character because she was an epitome of the Western culture practices. Her boyfriend left her and opted for a family arranged marriage. *Sedibelo sa nkgono* shows a juxtaposition of the Western and African cultures instead of promoting the arranged marriage as such. It juxtaposed the Western version of the two people falling in love with the hope of having a family in future. The fact that Keneng was tortured for embracing the Western custom does not erase the practice of this custom amongst the contemporary Basotho. Hence *Sedibelo sa nkgono* has indirectly promoted the Western norm of having a boyfriend that Keneng epitomized.
  
- ❖ When the Basotho met the Western culture, they formed new vocabulary, practices and norms which were peculiar to Sesotho culture and could not be discarded from the Sesotho literature works as non-Sesotho. These aspects are now considered as real

Sesotho customs and norms. The traditional rope hopping (khati) and playing houses (mantloane) have their equivalent in the Western culture. Basotho might have adopted these games from the missionaries into their culture. The acquired Western culture extended the practices and the norms of the Basotho in return. The result is that the Basotho gave them new names which were befitting in Sesotho. When Keneng discussed the bringing up of a Mosotho child, she mentioned these games. Yet the hidden background is that such practices or games were universal, they were not only played by the Basotho children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the Western and (or) African messages in Sesotho literature remain parasitic to each other. The study discussed different factors that created this situation. In the first two eras of the development of Sesotho literature namely the missionaries and the colonial periods, the authorities published and promoted Sesotho literary works which their messages reflected and propagated their Western objectives and culture. The Sesotho religious or ritual aspects, values and customary norms that were submerged in the stories that the missionaries and later the apartheid government selected in the promotion of their aims resurfaced.

The equivocal nature of Western/African messages reflected in the oral stories that had been written down in the first two eras shows that the Sesotho values, religion and customs in them had valuable messages which show some similarities amongst the cultures of different people. But in the first two eras the authorities that promoted Sesotho literature were moving away from the fact that any culture can give the totality of knowledge regardless of whether it is Western or African.

The missionaries used the words, concepts, traditional oral literature and the Basotho norms and customs to bring into Sesotho literature works the meaning that is different to the ones that were familiar to the Basotho before their stay in Lesotho. For example the word 'Thapelo' (prayer) should no longer reflect the way of talking to God and ancestors, but it should refer to God almighty whom the Bible proclaims. It should show that the Basotho

could use it to communicate with the angels, saints and God. It should not refer to God mentioned in the Basotho oral prayer “Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale” (The new god pray to the elderly God) in the Sesotho literature works. It should show that the Basotho could use it to communicate with the Christian God. In this way, it would reflect the Christian hierarchy of first the saints, then the angels and the almighty God. It would not refer to God at the centre surrounded by the new gods who were all the people who had passed away, following after the old people who had gone to Heaven “Leholimong” a long time ago and were now sited with God. According to the Western authorities and the missionaries, the Sesotho literary works had to reflect that not everybody went to Heaven like the Basotho regarded ancestors as all the people who died. Only the saints went to Heaven. That is those people who hardly sinned to God went to heaven. However, the mentioning of the word ‘Thapelo’ also referred to a Mosotho reader’s traditional prayer that reflects the link of the gods to God.

What happened is that Basotho extended their culture. Their religion acknowledged the Christian understanding of the word ‘Thapelo’ (prayer). However, the Sesotho interpretation was not entirely discarded as the missionaries and the Western authorities expected. In other words, the Western ideas that came along with writing when the missionaries and the colonial power met the Basotho could not pre-empt the African religion or ritual aspects, values and the customary norms from the Sesotho language, which was they used to write the works of literature.

Ngugi (1965) in *The river between* presented this parasitic relationship of the West and African messages with regard to African literature in a metaphoric way. The two ridges of Makuyu and Kameno stood side by side. Makuyu was the village for the Christians and they had parted with the ways of the barbaric traditions practiced by Kameno villagers. These Christian villagers were able to get the privileges of Western culture like formal education

and health care of modern times that the colonials and the missionaries did not offer to the Kameno people. However, Muthoni, a daughter to a staunch Christian ran away from home and went to her relative at Kameno to getcircumcised. Achebe in *No longer at ease* and *Things fall apart* protested the attack on African culture, and showed that it resurfaced whenever African literature and language is used as a tool to instill the Western culture.

In the present post-apartheid era of Sesotho literature, publishers would like to present the African literature that is devoid of the Western culture. They would like to reassert the African culture and identity. However, the study found out that since the Basotho had embraced the Western values, religion and customs in the past two eras of the development of Sesotho literature, the Western orientated messages reared their head in their writings. An example is *Sedibelo sa nkgono* in this study. Khaketla has hardly produced a work that is devoid of Western culture in *Sedibelo sa nkgono*. The study found out that the Sesotho literature could not get rid of the extensions of the words, ways of life imparted by the missionaries and other Europeans who came along with the new vocabulary.

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