

*I declare that The Oral Nature of Northern Sotho
Direto : is my own work and that all the sources
that I have used or quoted have been indicated
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NGWANATSOMANE SEKHUKHUNE

Ngwanatsomane is a man also in the 70's. He is a Chief councillor, at Mohlaleitse. Apart from being counsellor, he is also chairman of school committee for several schools around Mohlaleitse. He is an artful speaker and it is always difficult to find him at home. Some of his poems were written down in an old note book.

MOLWETSI MATLALA

Molwetsi is an old blind man who could not estimate his age. He is an excellent artist who recited better than any other poet during my research. He lives alone in a one roomed house and is also able to cook for himself. What surprised me is that he always had a clay pot full of African beer which he claimed to have brewed. He is also the man I wish to research for the sake of his way of repeating certain words and sentences.

SERAKI MAKWELEYANE THOBEJANE

Seraki was born on the 06-06-1927 at the old Mamone. He is now resident at the present Mamone and command the greatest respect from the counsellors at the royal court. Seraki became blind when he was a boy of ten years. He is married with four children. Seraki is also the chief reciter at the royal court. A good improviser and composer. Like Matlala, he is a gifted man.

NTEPANE SEKWATI

Ntepane is a traditional woman who still wears traditional clothes. We asked about her age and she just answered that she did not know. Ntepane is the sister-in-law of Kgošigadi Lekgolane at Mamone. She is also living with Kgošigadi at the royal court.

SEKGO THE MOREWANE

He is a man also in the 70's. A good reciter who left the royal kraal because of political feuds. Sekgothe also had a small note book in which he had recorded his poems.

PREFACE

I wish to thank the following people most sincerely for their making it possible for me to forge ahead with my dissertation without bounds:

1. *My supervisors, professor S M Serudu and professor J A Louw, who did not tire up to give me suggestions and contributions.*
2. *Mr A M Mathibe, the principal, Semashego School in Sekhukhune land who made my research possible and successful.*
3. *Mr M L Bopape, my colleague, whose library search was most marvellous.*
4. *Miss C Irving, my colleague who corrected the English and the construction of sentences.*
5. *Mr P D Sekhukhune, Head of Northern Sotho at the University of the North, for the countless hours he used to correct my translations of the poems.*
6. *Mr P L Boshego, my colleague, who made the typing of this work possible.*
7. *Whatever else goes into the making of a work of this sort, it is a great consumer of time, time that the author must steal from others. It seems proper, then, that this dissertation, which deals so much with the subject of time, should be dedicated to my dear family for their untiring support and encouragement.*
8. *The field work for this study was started in 1986 and completed in 1988. The research took place in a vast area of Sekhukhune land starting from GaMasemola, Mamone, Schoonoord, Mohlaletse, reaching as far as Praktiseer and the Mines in the most Northerly area of Sekhukhune land. Many poems from many informants were recorded on the cassette tape-recorder. For the sake of this study only a few were selected and included in the Appendix of this study.*

All the informants were always ready to offer information. Before one can single out a few of my informants, I wish to say special thanks to Kgošigadi Lekgolane of Mamone, Kgoši Seopela of Schoonoord and Kgoši Morwamotšhe of Mohlaletse who were always ready to organize my meetings with the informants.

The following were a few of my informants.

KGAGUDI MAREDI

Maredi is a man whose age one could estimate at 70 because while on the present research, he mentioned been born in 1918. He is a good reciter whose voice is often heard in the air on Radio Lebowa. His art is unmistakably clear and outstanding. He is one of the reciters at the royal kraal of Chief Sekhukhune.

SUMMARY

In this study the oral nature of N Sotho Direto is examined. It is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces and delimitates the scope, outlines the characteristics of oral poetry and gives briefly, a classification of the N Sotho Direto.

Chapter 2 focuses on the reason for which the Direto are composed and their transmission from generation to generation. Attention is also focused on the content of the Direto and the form they take when presented to an audience. Poetic devices involved in the presentation are scrutinized.

Chapter 3 looks into the composition of Direto, the composer (Sereti), his performance and audience. The language of the composer also receives attention in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is a comparison of unwritten poems collected during research with written poems of D M Phala in Kxomo 'a thswa.

Chapter 5 is a general conclusion. The findings of the preceding chapters are synthesized.

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS ORAL IN ORAL POETRY

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

When one looks at the world and specifically at the whole of Africa, one is disturbed by the lack of interest by researchers in the field of folklore in the Southern African States. A wide field has already been explored in the Northern, Central and Western African regions. In South Africa, a few attempts have been made in this field by the Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and Southern Sotho folklorists. Northern Sotho and some other South African Languages are not represented. In Northern Sotho, the language which is the subject of this dissertation many fields, if not all, remain untouched. As a result I was urged to tackle this aspect of poetry which is only a fraction, amongst many other perspectives, of folklore.

In this dissertation, an attempt will be made to relive the past which will then brighten our future. It is here that an endeavour will be made to define and to show the oral nature of **direto**, that is the heroic praises of Kgoši Sekwati and Kgoši Sekhukhune. In this chapter, a definition of what oral poetry is and its classification will be discussed. In the second chapter, the content and form will be discussed. In the third chapter an attempt will be made to discuss the nature of composition, performance and style, the poet and his audience, the style of delivery and the language and diction of the poetry. The fourth chapter will contain a comparison of the written and unwritten **direto** of Kgoši Sekhukhune and Kgoši Sekwati. The last chapter will give a summary of the nature of **direto**.

1.1 Definition of Concepts:

1.1.1. What is oral: The term "oral" according to the concise oxford dictionary, means "spoken, verbal, by word of mouth." From these meanings we are already thrown into confusion about the actual meaning of the word oral. Languages are oral and served the useful purposes of communication in ordinary life, business and commerce as all languages do. Communication and transmission of knowledge depended almost entirely on word of mouth. Therefore at this moment in African history it is not difficult to make the distinction between oral and written literature, since the oral is still being passed down from one generation to another. But if it is to be preserved, it has to be collected and written down, and if it is collected and written down, the spontaneity of oral flavour is once and forever lost. No longer will one be able to claim that each oral performance is unique, for literary artists might themselves come to depend on the written text.

Finnegan (1977:16) says:

Oral poetry essentially circulates by oral rather than written means; in contrast to written poetry, its distribution, composition or performance are by word of mouth and not through reliance on the written or printed word.

Oral and verbal are closely related but not synonymous. Oral means "uttered by mouth, spoken," whereas verbal means "in the form of words" whether written or spoken. When we talk of oral composition, oral performance, oral transmission or oral poetry, we realize that the term is very useful. When it is

used, as it is frequently used today to qualify literature, it indicates the necessary differentiation from written literature and at the same time states this in a positive way. It is oral rather than just the negative unwritten. We want however, to suggest that there are a number of different meanings and implications associated with the term, and that it is important to sort out some of the various ways in which a piece of literature is said to be oral. This may contribute towards more pointed discussions about the various characteristics of oral literature and at the same time perhaps serve to remove some of the slightly mystic awe that often seems to be attached to the term "oral". It is from its nature, that is, the average excellence of its qualities when unaffected by adverse influences, that we are able to say it is oral. Oracy is a marked feature of traditional African societies. When we consider the sum total of inheritance as we do now, we must consider, a few characteristics that qualify oral tradition as being oral.

Tradition first of all is understood to mean the product of past activities handed down from generations immemorial. Its characteristics will then be first its antiquity: the roots of oral tradition reach back as far as our scholarship can trace. Second, its association with ritual, a kind of behaviour which is shared, in part, with other animals and which appears to be fundamental to human nature. Third, its association in practice, with pleasure, on which there is an increasing body of neurophysiological research. We know very well that literature with a traditional flavour is a pleasurable means of instruction. Fourth, its use of psychic technologies such as rhythmic driving and mnemonics. Fifth, its cultural

universality, which points to a shared human inheritance. Sixth, its nature as a tradition of performance, an activity now increasingly recognized as having its own rules and structures, which may in turn cast light on the literary arts in general. Seventh, its complex and profound involvement with speech acts and performative utterances, forms of language which linguistic philosophy has recently begun to explore and which are in turn connected to the most fundamental questions of truth, reality and being.

Folklore is oral, that is, it passes by word of mouth from one person to another and from one generation to the next. Brunvand (1968:4) suggests that we should say it is "aural" because it reaches the ear either from voices or from musical instruments, but usage is even broader, "oral transmission" also includes passages by customary demonstration and imitation. This covers such activities as learning to whittle wooden chains, play traditional games, sew quilts, and build log cabins. Folklore is never transmitted entirely in a formal and deliberate manner through printed books, phonograph records, school classes, church sermons, or by other learned, sophisticated, and commercial means.

In agreement with Brunvand, we have Andrzejewski (1985:35) who says:

It is an essential feature of oral literature that they communicate their contents through the sound waves produced by human speech and are aurally perceived. From the point of view of the recipient, oral literature is aural, just as written is visual.

Since sound waves are of very limited duration, a work of oral

literature can be perceived and observed only while it is being performed. When the performance finishes the work vanishes into silence. Its continued existence in memory storage can be only inferred from subsequent repeated performances, but otherwise it remains totally inaccessible. To this Bascom (1981:74) says:

Verbal art, similarly, dies when people stop telling it, and when they learn it by reading, rather than by hearing it told by others.

In Dathorne (1974:6), to emphasise this point further, Hampat'e Ba is credited with having said that "every old man that dies is a library that burns down" and he was possibly thinking of the traditional methods of retention and bequeathal.

It is clear from the above discussion, as Lord (1960) has observed, that when any phenomena of tradition is learned orally, composed orally and transmitted orally, it is oral. I would in conclusion state that it is justifiable to follow common usage and restrict its meaning to forms which depend upon the spoken word, because of the need for an acceptable term.

1.1.2. What is oral Poetry?

A consideration of African oral poetry or the sung or chanted art must take into account all non-spoken forms, including songs on the one hand, and on the other hand everything which is declaimed. Perhaps the Chadwicks (1968) put it best when they define oral poetry as "speech which is sung." Frobenius has added that with people who work everything into experience there can be no exuberance in story-telling, for life itself is poetry, poetry of the highest degree, but non-communicable poetry. Life itself is the poetry of these people. On the other

hand, the Chadwicks felt that "the memorization of exact verbal tradition is seldom widespread or long-lived, and though the composition of extempore poetry is very general, the quality is not such as demands great artistic powers." The Chadwicks assertion arose out of ignorance, for not only was there a large body of verse which was recited, but it was also of a high quality. About Zulu oral verse, Jordan (1957:98) claimed that:

In the indigenous language of South Africa, including Zulu, there is a wealth of traditional poetry covering, in its subject matter, the whole range of human experiences and emotion... These emotional experience are expressed communally in song, speech and action.

African oral poetry, however, is not used merely as a vehicle of emotion, for often a more complicated and significant meaning has to be expressed. The poetry therefore is used for working out ideas, which explain why song has so prominent a place in primitive life. While it makes sense of daily pursuits and relaxation and enhances interest in them, it is even more useful in dealing with problems which trouble man and call for a solution acceptable to his ways of thinking.

It is only by realizing that the recited or chanted art is an expression of the wholeness of life that the significance and meaning of poetry can be appreciated. Since poetry is geared towards ritual, ceremony, and occupation, it can be called a complete activity.

However, our chief concern here is what is oral poetry?

Cuddon (1977:468) says:

Poetry belonging to this tradition is composed orally, or made up as the poet goes along. As a rule, it is usually sung, chanted or recited and it is the earliest of all poetry, in the sense that it precedes written poetry.

This is the poetry that is fading in many parts of Lebowa because of the fast emerging influence of modern European poetry. While it is still found in remoter parts such as Sekhukhuneland and other regions, it is only found among older people. As literacy is now spreading throughout the entire world at a rapid rate, oral poetry seems destined, in time, to disappear if it is not collected and stored.

Shaw (1972:1266) on the other hand says that oral poetry is that which is uttered by the mouth. It is poetry that survives through the spreading or passing on of material by word of mouth. This term is applied especially to the ballad, epic, and folklore. Some of these, in the opinion of some scholars, were originally made known to audiences only by recitation and singing and were handed down to succeeding generations through memory rather than in written form. This is the theory of transmission, which says that traditional material (not only the forms just mentioned but also folktales, fables, proverbs, songs) were first the property of the so-called common people who repeated or sang such items, consciously or unconsciously uttered them, and taught them to their children from one generation to the next.

Oral poetry is defined not only in terms of form but also in terms of its technique of composition, its manner of transmission and its performance. Thus, oral poetry is not only a poem that tells a story, it is also a poem that, no matter how it was composed, has been transmitted primarily by word of mouth and changed in the process. Therefore, without additional, extraneous information, no one can distinguish an oral poem from any other sort of poem. As a matter of fact,

Finnegan (1977:26) simply says that the distinction is blurred. One must know something about its history, how it first came to be written down (if indeed it ever appears in writing), how it came to its singers or reciters, and whether or not it exists in other forms. Identification of a poem as an oral poem is impossible without at least this information, for it is quite possible for a sophisticated poet to imitate the characteristics of oral poetry with success, and, indeed, many Northern Sotho poets such as Machaka, Tseke, Matsepe to name only a few, have done so.

But the oral tradition that is the incubator of oral poetry, is not maintained by the singing, dancing throng of the romantics nor even the somewhat less aesthetic masses of the peasant or proletariat conceived by the twentieth-century "visionaries." Oral poetry is transmitted and re-created by popular virtuosi. Only where such virtuosi still exist is oral poetry or folk poetry a living tradition, and there is absolutely no evidence to support any imaginative postulate of a culture in which everyman is a singer-composer. At most one can say he accepts or rejects the materials offered for his appreciation. There is, on the other hand, considerable evidence to support the hypothesis that when popular virtuosi go out of fashion, when their function is replaced by some other medium, especially a medium over which everyman has little control, oral poetry deteriorates, fades away, and becomes, at least, an imperfectly remembered survival. Such seems to be the situation in Lebowa and its people.

Leach et al (1949:826) says:

Tradition, as the handing on of acquired characteristics, has been said to be the basic

distinction between man and other animals. Korzybski in adopting a more abstract homolog, refers to 'time-binding' as enabling men to communicate over intervals of time, so that the younger members of a group can begin where the older leave off.

According to him, it is man's principal survival mechanism, in terms of which relative sanity or insanity can be measured. Whether or not acquired characteristics can be inherited biologically, there can be no doubt that they are inherited socially. Moreover, tradition is not a thing of the past but a living and dynamic process which began in the past, flourishes in the present, and looks forward to the future as well. While it does seek novelty for its own sake, it does not avoid the new in the life around it. Oral traditional literature tends to make the songs and poems from the past serve the goals of the present for the sake of the future. It is only when a tradition is dying that it begins to lose contact with the present and becomes a preserver of its own past rather than a continuator.

The most distinctive characteristic of oral poetry is its fluidity of text. While this is best seen in long epic songs, where the length renders impossible exact memorization from frequent repetition, it is discernible also with shorter poems. Fluidity of text, or to put it in another way, the absence of a single fixed text, arises from the technique of composition, which the poet learns over many years, no matter which genre of verse is in question. It is a technique of improvisation by means of 'formulae', phrases which say what the poet wants and needs to say, fitted to the varying metrical conditions of his tradition. Stereotyped phrases such as **Se hlwa le ngwanana ntlong** (Stayer with a girl in the hut) in nearly all poems of Sekwati, or **Phasma 'a Makwa**

(Phaswa of Makwa) in nearly all poems of Sekhukhune have often been thought of as the building blocks from which the poets construct their lines. Actually, they are probably not so stereotyped as was at first thought. For one thing, the 'formulae' pervade the poetry, every line and every part of a line in oral poetry is formulaic. Finnegan (1976:137) quotes Magoun as saying:

Oral poetry, it may safely be said is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic.

Oral poetry is fixed and it is and has to be transmitted exactly as it is learnt. It is actually learnt by memory and then recited in a performance. Northern Sotho oral poetry is a living and dynamic verbal art. Our experience of African oral poetry is that it is a living phenomenon which is contemporaneous with the written tradition. The major distinction between the oral poet and the literate poet is that the oral poet is largely nonliterate and it is the vocal performance of his poem that gives them their very existence. Each performance of the same theme yields another "poem" because of the variability in the wording of each performance. The oral poet usually has his listeners or audience face to face, and the demands made on him by this audience determine and condition his product, the finished oral poem. For the oral poet, the moment of composition, the making of the poem is simultaneous with the performance the act that gives existence to the poem though there are a few instances of premeditated oral composition. The moment of creation is usually not the moment of performance, and, even though every poet of the literate tradition intends to be read, he is not

face to face with his audience. His audience, unless they have the poems read aloud to them, are usually fellow literate people, and the kind of direct communication line between the oral poet and his audience cannot be said to exist in the case of the literate poet, though this is not to deny that a line of communication does exist.

This poetry is meant to be recited, chanted or intoned in performance in the presence of an audience. In it we need again to consider the context of the performance of an oral piece. What most people call poetry consists largely of the vocal aspect of their music, and the poetry of many African peoples is classified partly or wholly according to the mode of vocal performance employed in producing it. We need to remember the circumstances of the performance piece, this is not a secondary or peripheral matter, but integral to the identity of the poem as actually realized. Performed differently, or performed at a different time or to a different audience or by a different singer, it is a different poem.

There are paralinguistic features of oral poetic performance which cannot be represented because they are visible phenomena and only meaningful to those within the culture of the performer. These are movements of the parts of the body either to accompany or add to what is uttered in speech or to effect communication independently. This dramatic aspect of the performance, as well as the reaction of the audience to it and to the whole performance, is lost to the reader who has the text of the chanted poem before him.

Cope (1968:28) in an illustration of the issue under discussion, has this to say about the performance of Izibongo;

...recites the praises at the top of his voice and as fast as possible. These conventions of praise-poem recitation, which is high in pitch, loud in volume, fast in speed, create an emotional excitement in the audience as well as in the praiser himself, whose voice often rises in pitch, volume and speed as he progresses, and whose movements become more and more exaggerated, for it is also a convention of praise-poem recitation that the praiser never stands still.

When the text is torn out of the natural setting of performance, the repetitions that engender audience participation and group solidarity, the poet's comments in response to a wink, a gesture, the coming in of a member of the audience or the message from his master drummer, all appear irrelevant or trivial.

Most African oral poets sing spontaneously, even if studiedly, as they go about their daily chores without an audience. To accept too uncritically Lord's dictum that what is important in oral poetry is "the composition during oral performance" or claim that "oral narrative is not, cannot be, memorized" (Lord 1965:529) is liable to blind one to the many interesting ways in which the elements of composition, memorisation and performance may be in play in or before the delivery of a specific oral poem. In other words, a single model of the relation of composition to performance will not necessarily cover all cases.

Similar points about the division between composition and performance come out in a number of other African examples. The long panegyric poems in Ruanda and South Africa, for

instance, are often quoted as outstanding examples of specialist oral art. For the Zulu a recent study states quite categorically that the specialist praise singers attached to the courts were concerned more with 'performance' than with 'composition', the singer "has to memorize (the praises of the chief and ancestors) so perfectly that on occasions of tribal importance they pour forth in a continuous stream or torrent. Although he may vary the order of the sections or stanzas of the praise-poem, he may not vary the praises themselves. He commits them to memory as he hears them, even if they are meaningless to him" (Cope 1968:27-8) .

Similar cases of prior composition and rehearsal for later performance are mentioned not infrequently in descriptions of African oral literature. This is also the case in Lebowa. To mention but a few, when busy on present research in Mamone, a blind poet named Seraki endorsed this point that he listened, memorized, composed, memorized and then later performed.

Life in Bapedi society proper, is full of cultural activities which follow a rhythmical pattern from the womb to the tomb. Each stage of a man's life is marked by one important cultural performance, which turns out a drama of the particular stage. It is from these various stages that oral poetry emanates.

Finnegan (1974:4) says:

Literature is inevitably oral where all literary production, performance, and consumption - indeed all communication - is fully oral and there is a total absence of literacy.

At first sight, there is a clear and common-sense way in which to differentiate between oral and written literature by reference to the society in which it takes place. Oral literature should be seen as a kind of survivor from an earlier stage of society to which it originally and fundamentally belonged, which merely came to us as a kind of fossil through unchanging oral tradition. This, indeed, was the common view in the nineteenth century evolutionary anthropology and folklore. But there is just too much evidence of the typical changeability and variety of orally-delivered forms to accept this view without question and, in any case, the popular evolutionist and romanticist preconceptions that underpinned these theories from earlier stages of society do not nowadays find ready acceptance. But one aspect of this general approach does still attract a number of adherents. This is the idea that something in the oral tradition, transmitted orally, preserves itself uncontaminated and pure, as it were, even in cultures where written literature also circulates. The truth is, there is a close interaction between written and oral forms.

From our collection of the poems of Kgoši Sekwati and Kgoši Sekhukhune, we discover from some similarities with the written poems that the printed page is nearly as much the property of the folk as is oral tradition. What fascinated us was that one rendition by a man born blind at Mamone, the official residence of Kgoši Sekwati, was the same as the written poem with only a few insertions of variant forms. It might be that Phala influenced Seraki in the tradition since Seraki was still a young man in 1935 when they were

recorded. But, the term 'oral' will continue to be used, and rightly so and it is relevant to consider further, before we decide on the nature of oral poetry, its various modes of application. There are three main important modes according to which a piece of literature can be classified as oral. They are the modes of composition, transmission and actualization in performance.

First, the mode of composition. According to this, for a piece of literature to be 'oral' it must have been composed orally, without the use of writing and perhaps in interaction with an audience. But there we do run into certain difficulties. Some scholars, like Lord and various adherents of the oral-formulaic school, would define oral in terms of one particular kind of oral composition. 'Oral', writes Lord (1960:5) "does not mean merely oral presentation ... what is important is not the oral performance." It is the type of oral composition that, in a sense, takes place simultaneously with performance and in which the poet is able to produce lengthy narrative poetry without the use of writing and without interrupting the flow of his narration. For Lord composition and performance are not just simultaneous acts, they are merely two different aspects of the same act in which the poet produces his own unique composition/performance. Lord's oral compositions exclude any oral compositions which are handed down word for word, like certain religious texts.

Second is the criterion of transmission by oral means. It is another common basis for identifying oral literature. This sometimes means little more than that a given item circulates

or is actualized by oral means. This is clear and relevant enough, though one might need to go on to inquire about the degree to which it circulates orally compared to written means and end up with a relative rather than absolute distinction. In this sense it really coincides with the criterion of performance. But oral transmission is also sometimes taken in the sense of the oral handing on of some item over long periods of time in a relatively unchanged form. One criterion an anthropologist might use was whether he considered that it had been transmitted orally over some time say several generations or whether it had been culled from some recent school-book. Similarly, the oral nature of certain written texts is sometimes said to be indicated on the grounds of earlier transmission by a long oral tradition, depending for its material on oral rather than written sources. It can be seen that the application of this criterion must often be merely speculative for one frequently has little or no concrete information about the earlier oral history of a given piece of literature, especially in view of the possibilities already mentioned of oral/written interaction and the fact that informants' assertions about the long word-for-word tradition behind a given piece are not necessarily good evidence.

Finally, there is the criterion of actualization in performance. This has the virtue of being less speculative and much more applicable empirically than questions of transmission. One can observe performance actually taking place and, by and large, trust reports describing such performances. In most cases, therefore, this is a relatively

straightforward criterion. Even here, though, there may be some problems. Lord, for instance, excludes "poetry ... written to be recited... What is important is not the oral performance but rather the composition during oral performance." It emerges that the oral nature of oral poetry is not easy to pin down precisely. In one sense "oral poetry" is roughly delimited and differentiated from written poetry, and in a rough and ready way the term "oral" is then clear enough. Oral poetry essentially circulates by oral rather than written means in contrast to written poetry, its distribution, composition or performance are by word of mouth and not through reliance on the written or printed word.

1.1.3. Classification of oral poetry and "Direto".

Literary phenomena, like all other phenomena, can be classified or arranged in groups according to their similarities and differences. The purpose of the careful examination of literary works and processes, which is a large part of the critic's business, is to disengage and note specific elements or characteristics of certain genres. Some of these elements are unique to a single work or process, some reappear in others. To note that a given element appears in more than one work or process, and to group together the works or processes in which this element appears, is to distinguish a class.

Shipley (1972) in his dictionary of world literature says that there are four basic principles according to which literary works can be classified. In the first instance he talks of the agent or agencies that produce them, secondly, he states the

end for which they are produced, in the third instance he mentions the material out of which they are produced, and lastly the characteristics that analysis brings to light about them as objects. A single classification may, of course, involve application of more than one of these principles, as in description of poetry as produced, for example by an inspired bard for the purpose of delighting, as well as description of poetic language or diction, in verse.

Regarding these statements, Ker (1929:10) says:

the use of classification in English poetry is not in the recognition of different species, the labelling of poems as narrative, lyric and so forth. The use, I should say, is chiefly in the intermediate and composite sorts. The three kinds are there but they are not severed from one another.

We are all aware that epic is not good unless it is dramatic as well. The good must have conversations in it. The best narrative poems in the world, and the best novel, might be regarded either as narratives with a large amount of dramatic dialogue, or as drama using freedom to expand and amplify the stage direction. Lyric does not exclude the narrative, i.e. the old ballad. From these points it is clear that it is really hard to draw a line between the different kinds. We have a rich and varied store of oral poetry that is found in every sphere of human life. On this point, Dhlomo (1977:43) says:

It adorns the folktales, accompanies the dances, and it is connected with many war and peacetime observances.

What is unfortunate is that it has not been systematically collected and preserved, and is dying out with the disintegration of tribal society. I would suggest that these tribal compositions be collected into one volume prefaced with critical essay on their nature, classification and quality.

Most of what goes as poetry among many African people constitutes the vocal aspect of their music. The same is true of the Northern Sotho people. We need, therefore, to be aware of our music in order to fully appreciate the place of oral poetry among the people: In Tšwelopele of May (1987:7), Maibelo says:

Mosadi wa mopedi ge a tia moropa le go opela, o a reta.

(When a Mopedi woman is beating the drum and also singing, she is praising.)

Among the various communities that make up the Northern Sotho ethnic group, drumming is a professional art. The drums have similar shapes but bear different names from one place to another, as has been aptly demonstrated. What should interest us more is not the variability in the shape of the drums but their very existence and grouping into ensembles which lend their names to the types of music produced by them. An instrument may occur in more than one ensemble, but the dominant instrument determines the name by which the ensemble is called.

When the Northern Sotho talk about their music, however, they have in their minds something that goes beyond instrumental music. Indeed, they are thinking of singing and dancing, and the accompanying social cohesion which audience participation generates. But the student of Northern Sotho oral poetry cannot, in the absence of cinematographic equipment or audio-visual accompaniment, register all the vocal, visual and dramatic aspects of this music, he is only left with the transcribed texts, bereft even of the voice of the artist /

performer. What the student presents is a mere shadow of the substantial living art of the Northern Sotho people.

Northern Sotho oral poetry is classified not so much by content or the structure but by the group of people to which the reciter belongs and the techniques or recitation which he employs.

On the basis of this, oral poetry may be classified in various types known to occur throughout Africa. This brings home something of the diversity of forms in which human beings have expressed their poetic imagination. At the same time it reminds us of the many parallels and overlaps with written literature. In my brief discussion I will mainly adopt the terms long used in Western literary study to describe different genres. These terms form a convenient means of grouping together certain broad similarities. However, it cannot be assumed that they would be the most appropriate ones for detailed analysis of a given oral literature, or that their use in a preliminary account implies any attempt to set up a definitive typology of genres.

The classification of the kinds or species of oral poetry most commonly accepted in Northern Sotho "direto" embraces in its scope the following:

- i. **Direto** about their own clan, tribes, chiefs and heroes.
- ii. Children's songs, associated with children's daily chores and plays.
- iii. Miscellaneous songs associated with adult life-situations and daily chores.
- iv. War songs, associated with warriors and their life.

In my brief explanation about the types, I will not enter into

a discussion of item ii,iii and iv which already appear in my honours article. Relevant to this study is "direto" which needs a detailed explanation since it is one of the most developed forms in Africa. The label **direto** or panegyric, in the African context, is a case in point. **Direto** highlights a theme that, on one hand, has been inadequately identified and, on the other hand, is known to pervade nearly the entire realm of oral poetry in Africa. It is, indeed, yet to be known if there is any genre which is locally acknowledged and which holds a better recognition than **direto**.

The intergeneric use in Africa of what is often called "praise," is largely attributable to the tremendous strong appellations, often called "praise names," which feature is of great significance in African oral discourse in general, and in poetry in particular. A recommendation that clearly derives from the above, is to regard **direto**, or a more appropriate label, as an analytical megagenre that embraces all forms of poetry in which praise names constitute a key structural feature. The very fact that not all strong worded appellations are laudatory, however, would clearly betray **direto** as a misnomer.

To this however, the attitudes of various scholars have not been uniform. A few scholars do not seem to be perturbed by the label "praise poetry." Lestrade (1935:291ff), for instance, refers to Bantu praise performances including a recital of "Laudatory epithets applied to (one) as either a member of a group, or as an individual and known as his praise names." Schapera (1965), writing on the royal poems of the

Tswana, sticks to Lestrade's use of "praise poem." Torn between the terms heroic and praise, Kunene (1965:xvi) opts for heroic, "even though there is no very strong reason for preferring one term to the other." Kunene (1965:xxii) coins the term eulogue to refer to different kinds of praise reference; names such as deverbative nouns... metaphorical names... praise by association of the hero with some other person, whether himself (or herself) praise worthy or not." At the latter part of this definition of eulogue, Kunene hints at the possibility of "uncomplimentary eulogues", but he does not elaborate on this. Even so, his neologism (derived from eulogy) clearly denotes laudatory attribution.

On the other hand, Finnegan (1970:111) refers to praise names in Africa as "explicitly laudatory," yet admits that, "other praise names are derogatory." Writing on Xhosa heroic poetry, Kuse (1979:207ff) devotes a section to "passages that are critical or satirical of the hero," where the author deals with uncomplimentary references to the hero. Jeff Opland (1980:295ff) on the Southern Bantu eulogy refers to, "what is generally (but unhappily) called praise poetry among the Zulu-speaking and Xhosa-speaking peoples of South Africa". Elizabeth Gunner (1980:257) refers to the complaint and combat motifs in Zulu praise poetry composed by women and goes a step further by concluding, that the term praise poetry does not adequately convey the extent to which, among the Zulu, such poetry identifies and appraises the individual.

While many literary scholars seem to be aware of the inadequacy of the label praise poetry, however, loyalty to the phrase

remains unshaken in the absence of a more adequate tag. Perhaps the question of the inadequacy of the label need not arise, after all even if there are instances of deviance, is praise not the predominant issue?

In West Africa and central African states, the praises are embraced in the epic. The epic is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on an heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. These were shaped from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare. In these epics the hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance. However we in Southern Africa and specifically in Northern Sotho, do not have such long narratives, which by their nature take a day or a weekend in order to complete a single rendition.

Praise poetry occurs in various forms in African societies and is a very important component of folklore. Regarding this statement, Pretorius and Swart (1982:29) state that:

The most important component of the traditional African poetry is the praise song (praise poem).

It is considered to be an admixture between the epic and the ode found in European poetry. The praise poem closely resembles the ode which has been used to commemorate an event of some significance. It has been used to compliment rulers and warriors. In modern usage it refers to the most formal of lyrical poetry, usually of considerable length. It is frequently the vehicle for a public oration on a state occa-

sion, as for example, a ruler's birthday, accession, funeral or the unveiling or dedication of some imposing memorial or public work. The ode has been loosely described as panegyric.

From the foregoing explanations one finds oneself at sea, to explain clearly and categorize what praise poetry is, especially if one considers Finnegan who also refers to praise of an individual, institution or group as panegyric. Originally panegyric was a rhetorical type belonging to a display of oratory. Much primitive poetry is panegyric in nature, consisting of the praises of heroes, armies, victories, states etc. Sekwati and Sekhukhune's odes have been loosely described as panegyrics.

Our traditional poetry, when its characteristics are considered, consists of a combination of all the above-mentioned genres. Praise poetry combines the qualities of an ode, a eulogy and an epic. As an ode it apostrophizes the king, referring to his personality and physique, pointing out both good and bad qualities. As a eulogy it lauds the king for his diplomatic and military achievements. As an epic it alludes to his history. Basically, they are epithets called out with reference to an object (a person, an animal and so on) in celebration of its outstanding qualities and achievements. The unit is the "praise-names" in the nature of the one who is praised. African names, in any case, are usually sentences that describe the familial circumstances of the bearer, so these praise-names are accretions that the bearer collects in his passage through life and are called out to fix him in his true nature, and in effect, to encourage him to live up to them. Such epithets are

are known as *direto* among the Northern Sotho speakers and *izibongo* among the Zulu, *dithoko* among the Southern Sotho, and *maboko* among the Tswana. When several of these are compiled to form a lengthy celebration of a subject, they become "praise-poetry" which is still *direto* in Northern Sotho.

Lekgothoane in his introductory lines to praises of animals in *Bantu Studies* (1938:120) says:

... for everything that we see with our eyes we can praise, and besides, such things as we know from thinking about them or by hearing about them, all these we can praise.

Indeed, this is a true statement when we note that it is not only people who qualify to be praised. Animals, especially cattle, may earn the right because of some peculiar idiosyncrasies. As an example, Mashabela (1973:5) in his honours article has quoted a cow named Sebotse (The Beautiful):

Sebotse sa gaRaphaka,
Ngwana a mmala wo botse.

(Sebotse of Raphaka,
the beautiful young lady.)

Even divination bones may be showered with praises, to indicate the order in which they have fallen on the ground, that is the divination message they have to impart. It is more the inherent message that is reflected in the praise than the individual bones. Here follows a message that is often conveyed by the name of one of the bones. Mashabela (1973:5):

Mohlakola (Robbery, Theft, Embezzlement, Death)
Mohlakola moswana
Phate ke alola 'a ngope,
Phate di ala ke basadi,
Banna re tla ka go lala.
Bo hlakotšego bohla^vkotše,
Bo hlakotšego mosadi 'a kgoš^vi ditšwaro.
Modiši a kgomo tša badimo,

*O di ralatše le maope,
Beng badimo ba fete ba gopola.*

*(The robbery
The black robbery
that takes away the cow-hide sleeping mat,
the mat that is prepared
for men to come and sleep.
Irrevocable robbery of the chiftainess' loin skin.
He that takes charge of the gods may have regular
inspections.)*

*Before the advent of Europeans and missionaries in this land,
all Bapedi boys had to undergo initiation. During this period,
they were required to compose praises for themselves, which
they would recite in public on the day they returned home. The
weaker ones, who were incapable of such oral compositions,
were assisted by the Moditi (teacher), who did most of the
composition for them. Even instruction in the secrets of
manhood and later life is given through songs which they
memorize, and, at regular intervals, they repeat the lines they
have been taught. During this process the initiate also
acquires a name which becomes his praise-name and is combi-
ned with the praise poem. One such composition taken from
Kgobe's honours article of 1985 is:*

*Ke a reta, ke a reta lentšakalana,
ke a retela ina laka
Le apara kobo, le apara kobo ka pedi dingwe mathatha,
Makgushakgusha a ba a mo lokišetša,
Ba mo laile bja bopudi bonya-marokolo.*

*(I praise, I praise lentšakalana,
I praise my name.
One who wears two garments, some of which are in tatters
Makgushakgusha was never well trained in the law,
But was trained like a goat that brings out the
droppings.)*

*So far for practical reasons already alluded to, our praise
poetry is divided into the following categories, namely,*

praise poetry for:

1. Animals (*diphoofolo*)
2. Divining bones (*ditaola*)
3. Boy initiates (*Bodika*)
4. Kings and warriors (*magoši le bagale*).

The last category is our main concern in this dissertation, that is the praises for kings and warriors. On this Bowra (1952:1) says:

In their attempts to classify mankind in different types the early Greek philosophers gave a special place to those men who live for action and for the honour which comes from it. Such, they believed, one moved by an important element in the human soul, the self-assertive principle, which is to be distinguished equally from the appetites and from the reason and realises itself in brave doings.

This was the origin of heroic poetry. The poetry that originated during the heroic age. An age that consisted mainly of the heroic deeds of warriors and of kings. This age included also the praises of the kings such as Sekwati and Sekhukhune. In their praises, there is an overwhelming number of verbs expressing the acts of chopping, cutting, clearing, kneading, piercing, bending, beating, killing, smashing, overpowering, spearing, annihilating. Consider as evidence of the above statement the following few lines from poem 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune :

2 Ke nna Mašile a gatiše a bo Ngwakwane,
3 Mogale ga a gatiša ka lekopelo,
4 Theledi ka Borwa o tšo senyana,
5 Masenyetši a magadi a batho,
6 Maphumphanye a ma tswaka-le-mobu
7 Theledi a marota, Tsotsobidi mmanaka le phatleng,
8 'Naka la gagwe le kile la palela "masole"
9 Le paletše maburu ka mo "Ilareng,"
Ma-bohlale-hlale Theledi

2 Its me Mašile the trampler of Ngwakwane,

- 3 The hero when he covers with a broken piece of a clay pot,
- 4 Theledi went to plunder in the South,
- 5 The one who disorganizes the in-laws of others,
- 6 The wrestler who mixes one with the soil,
- 7 Theledi of Marota, the lanky one with a horn on the forehead,
- 8 His horn once defeated the "soldiers."
- 9 It beat the Boers in the laager, the most wise Theledi.

This ought to be sufficient evidence when we consider the underlined words such as trampler, destroyer, spoiler, breaker, killer. In these praises, the true chief is one who brings good living, fame, conciliation, and harmony. The chief is foreshadowed in the hero, and there remains something of the hero in the king as long as he has not attained the highest level of perfection.

Heroic poetry is as already mentioned, partly and essentially narrative and is nearly always remarkable for its objective character. It creates its own world of the imagination in which men act on easily understood principles, and, though it celebrates great doings because of their greatness, it does so not overtly by praise but covertly by making them speak for themselves and appeal to us in their own right. That is why many are in the first person singular. In our example, it says that it is milked by "me" referring to *kgoš*i personally. In this way it wins interest and admiration for its heroes by showing what they are and what they do. This degree of independence and objectivity is due to the pleasure which most men take in a well told tale and their dislike of having it spoiled by moralizing or instruction. Indeed, heroic poetry is far from unique in this respect. It has much in common with

other kinds of narratives, whether in prose or in verse, whose main purpose is to tell a story in an agreeable and absorbing way. What differentiates heroic poetry is largely its outlook. It is determined by special conceptions of manhood and honour. It cannot exist unless men believe that human beings are in themselves sufficient objects of interest and that their chief claim is the pursuit of honour through risk. I have no doubt that Kgoš^hi Sekhukhune and Kgoš^hi Sekwati were great men who took the risk in pursuit of honour. Historically and as told in the content of their praises, the two kings fought many dangerous battles, against the Boers of the Republic of Middelburg and against the Matebele, Zulus and Swazis.

This important dimension of oral praises or heroic poetry or referential poetry, as Kwesi Yankah (1981) prefers to call it, is often overshadowed by what Western scholars consider to be higher virtues stylistic and poetic devices of dynamic stress, elision, parallelism, chiasmus, and of course metaphor and simile. These devices which will be discussed in chapter two under form do abound in what Ruth Finnegan (1970:121) calls "the most specialised and complex forms of poetry to be found in Africa," but fine-grained stylistic analysis of these works should not blind us to some of the mere basic and obvious statements which they make, in particular statements that criticize the very objects of praise. These criticisms, voiced through praise, are of fundamental importance to their production, not as works of art abstracted onto a printed page, but as communicative acts mediating between a King and his subjects.

Even if at this stage we are not going to use particular praise-texts, I wish to comment on the general model which accounts for the work performed by Comaroff (1975), who shows how the effective power and legitimate authority of Tswana chiefs is negotiated through a form of oratory composed in two parts. The first part, highly formalized, expresses the shared values and ideals of the kingly office, against which the more flexible second part evaluates the king's actual performance. If a king rules well, the formal and evaluative codes converge, if he violates the norms of his office, the two codes diverge. This is called the indigenous incumbency model—standards of exemplary conduct which attach to high office, to which the incumbent is expected to conform and against which his performance is evaluated.

Finnegan (1970:142) begins by describing the incumbency model as a diffuse political resource in the hands of the public when, in her general survey of African royal panegyric, she mentions an important consequence of status validation—the obligation of a status holder to conform to its demands:

In societies where status and birth were so important, the praise-poems served to consolidate these values. As so often with panegyric, the recitation of the praises of the King and his ancestors served to point out to the listeners the chief's right to the position he held both through his descent from those predecessors.... and through his own qualities so glowingly and solemnly depicted in the poetry. As elsewhere, however, praises could contain criticism as well as eulogy, a pressure to conform to expectations as well as praise for actual behaviour. In this way praise could also have the implicit result of exerting control on a ruler as well as the obvious one of upholding his position.

In effect, two sets of overlapping values can be analytically

distinguished in this rudimentary incumbency model: rights of ascription and entitlement to high office, which the king or chief possesses by virtue of his membership in a royal descent group, and norms of good leadership. The blurred quality of this distinction is important because it allows the praise-singer to evaluate the legitimate authority of the king, by invoking his rights of office while simultaneously voicing the public concern with how he fulfils the duties associated there with. It is therefore apparent that this tug-of-war occurs in the idiom of the same set of values, expressed in a veiled language of indirect allusions and substitutions which can, but need not always, keep his confrontation between the king and his subjects beneath the surface of the praise. In our examination of the *direto* of Kgoši Sekwati and Kgoši Sekhukhune we shall see some of the contours of this incumbency model, and the directions in which these contours can be manipulated.

1.1.4. Conclusion

It suffices to say, at this juncture, that praise poems among the Bapedi are called *direto*, a term derived from the verb - *reta* (praise) which is translated as "to honour by giving title to a person in poems, to sing the praises of." This definition applies to all praises, which are composed not just for kings, but also for headmen, distinguished warriors, and commoners, including women. The praises of kings however are of two unique types—those composed by professional praise poets/reciters (*Bareti*), and those composed by the incumbent himself. The difference between the two will be discussed under the relevant section of composition and performance in chapter three.

CHAPTER 2.

FORM AND CONTENT OF "DIRETO"

2.1. THE CONTENT OF DIRETO

The Oxford Dictionary refers to content as the constituent elements of a conception.

*From a point of view of Lekgothoane (1938) who says that for everything that we see with our eyes we can praise, and that besides, such things as we know from thinking about them or by hearing about them, all these we can praise, it is evident that the content of **direto** vary greatly and that classification according to content cannot be made according to hard and fast rules. In this dissertation, an attempt will be made to determine the content according to the subject of praise.*

Dan Ben-Amos in Opland (1980:295) says that content like style and structure are expressive features of a genre. Content is an important aspect that distinguishes our praises from any other forms of folklore. The praises produced by a poet about important people, as well as those composed by individuals about themselves or others, tend to place the subject in a genealogical context. They tend to refer to the subject's physical and moral characteristics, and they allude only elliptically to his significant deeds and achievements.

The primary aim of praises is to bring into sharp focus, and to celebrate the royal personality. In furtherance of this, all notable events in the history of the royal household are highlighted and poeticized, but the poeticization consists essentially of the performance and dramatization of a series of

royal appellations in which are telescoped the notable deeds and personality traits of the king. This does not however, imply that the praises consist of nothing else but appellations. In fact there are instances of lines or stanzas that are not appellations, these are quantitatively insignificant. Besides, in several apparent instances of non-appellation, it is possible to posit a deep, underlying epithet on which the sequence is based.

Referring to the praises as essentially referential and appellative is no exaggeration. Royal appellations often portray the king and his ancestry in a positive manner, but this is secondary to the primary goal of celebrating the royal ego and depicting the importance of the king as a single inspirer of multiple appellations.

Msimang (1980:220ff) asserts that praise poetry should incorporate physical features and dispositional traits such as his shrewdness and craftiness which are expressed in the imagery used. He says that in the case of an individual being praised only those events which are historically significant regarding him, should be recorded.

Mashabela (1982:36) contends that the content of praise poems consists of the oral praise poetry lauding heroic deeds of men in battles, hunting expeditions and casual encounters with beasts of prey. This poetry was handed down from generation to generation, and retained by means of constant recital at family clan or tribal gatherings thereby forming the most important record of heroes, lineages and national history.

Cope (1968:33) says:

Praise poems have been likened to eulogies, odes and epics. The most apt description is eulogy, for the purpose of the poem is to praise its subject as favourably as possible, it aims to give an assessment of the subject that is constant with reality.

Within this general eulogistic framework, the poet is also free to comment on current events. He has the ability to provide a coherent narrative of an event if he chooses, but he tends rather to allude to events that are generally known to both him and his audience. In other words he is not a narrator, as are the performers of folktales or legends, nor is his poetry narrative poetry, it is essentially eulogistic.

According to Lestrade (1935:295)

Praise poems consist of sentences in praise of some tribe, clan, person, animal or even lifeless objects, which as a group or individually is the subject of the poem. They narrate in high pitched adulatory style, deeds for which the subject has acquired fame enumerating in hyperbolic apostrophe, those qualities for which he is renowned.

However, such a record succeeds only if deemed worthy by his supporters. The King must maintain and achieve a good record, to be worthy of great praise as an ancestor. I mention this eschatological point—the judgement of a king after his death, because it underlies the power of the public to negotiate the legitimacy of the incumbent.

Bruce King (1971:19) says:

The content of Ese Ifa represents the whole range of the Yoruba world-view.

It is the same with every nation of the world that has a treasury of tradition saved in its praises. The praises deal with all subjects. They deal with history, geography, religion, music and philosophy. The narrative content of the Bapedi praises is largely

biographical. History, like genealogy, is a charter for legitimate authority, but it is personal history, not family history alone, which distinguishes the incumbent and demonstrates his personal worth. For, unlike genealogy, personal biography often illustrates greatness that is achieved rather than ascribed, A King is judged by his deeds, not by his blood. Praises thus provide a public record of the incumbent's deeds and character. There is certainly no limit to the subject matter which praises may deal with. Praises are, therefore, derived from the rich experiences of our forefathers. These events are part of what has happened before in history. They are a record of precedents carefully laid down for us. The underlying philosophy of the whole system is that history repeats itself.

It is not an exaggeration to say that for the audiences of heroic poetry, the poetry of the King or hero usually assumes the status of a record of fact, which takes the place of history in societies which have no written annals. It is believed to speak with authority about the past, and may even be used to settle disputes on such matters as land or ancestors.

Bowra (1952:508) says:

The Greeks of the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. treated the Homeric poems as an account of real events and real people and appealed to them as an authority on matters of past history, like the Athenian claims to Salamis and Segeum.

In this case matters were made easier because at the time the poems were written down and could be consulted with ease. It is clear that these praises were respected and regarded as repositories of information. Further on Bowra says that in the sixth century AD, when heroic poetry was in its heyday among the

Germanic peoples, serious historians seem to have used it without any great doubts about its credibility.

The trust is shared by ordinary people who accept the poets words as true and their trust is confirmed by the prominence which artists give to themes canonized by heroic poetry. The King here is identified as a hero, a hero that is more than an audacious and vigorous personality, a performer of perplexing deeds, that is wonderful things, including good and bad omens. He is seen as the producer of miracles. The advent of the hero is an astounding phenomenon which is sometimes connected with supernatural turmoil. Consider from poems 13, 14, 19, 21 and 23 of Kgoši Sekhukhune who, in this case, is taken to be **Ledimo** (Cannibal), or with unusual social and physical situations. It constitutes a drama never previously experienced.

According to Biebuyck (1978:93)

What was never seen is seen for the first time.

In the praises, the hero is constantly plunged into difficulties and hardships, he is tested and tormented, he is tough, he is capable of escaping dangers and of safeguarding himself. His life cycle is so richly varied that it produces stories. In some descriptions as we shall see later, the hero surpasses nature, a being that has never been born. He possesses the plentitude of manhood, he is conscious of his power, his only aim is to be victorious. In some praises, we find Kgoši Sekwati or Kgoši Sekhukhune entangled in a complex network of personal relationships, rooted in kingship, in friendship and alliance in political and ritual associations, and in supernatural linkages with animals and divinities. In all his poems, kgoši Sekhukhune

talks of his lions when referring to his fearful soldiers, he talks of his elephants when he refers to his captives. Many of these relationships are of a positive, friendly, cooperative nature, others are marked by either temporary or inveterate hostility and antagonism.

As a hero he is responsible for the origin and development of certain techniques, cults and customs. The King displays many contradictions of character. Biebuyck (1978:103) says:

He is alternately ruthless and magnanimous, fearless and pusillanimous, threatening and merciful, insolent and shamefaced, heartless and grieved, boisterous and sedate, thoughtless and poised, verbose and meditative.

Such as did Kgoši Sekwati and Kgoši Sekhukhune, they relentlessly take women, animals, and goods from those whom they defeat, but give liberally to their friends and allies. They delight in praising themselves immoderately, and they occasionally grieve over the fate of their people. From many of their praises it is apparent that they are never regarded as hateful, but instead, as forgiving and conciliatory.

The importance of oral traditions in the reconstruction of the history of non-literate peoples has virtually ceased to be a matter for debate, and is now generally acknowledged. Indeed, within the last few years, historical research based on such traditions has possibly shed new light on the history of many societies in Africa. But, in spite of this general acceptance, the diversity of oral traditions has made it very difficult for historians to analyse each type into historical data. In this regard, the history of the Bapedi serves as a good example. Their culture has accumulated around it a rich variety of oral tra-

ditions the study of which has made significant contributions towards the understanding of their past. For the earlier and later periods of their history, the historians have had to rely mainly on oral traditions. In spite of the existence of written documents, oral traditions have still proved very useful in giving a balanced view of events.

For the historian, the praises dealing with human achievements and especially in our case, achievements of the King, are obviously the most relevant. We will therefore examine this group of praises with their examples to assess their historical significance.

Kunene (1971:19) asserts that the use of eulogy in a praise poem may have diverse purposes, namely, to describe the King's physical features and moral and emotional attributes. In poems number 14 and 15 on Kgoši Sekhukhune we have:

Theledi 'a Marota.

(The slippery one of Marota.)

This is a good example of a description of appearance and emotional attributes such as are found in *direto*. In other instances descriptions of his bravery, gait and courage are given. In the example from poem 15 that follows Kgoši Sekhukhune's bravery is extolled:

8 Gomme nna ke lle ya mampampa,
9 Theledi, ka ba pharephare dinama.

(8 And I having eaten the big bellied one
9 Theledi, I became the strong one.)

Further on in the poem the poet says,

12 Ka Borwa o tš^vo senyana, o tš^v'o thopa
tš^va Radipilwane.

(12 In the South he has plundered,
he has captured those of Radipilwane.)

We have stated earlier that Sekhukhune was a brave man. The above lines are sufficient proof thereof. He was a brave military leader whose armies always emerged victorious. In his reference to poetry the poet also hints at the historical and geographical background of the subject of his praise. He talks of the South which was an area of the Boers of the Transvaal Republic. In the poems of Kgoš^vi Sekwati reference is also made to the most important rivers that cut or divide the whole of Bopedi into sections such as Tubatse and Ngwaritsi.

In praise poetry, the hero is often identified with various kinds of animals, especially large or brave ones. He can also be identified with natural phenomena such as the sun, rain, storms or even hurricanes. In the example from poem 15 that follows, Sekhukhune is identified with a giant which kills and eats its prey on the spot without considering his fellow-giants.

10 Ka ba Iedimo ka go ja ka kona mmane,
11 Gomme ke konne Mošopyadi Lekgolane,
Theledi 'a Marota.

(10 I became a giant by eating without giving to my aunt,
11 In fact I did not give sparingly to Mošopyadi
Lekgolane, Theledi of Marota.)

In other poems Sekhukhune is also identified as a louse.

Ke nta ya malomelakobong.

(He is the louse that bites in the blanket.)

Here the poet implies that Kgoš^vi Sekhukhune was an unreliable person. The kind of person who delighted in tricking others

especially those who regarded him as an honest and trustworthy leader.

In poems number 1,3,4 and so on,Kgoši Sekwati is identified as a scraper or a sharp knife.He says:

1) 6 Phalo ya Mmabatome'a Makwa,phalo ya se-fala-mathoko
(Scraper of Mmabatome of Makwa,scraper of the one who thrashes lightly.)

3)35 Kxatswatswa a Mabjana,phalo ya ga Mamodiši a Makwa,
Phalo ya se-fala-mathoko,gare o si'o thula kobo maroba.

(Leader of mabjana,scraper of the Mamodiši of Makwa,
Scraper of the one who thrashes lightly,in the middle I am afraid of piercing holes through the blanket.)

4)33.Ke sefadi,Phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka, a Mokitlana a Tšatši.

(I am a potscraper,the scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana of Tšatši.)

In traditional society a scraper was used to remove pieces of meat that remain on the skin after skinning an ox.Before the skin was tanned,it was often scraped with this instrument called **phalo**.The impression we get is that Sekwati was such a harsh and cruel person,that if a woman did not accept his love,he would force her to do so.In the same way he opened his way to the north as he went on his plundering expeditions. Although he did not mind harassing women,yet he was very careful how he handled them.His wartime behaviour was the same.As alluded to in the third example,he did not attack his enemies directly,but instead,he would surround them from the side. Sekwati is here identified with two sharp instruments namely the scraper and the horn.The impression one gets is that he was very brave and hard to defeat.

From the examples given above we have been told about the deeds

of these two heroes, namely Sekhukhune and Sekwati. Sekhukhune went about plundering, destroying and capturing his enemies. He usurped powers and took women by force. In the same way Sekwati sowed destruction leaving in his wake, villages in ashes people mercilessly butchered.

Another purpose of a eulogie is to identify the hero with his regiment. In poem number 3 Sekwati is identified with the Mabjana regiment :

15 Tlakana le le setšexo meralelo
16 Melemo ya banna ba Makxake a Selope Letlakana.
17 Tlakana la Mabjana la Borwa, e se tšee ke phefo.

(15 Member that has crossed the courtyard
16 The protection of men like Makxake of Selope a member ,
17 Member of Mabjana regiment from the South, I am not easily blown away by the wind.)

In this stanza, we find that whatever has been employed for the defence of the village he overcomes. He is a member of the Mabjana regiment which comes from the South. Sekwati is associated with Mabjana regiment which was very strong and invincible during his time.

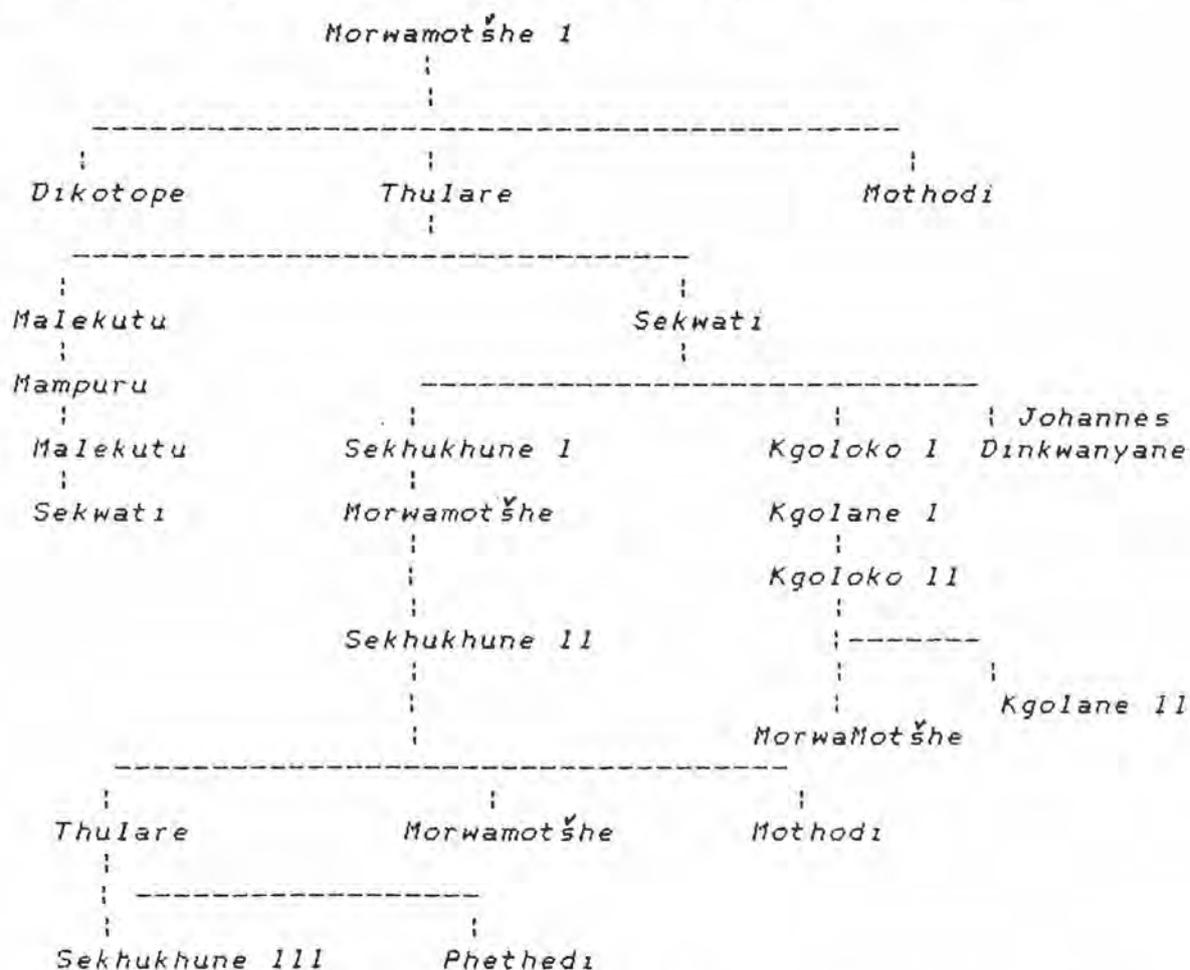
In poem number 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, we also find him associated with **Makwa**.

46 Theledi ke wa Kxalatlole 'a Makwa
(46 Theledi is a member of Makwa regiment.)

Makwa here refers to his regiment. Traditionally, boys of the same age-group were, at an appropriate time, all sent to an initiation institution upon the instruction of the King. This group of initiates would be given a name. In this way, Sekhukhune's group was called **Makwa** and Sekwati's group **Mabjana**. As sons of the King of Maroteng, Sekwati was made leader of **Mabjana** and

Sekhukhune, leader of **Makwa**. This group would then communally carry out every task they might wish to accomplish. These groups in Northern Sotho are called **Mphato** or **Moroto**. Today **Mphato** is even used at school to indicate a class of children in the same standard.

In his praise the hero often refers to his relatives or kinsmen. During the present research, it was made clear to me that Sekwati the brother of Malekutu, was the father of Sekhukhune. What is confusing is that often Mampuru is also known as Sekwati. Here follows their genealogical table from Kgoši Morwamotšhe:



The conflict between Sekwati and Sekhukhune I was caused by the struggle for kingship. That is why today we find the whole of Maroteng divided into small factions.

One of my informants, Mmakgoši Ramaube who claims to be the younger sister of Sekhukune, told me that of the two Kings, Sekwati and Sekhukhune I, the latter was a fierce and brave warrior. His only weakness was that he lacked intelligence. On the other hand Sekwati possessed both intelligence and bravery. The following lines from their poems show clearly that they were related.

Sekhukhune says:

Gomme ke konne Mosopyadi Lekgolane,
Theledi ya Marota.

(And I have given sparingly to Mosopyadi Lekgolane,
Theledi of Marota.)

And from Sekwati we find the following allusions.

Ke Mopedi wa bo Lekgolane,
Ka selepe ke a rema mmoelele.

(I am the Pedi of Lekgolane,
with my axe I chop repeatedly.)

If we were working mathematically we would consider the elements that intersect between the two statements. Drawing Venn diagrams we would find Lekgolane to be an element that unites the two sets. Lekgolane is the royal name of a Maroteng chieftainess. The chieftainess at Sekwati's kraal, at the time of writing this dissertation is Lekgolane. This is enough evidence of their close relationship.

Reference to the various names is a good outline of their genealogy. In the poems of Sekwati, allusions are also made to Thulare, Mampuru and Morwamotšhe. To know that Morwamotšhe was the father of Thulare and Thulare the father of Sekwati, is sufficient evidence to prove their genealogy and history, as the diagram has indicated. The same evidence is found in the poems of Sekhukhune I where reference is made to Sekwati. In poem 17

Sekhukhune 1 says:

2 Sekwati o ntswetš^he ka loga mano.

(2 Sekwati fathered me and I made means.)

In poem 14 Sekhukhune says:

Mola Sekwati a tswetš^he tau ya segafa

(While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion.)

In some praises, the hero is often identified with his place of origin. In poem number 15 Sekhukhune says:

Ee, itš^he ge re tš^hwa Bokgatla bja Dithebe

(Yes, when we came from Bokgatla of Dithebe.)

In simple language this is, "when we came from the land of the Bakgatla people." History says the origin of the Bapedi people is from Bokgatla. The Maroteng people are the descendants of the Bakgatla people.

Hunt (1931:275) says:

The Bapedi originated from a small Bakgatla clan living at Mapogole or Mahlakoaneng near the source of the Vaal river.

On the genealogical list of the Bapedi Kings, Thobela is shown as the founder of the Bapedi people. History shows that when this small Bakgatla clan found that their land was not fertile, they trekked to Skilpadfontein which was under Kgoš^hi Tabane. There, a quarrel arose among the Bakgatla women and the favourite wife, that is MaThobela, was mocked until she decided to break away and trekked to the east with flocks and herds. She crossed the Olifants river and passed through North Middelburg. On crossing the Lulu mountain range at what is now known as the Maila pass they happened to find a porcupine spine on an antheap, some say

on top of the Lulu mountains and others say on the site of the present platinum mine at Maandagshoek known as Saolekop. From that time they discarded the old monkey or flame **kgabo** emblem of the Bakgatla and adopted that of **noko** the porcupine instead. Most of the people of Maroteng are today known as Babinanoko. From this historical data we are able to trace the origin of people of Sekhukhune as well as the geographical setting of their settlements. All these are deduced from their different praises. The excerpts used in the preceding paragraphs, except those of Sekwati, come from poem number 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune in the Appendix.

The significance of all these examples mentioned above can, however, only be fully appreciated if they are placed within the context of the Bapedi culture.

Most writers who have studied **direto** agree that, the praise poems are culturally very important. Their functions within the society are manifold. They can serve as a simple verbal salute from an older member of a family to a younger one when they meet each other for the first time in a day, or just as a means of encouragement to the younger one if he has done well. It is true that the praises provide the Bapedi with a great deal of psychological satisfaction. By listening to the poems they are reminded of their ancestors. Deeds and achievements provide them with confidence for the present and courage to move into the future. According to Babalola (1964:24) the chanting of the praise poem arouses a feeling of solidarity with one's blood relations and creates a feeling of pride in one's pedigree.

In addition, the praises constitute some form of record of the history of the Bapedi society and most informants, especially the professional bards, seem to regard them as such, for a praise poem deals with the most salient aspects of a subject's life and in the main represents the popularly accepted view of a man's lineage or a town's achievements by contemporaries. Indeed the genesis of the praise and the method of composition confer some authenticity on the contents of the praises and highlight its potential historical value. The praise poem is not a ready-made poem, but is composed piecemeal over a long period of a subject's life. Single epithets, phrases, or sentences in hyperbolic language are spontaneously coined about the subject by his contemporaries, friends, and foes who have had a chance of observing him at close quarters.

Different occasions, as we shall see later under composition, give rise to such descriptions. A drinking bout with his companions, his performance in battle, his impressive display of wealth, settlement of a quarrel etc. These occasions, in fact, form the backcloth into which the descriptions are woven, but on each occasion the subject must have distinguished himself and attracted public attention. The constant repetition of such descriptions by all and sundry attest to their aptness in describing the subject as well as their wide acceptance within the community. The praises therefore, start off as an expression of public opinion, the product of a close observation of the subject, at a particular period in history. Since they are sung publicly and on festive occasions they soon become public property and go into the repertoire of the professional bards

who eventually string them into some kind of poem which has been aptly described as a body of praise units. The format of such a poem is usually, but not always, in the same order consisting of three parts: It starts off with a short section of appellatives which describe the subject's status, appearance, nicknames. The second part of the poem is longer and lists the subject's achievements and distinctions, while the third part, which is also short, deals with commentaries, opinions and criticisms of the subject. Everywhere in the poem there are interjections and at suitable intervals some of the subject's more popular appellatives.

This section will be incomplete if reference is not made to Jeff Opland (1980:301) who says that an Irish poem contains the stanzas:

If the wealth of the world were to be assessed-
nothing is the sum total of the matter - nothing in the
world is other than futile except only eulogy.

Eulogies are praises. And praises are like footprints imprinted on a newly cemented floor. When a man dies, his praises never perish. If one were as ferocious as lioness or a hungry old lion like Sekhukhune who was always hungry for war, one's reputation remains imprinted in the minds of one's relatives. This is the case with eulogies.

2.2. FORM OR STRUCTURE IN " DIRETO "

So far we have been mostly concerned with the understanding of some views which form the base of the composition of oral praises, and one or two of the characteristics of the creative process as poets have experienced it. It is now time to examine the form of the praise poem. No matter how interesting or

prophetic poets imaginings may be, they can have little effect upon the reader or listener if they are not presented in a form which is in itself impressive and appropriate. The art of responding to the form of poetry is not less difficult than the art of grasping its content. To attend to form in poetry is to attend to a most important aspect of the meaning of poetry. The word "form" itself is capable of many interpretations. It can refer to every aspect of the structure of the poem. In such case it is difficult to distinguish its meaning from that of the word "content". As we have already seen, the poet himself most frequently does not regard form and content as separate, he does not attempt to fit certain material into an appropriate form, his exploration simultaneously features form and content. In a well-written poem, content and form cannot be separated. Content determines the form in which it is to be expressed. Nevertheless, in order to talk about form at all, we have to separate it to some extent from content, and think in terms of what gives the poem its quality of pattern.

It is not easy to analyze the form of oral poetry according to Western poetical norms. Yet they certainly have form and they adhere to certain conventional patterns. It is a complex art practised and enjoyed by ordinary people. Pleasing language; worthwhile ideas; balanced arrangement; measured form - these then are the qualities we find in the poems.

Whatever differences we may find between these poems and Western poetry, one unmistakable quality links them together-

beauty of language and discipline of form, and the combination of these in such a way that they are capable of evoking emotion.

Skelton (1977:91) says:

Form does not lie simply in the correct observance of rules. It lies in the struggle of certain living material to achieve itself within a pattern.

However, many folklorists have a notion that praise poetry does not have form. Granted it may be so, but how was it organized into a genre if it does not have form? For without form there can be no content. Our stand is that the form is its organizing principle. According to Abrams (1971:65)

Many neoclassic critics, for example, thought of the form of a work as a combination of component parts, put together according to the principle of decorum, or mutual fittingness.

When we talk of a combination of component parts, then we go back to the order of pattern. In one way or the other there has to be a way in which things are done and that is form.

Expressing the above view more aptly, Cuddon (1979:277) says:

When we speak of the form of a literary work we refer to its shape and structure and to the manner in which it is made - as opposed to its substance or what it is about.

Thus poetical form turns out to mean simply the poem itself, the poem as an individual thing is all form, what is not form in it is not poetry. It is generally accepted that the poet gives poetical shape to his thoughts and experience.

Shape and form are the same, but what is meant when this is said is not simply that the poet turns his thoughts into the frame of the praise, like an artist in the kitchen pouring hot jelly into a mould to cool and set. He has, first of all, to formulate a structure that will later produce the intended form.

From the definitions and explanations cited above, it will be wise on our part to use structure and form interchangeably, for they seem to be synonymous. Their basic meaning according to Shipley (1972:167) is:

The character of an object as experienced or the structure into which the elements of an experience or a thing are organised.

Form in poetry, simply defined, is the manner in which a poem is composed as distinct from what the poem is all about. Form implies the sum total of the elements that make up a work. A poem cannot be exhaustively decomposed into separate elements : rhythmic, semantic, etc. To describe the poem we must look at it as a whole from different aspects, the aspect of meaning, the aspect of rhythm. Each one of them is but a certain function in the totality of elements of the poem. This totality of elements in the structural make-up of a poem was expanded by Hrushovski (s.a. 180) who says:

A poem is like a many-sided crystal, we can observe its inner properties only from one side at a time, but then its whole structure appears through this particular face, showing different emphasis in different directions.

Being a term with a variety of denotations, some of them closely connected to particular systems of philosophy, poetic form also admits to several meanings, some so divergent from each other that they are contradictory. Considering the structure of the praise-poem, which is often divided into undefined stanzas dependent upon the thought contained, the statement is correct. To endorse the totality referred to above, Vilakazi (1938:112) abstractly likened stanzas to lights on a piece of sculpture. He says :

Stanzas in primitive Zulu poetry are like lights on a sculptured work from different angles. These lights operate independently of one another, but bring into relief the whole picture which the artist presents in carving. Lights are generally hidden from the on-lookers, but their effect to the eye and the mind bring perfect unity in their very difference. The primitive poet in tackling his theme acts like a exhibitor of sculpture in the arrangement of lights. The piece of sculpture and the lights are one configuration indivisible as a mental setting which induces an aesthetic sense.

On this point in 1978, Ntuli was one of the Zulu critics to adopt a holistic approach to the question of structure, stating that structure could not be seen in isolation because it is an integral part of other constituents.

Ker (1929:138) pointed out that :

From another point of view, however, which is just as common, it is the scheme or argument that is the form, and the poet's very words are the matter with which it is filled. The form is not that with which you are immediately presented, or that which fills your ears when the poem is recited—it is the abstract original scheme from which the poem began... If it is said that a poem is formless — Wordsworth's *Excursion*, for example — what is meant is generally that the argument is not well planned.

In this sense form is the structure, tight or loose, supple or flaccid, of the whole composition, this kind of form being in strictness neither prosaic nor poetical, but just as much the one as the other. In a broad sense, whatever is in the make-up of an object that helps one to perceive it as a whole is its form it is therefore much more than the abstract argument or original scheme as mentioned above, it is the actual welding of all parts into a whole, the individual organization of a work, so that all its constituents however defined — words, thoughts, diction, style or meter — cohere and harmonize. In this sense form is often called organic form and sharply distinguished from abstract structure especially as determined by genre or kind of composition.

We should remark that in traditional poetry, the poet does not think for a long time about the form of his poem because the praises are created on the spur of the moment with the intention of giving expression to the inner feelings as they arise. They are spontaneous compositions that come to us in their unique form, least influenced by European poetic techniques. Thus, we must not expect the praises to completely satisfy the requirements for structural analysis from within the European frame of reference. We have to also bear in mind that this type of poetry was composed not for the press or the eye, but for the ear and the mind.

Another important point to consider in our study of form is what makes a free verse line a line at all? To answer this question, Smith (1968:84) suggests that:

It is only a line because it is a rhythmical unit, and it is only a rhythmical unit because it is a unit of sense.

We must object, however, not only because lines of free verse poems are often not units of sense, but because a unit of sense is not inherently rhythmic. It is experienced as rhythmic only in so far as it participates in a pattern of similar units. It is only when we perceive that a verbal sequence has a sustained rhythm that it is formally structured according to a continuously operating principle of organization that we know that we are in the presence of poetry and we respond to it accordingly.

Another point I wish to make is that there are numerous rhythmic passages in the praises, but the rhythm of one passage, especially within the same praise poem, is not related to the

rhythm of the next (except in the new compositions, where this occurs coincidentally as a consequence of the habits of a poet's personal style) and no overall principle of formal structure is maintained throughout the entire piece. In a poem, however, it is precisely the designed presence of such over-all principles that allows us to speak of poetic form, and it is the presence of such principles that is most significant for poetic closure.

Another interesting feature about the structure of praises is that praises show, amongst other things, verbal variability. This aspect is attributed to the verbal variability of traditional literal use because of its being transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Let us return to the definition of form which talks of a pattern and look at the various ways in which words are commonly given this patterned quality. First of all we can say that there is one basic element common to all forms, and that is the element of repetition. We detect a pattern most easily when we see, or hear, certain effects repeating themselves (possibly with variations) at regular intervals. It is this movement, this orderly movement, that gives to every poetic passage its specific character - one might say its vital heartbeat. Of course, the orderly movement may well be a subtle one, and make use of irregularities. We must not think of the poem's pattern as being necessarily rigid, or, indeed, necessarily obvious to the reader in every detail at the first reading of the following poem of Kgoš^vi Sekwati which is poem number one in the appendix.

2. INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI sa I

1 Kxomo 'a th^vswa! E xama ke mang?

- 2 Ke nna **Sekwati-kwati** sa bo-Maboforhlwe,
 3 Bo-Kxomo **sekwatiša**-motho-botlakala.
 4 **Sekwati** Se-hlwa-le-**ngwanana**-ntlong, e le mano a xo ja tataxo
ngwanana.
 5 **Phahle** Kxatswatswa a Mabyana.
 6 **Phalo** ya Mmabatome 'a Makwa, **phalo** ya se-fala-mathoko;
 7 A rexo xare; O ši 'o thula kobo maroba;
 8 **Phalo** ya morwedi wa Mphaka a Mokitlana a Tšatši,
 9 **Tlakana** la bo-Mpedi a xo rekwa,
 10 **Tlakana** la mosadi wa xa Mafiri,
 11 Makopye Mothša a-Malema Se metsa-melao a Marota
 12 a bo-Mma-Dinkwanyana a Mokxoko,
 13 **Sekwati** ba banyane le ba baxolo ba mo tseba,
 14 ba re: Ke mang yelaa? wa kala 'a puwane,
 15 xomme **marole** a a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana
 16 xa se **marole** a dikxokonyane, ke **marole** a batho.
 17 ke mo xo tlaxo Mothše 'moxolo, Se-laiwa-xale,
 18 **Sekwati** šoono! O re: Ke Mmidibiding, Sexukubyaneng,
 19 sa Se-hula-bošexo, ke **Phahla** 'a Bauba, Se feta-methepa.
 20 Ke fetile banana ba bahulwana, bo Mmaboloko 'a xa Maredi
 21 le bo-Letlapee 'a xa Mphela.
 22 Ke Se-ithlotledi sa Rakau 'a Modiši 'a Dihlašana,
 23 xa a foloxa Leolo la Thšupaxadi 'a Mabetha 'a Bokone.

In the poem, the boldprinted words have been repeated as indicated below:

Sekwati -- five times
 Phahle --- two times
 Phalo ---- three times
 Ngwanana -- two times
 Marole ---- three times

We shall see later which poetic features are represented by the repeated words.

There are three main ways in which this ordered pattern can be made. The first one is by making a pattern of sounds. Poems are given their patterned order by the use of rhymes, alliteration, assonance and consonance. Sometimes the repetitions are easy to notice, as in the case of rhyming couplets. Sometimes the poem has no rhymes, like in our case, but it contains repetitions of certain sound combinations within the lines, so that a pattern is made up that way. Our praises depend largely upon an effective use of alliteration for its pattern. Consider for example from poem number one of Kgoši Sekwati lines such as the following

which indicate internal rhyme through the repeated sounds.

- 5 Phahle kxatswatswa a Mabjana.
- 6 Phalo ya Mmabatome a Makwa, Phalo ya se-fala-mathoko,
- 7 A rexo xare: O šī 'o thula kobo maroba;
- 8 Phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka a Mokitlana 'a Tšatšī.

- (5 Phahle the leader of Mabjana.
- 6 The scraper of Mmabatome of Makwa, scraper of the sides
- 7 who says in the middle he is afraid of piercing holes in
- the blanket,
- 8 Scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana of
- Tšatšī.)

The second way in which to present order is rather similar, it is by providing a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. This is not so much a matter of repeating sounds, as of disposing sounds in an obviously regular manner. The use of stress-pattern as the most important factor in the order of the poem is hard to illustrate, for only rather crude poems emphasize repetition of stresses at the expense of other elements. For this reason we will not delve further into the illustration of this point.

The third way to establish order is by repeating, not sounds or stress-patterns, but locutions. A poem can be given an ordered appearance by making each sentence have the same syntactical shape, or by allowing one particular phrase or series of phrases to recur at regular intervals. Since this point involves parallelism, linking, refrain and punning, it will also not be discussed directly, but will present itself as I go deeper into the discussion of the aspects just mentioned.

Of course, in our praises, poets make use of a combination of all these methods. Total reliance upon only one of them would make the whole poem appear rather crude, and there are obvious advantages to be derived from making the pattern of the poem emerge in several different ways.

Coming closer to the point at hand, in our analysis of the form or structure, the following pattern will be followed: First we will consider poetic features such as repetition, parallelism, linking, alliteration, refrain, pun, rhyme and rhythm. Secondly and lastly we will consider Imagery and its related aspects.

2.2.1. Repetition:

In assessing the structure of Bapedi oral poetry, one is immediately struck by the high incidence of repetition in the poetry. This aspect, one of the most important in poetry, could have an entire dissertation devoted to it if only because it has enjoyed such great attention during this century. Much discussion has centred on the various types of repetition and various critics have suggested, inter alia, that repetition distinguishes oral from written poetry, or that it is part and parcel of both oral and written poetry, or that it fulfils many utilitarian functions besides being an aesthetically pleasing device. As such then, repetition can be seen as indispensable to poetry in general, and to oral poetry in particular. On repetition Cuddon (1977:564) says it is

An essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose. It may consist of sounds, particular syllables and words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas, allusions and shapes. Thus refrain, assonance, rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia are frequent in repetition.

The truth of the above statement is proved by the lines from poem number 6 on Sekwati. The praise-singer says:

8 Ke mo xo tlaxo nna Motšhemoxolo,
9 Sekwatikwati sa sehulabošexo,
10 Sekwatiša motho botlakala.
11 Sekwati le ba banyane ba mo tseba.

- (8 It is where I the big Motšhe walks,
 9 Sekwati, the one who robs others by night
 10 Sekwati the one who makes other kneel on dirt.
 11 I Sekwati even the children know me.

In the stanza, we find initial linking illustrated by

Sekwatikwati

Sekwatiša

Sekwati, in the second, third and fourth lines. Also the frequent use of "o" in the first line illustrate assonance. The praise-singer also plays on the word Sekwati which is an example of punning. There are compound words such as **se-hula-bošexo** and **Motšhe-moxolo**. Sekwati has also been reduplicated.

Shipley (1972:338) regarding repetition says:

In poetry especially, as a recurrence of rhythmic flow or pattern of sound, it is a most frequent aspect of verse.

Not only do these repetitions in a poem give it pleasurable variations and rhythm, they also draw our attention to some words and images, and thereby reinforce the meaning. Our poetry abounds with such repetitions. Our poets like to pile up words, and say the same thing over and over again in infinite variation.

By repetition a layman would understand that a word or group of words is repeated. Yet poetic repetition can take many forms and while it often does mean a recurrence of vowels (assonance), of consonants (alliteration), or of syllables and words; it may also include the occurrence of formulaic expressions to which we will refer to under composition, or a paralleling of ideas, a juxtapositioning of sentiments, almost a case of point, counterpoint.

Patterns of repetition can provide structure and coherence to an oral poem – a necessary aspect in a medium as ephemeral as the spoken or sung word, but need not lead to monotony. Full repetition is used to emphasize and intensify the theme of the repeated sentences. There is delaying repetition and repetition for euphony as well as many other types which have been distinguished. Through reiteration the audience is made to pay attention to the content of the sentences repeated, or the target of the sentences is made forcefully aware of the desires of the speaker or singer. When a group of sentences is repeated after some intervening ones, the idea contained in the sentences becomes a motif that draws attention to itself.

Of the many types, the most basic are the following:

2.2.1.1. Parallelism:

It goes without saying that parallelism is the fundamental problem of poetry, its essential characteristic. What is the origin of this formal property? The linguistic code? The stock of conventions proper to a specific historical period of the literary system? In "poetry of Grammar and Grammar of poetry", Jakobson (1968) emphasizes the constitutive importance of syntactic forms or linkages. The same semantic material permits its components to be ordered in different ways : **Lesole le bolailwe** (The soldier was killed) or, the other way round, **Ba bolaile lesole** (They have killed the soldier). This is the figure of grammar. When this figure is parallelistic, we immediately have the possibility of poetry, or rather of the poetic function. Over this bridge comes tramping the rhymes, the morphological and semantic repetitions, the prosodic symmetries that converge in

any given poem.

Cuddon (1977:480) says the following about parallelism:

A very common device in poetry (especially Hebrew poetry) and not uncommon in the more incantatory types of prose. It consists of phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other.

For example from poem number one of Kgoši Sekwati in the appendix, we have:

13 Sekwati ba banyane le ba bagolo ba a mo tseba,
14 ba re: Ke mang yelaa? wa kala a puwane,
15 Xomme marole a a tšwago Tswetla xa Ramapulana
16 Ga se marole a dikgokonyane, ke marole a batho.

(13 Sekwati, both the small and the old people know him,
14 They say: who is that one with a blooming twig?
15 And the dust that comes from Tswetla of Ramapulana,
16 It is not dust of cattle it is dust of human beings.)

In the first sentence he contrasts the people who know Sekwati namely the young and old. Further on he says that it is not dust.., but it is dust.... A negative and a positive.

Olatunji (1984:25) says :

*Parallelism has shown to exist in the poetry of many people ... and a claim has been made...
... as the principle underlying all versification.*

So far we have found the incidence of parallelism to be higher in proverbs than in poetry. It is, however a general feature of Bapedi poetry. It is both formal and semantic in nature and needs to be considered at both levels before its poetic function can be fully appreciated.

Olatunji (1984:26) says further that four types of parallelism are distinguished according to Vidal models. They are gradational, antithetical, synthetic and introverted parallelism.

In clauses that display gradational parallelism the second clause rises above the first either in significance or in expression. For example we have this extract from poem number 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune which says:

3 A laya Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe, a e botša are;
4 Phaswa, o sware motse wa Ledimo.

3 Giving advice to Phaswa, catching him by the ear, and saying:
4 Phaswa, you must look after the village of Ledimo.

The first statement only introduces what Sekhukhune wanted to say but in the second there is enough significance. He is actually telling him what to do— he must look after the village of Ledimo. This is where the emphasis is.

Another example is from poem number one of Kgoši Sekwati and has this formulaic expression:

4 Sekwati, sehlwa-le-ngwanana-ntlong, e le mano a xo ja tatago ngwanana.

(4 Sekwati, the one who indulges in courtship, tricking to conquer her father.)

The second expression gives the reason for staying with a girl and thus carries greater significance than the first. If a girl is captured, the father must show his responsibility by devising means of getting the girl back. To the father it is a matter of do or die.

Second to gradational is antithetical parallel sentences which are connected by contrast instead of similarity. Take for example a line from poem number 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune which says:

6 E itše xa di kgereša letšibogo, la mošola le mošono.

(6 When they went down the drift thither and hither.)

From poem 1 of Kgoši Sekwati which was also used in the general introduction about repetitions, we have the following line:

13 Sekwati ba banyane le ba bagolo ba mo tseba.

(13 Sekwati, the young and old ones know him.)

I think the people were aware that as a device in composition, for clarity, two things considered together become clearer than either alone. Life itself being to them a contrast of desire and disillusion, they had to give a good picture through the employment of antonyms. Some of these are repetitions for compositions. They are the formulaic expressions that will be discussed under the aspect of composition.

The third aspect of parallelism is synthetic parallelism which is based on the construction of sentences, for instance, noun answering noun, and verb to verb, being strictly artificial, that is the sentences display purely grammatical congruencies. This is what one can term as direct parallelism. In the following lines cited from poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have:

3 A laya Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe, a e botša a re:
4 Phaswa, o sware motse wa Ledimo.

(3 Giving advice to Phaswa, holding him by the ear, and saying:
4 Phaswa, you must look after the village of Ledimo.)

This is a superb illustration of congruencies **Phaswa** is answering to **Phaswa** which are nouns and **swara** to **sware** which are verbs.

Another example which illustrates this grammatical congruency is

an extract from poem 1 which has previously been quoted:

15 Xomme marole a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana,
16 xa se marole a dikxokonyane,ke marole a batho.

(15 And the dust that comes from Tswetla of Ramapulana,
16 It is not dust made by cattle, but it is dust made by human beings.)

There is here, the idea of emphasis that emanates emphatically from the noun Marole (dust).

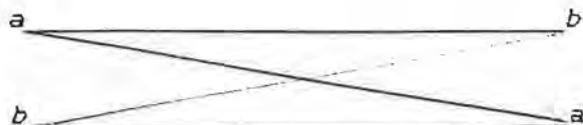
Finally, we have introverted parallel sentences, in which, whatever the number of clauses, the first is parallel to the last but one and so on. This is what many oral poets refer to as cross parallelism or chiasmus. The following examples from poem 6 of Kgoši Sekwati have been found more appropriate to illustrate introverted parallel lines.

(a) 22 Batho re a lelekwa, re raka ke ba ga Mogolle,

23 Ba ga mogolle, le thako e šilo.

In the first sentence lelekwa (to chase away) is a verb that corresponds with thako (the process of chasing away) which is a noun from raka or leleka (to chase away). In the first sentence, at the end we have ba ga mogolle (of my brother or sister) corresponding with Ba ga "mogolle" which starts the second sentence.

A diagrammatical illustration or representation of that would be:



2.2.1.2. Linking:

This is a process whereby a part of the first line or a word or idea is repeated or echoed in the second or third line. Sometimes this linking is done by commencing the next line with the last words of the previous line. These words are mostly linked without the use of conjunctives, especially when the second line advances the idea in the first line. Ntuli (1978:192) regards this aspect as a subcategory of parallelism. Whilst I agree with what Kunene, (1971) Ntuli, (1978) Pretorius and Swart (1982) say about linking and about it as a subcategory of parallelism, I wish to point out a slight difference. In parallelism we talk of phrases, clauses and ideas, while in linking, however, is the same, that is they unify and offer help in defining our pattern or structure. We shall here, in illustration of linking, apply a partial synthesis of the method used by Cope and the linear approach used by Kunene (1971). We shall deal only with words, stems and roots. In distinguishing the following types of linking, namely, initial, vertical, oblique, alternate, final and cross linking the following poems, together with other extracts from my collection which will appear at the end as an appendix, will be used. These poems have numbers allocated to them for easy reference.

25. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1. Kxomo a thswa! E xama ke mang?
2. E xama ke nna Mašile, Tsotsoboko Mma-naka le phatleng,
3. Mma-naka le mphatane, Mašile.
4. Mašile ke namane ya mesitwana;
5. E se seala, ke se-thšoša-baeng.
6. Se thšošitše ba ba tšwaxo Moxomatse,
7. Kwa xa Serutle sa Makotopo a Konyana.
8. Madimabe a xaxo, morwa Sennyé sa Ramaxohle a kxomo.
9. Madimabe a xaxo a tšwa xo feng;
10. Theledz a Marota, ka Borwa o tš'o senyana.

11. O tš'o senya thopa tša Radipilwane.
12. Mma xo Moxwete o a omana,
13. Xomme o re: Kxatswatswa, xa wa ka wa nthlabanela;
14. O lesa šaba la mahlaka-falala le e-ya.

18. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1. Kxomo a tshwa! E xama ke mang?
2. E xama ke nna, Seala-Kukuta o tlile,
3. O til'o ja Baditšana bo morwa Rakxamanyane a Mo-robela-hlaka,
4. Tsotsoboko a thšoša, thšoša khubedu, moxatš'a K'o-xola-kae;
5. Sesenyi bohwele bo-laiwa-dirathana,
6. Le bo Pitšana-apea 'a Dikxale,
7. Makhura a tšwa ka dibere;
8. Nneeleng dikxopa Makxalaka-tenang;
9. Xo batamela xo amoxa Mašile.
10. Xomme Makxalaka a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo;
11. Xomme ba re e na le Mmamabolo 'a Byatladi;
12. Xomme Mmamabolo a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo
13. E na le Makubu Ma-se-axa-ka-mošaša.
14. Xomme Makubu a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo;
15. E na le Dikxale tsa Molapo.
16. Xomme Sešupyane o dutla dikudumela.
17. Xomme o tš'o xapa tlou tša Masetle, tšiboxong la Baale.
18. A o thsetše ka lefe?
19. O thsetše ka la Kxorwane letšiboxong la Baale, Bo-hlapa-bootswa.
20. Di itse xa di kxereša letšiboxo la mošola le la mošono,
21. Xomme Kxoputšo o lle nala ya mefapa;
22. Xomme nna ke lle ya Ma-mpa-mpa Theledi,
23. A Kxalatlole a Makwa,
24. Seolo-sa-mmataladi Theledi 'a Kxalatlole 'a Makwa,
25. Se-kxopa-banna-matolo.
26. Motswako xa a re: Iie-le-ruuu' o kwa 'rumo la rona
27. La mo-robela-hlaka-'a marumo.

For translations see appendix.

(1) Initial Linking:

This expression is used to describe the type of linking where a word in the first line corresponds almost vertically with the one in the second line

Ntuli (1978:192) says:

This usually happens when similar words (or stems, or roots) appear at the beginning of successive lines (initial linking) or at the end (final linking)

Consider in this case, line 8 and 9 from example 25 of Kgoši

Sekhukhune above.

(a) 8 Madimabe a xaxo, morwa Sennyé sa Ramoxohle 'a kxomo,
9 Madimabe a xaxo a tšwa xo feng.

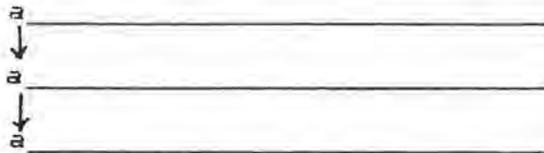
(8 Your bad luck the son of Sennyé of Ramaxohle of beast,
9 where does your bad luck come from.)

From poem 18 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following example to illustrate initial linking.

(b) 10 Xomme Makxalaka a re:Rena kxopa xa re nayo,
11 Xomme ba re ena le Mmamabolo 'a Byatladi;
12 Xomme Mmamabolo a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo.

(10 And the Makxalaka's said, we do not have a jewel,
11 And they said it is with the Mmamabolo's of Byatladi,
12 And Mmamabolo said: we do not have a jewel.)

Diagrammatically the pattern is as follows.



From poem 6 of Kgoši Sekwati we have the following example to illustrate initial linking. It is a very interesting example which also illustrates final linking with a slight variation that emerges from the locative **magolong**

(c) 47 Mokone šolaa! o tšwile magolong;
48 Mokone o tšwile gare ga magolo.

(47 There is Mokone! He is out of his den,
48 Mokone is out of the caves.)

Another example which is a fine illustration of final linking commonly known as end rhyme, is taken from poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

76 Xomme Moletše a šupa Ramapulana a Tswetla
77 Xomme ka re:Hee! Hena Ramapulana a Tswetla.

Of more interest to me is the following example of vertical

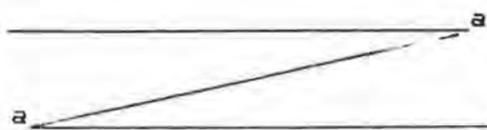
linking which occurs in the middle of two consecutive sentences. How the poet was able to count five words in each before the corresponding word is a poetic mystery. Especially if one takes into consideration that the poem was composed in performance through inspiration. These lines are taken from poem 18 of Kgoši

Sekhukhune which is recorded above.

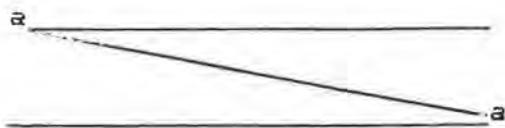
(d) 18 A o thsetš^ve ka lefe?
 1 2 3 4 5
 19 O thsetš^ve ka la kxorwane letšiboxong la Baale,
 Bo-hlapa-bootswa
 1 2 3 4 5
 20 Di itš^ve xa di kxereša letšiboxo la mošola le mošono

(ii) Oblique linking:

This is a common feature of **direto**. It is a type of linking where one word in the first line occurs in a different position in the second line. Like front linking, it is found in all degrees of completeness and complexity from the repetition of complex structures to those of much simpler features of similarity. The word oblique is preferred because it can be represented with lines having a slant from one side to the other. A right left swing, for example, can be represented as follows:



conversely a left right swing is as follows:



From poem 25 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following illu-

stration of oblique linking.

(a) 1 *kxomo a tshwa!* E xama ke mang?

2 E xama ke nna Mašile, Tsotsoboko ~~Mma-naka~~ le phatleng;

3 ~~Mma-naka~~ le mphatane, Mašile.

4 ~~Mašile~~ ke namane ya mešitwana.

(1 The cow spits! Who milks it?

2 It is milked by me Mašile, the lanky one with a horn on the forehead.

3 The one with a sharp pointed horn Mašile.

4 Masile I am a noisy calf.)

Another example is taken from poem 18 and is as follows:

(b) 11 Xomme ba re e na le Mmamabolo a Byatladi,

12 Xomme Mmamabolo a re: Rena kgopa ga re nayo.

The above-mentioned examples are illustrations of a right-left swing type of oblique linking. The following are examples of a Left-right swing. This example is taken from poem 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

(c) 5 Letšiboxo la Byale bya xa Masemola

6 E itše xa di kxereša letšiboxo, la mošola le mošono.

(5 The drift where the Masemola girls are initiated.

6 It was when they went down the drift from thither and hither.)

From poem 3 of Kgoši Sekwati we have the following example which illustrates both right-left swing and left-right swing:

(d) 14 Mahlape a bona le bo Makxake a Selope **letlakana**

15 ~~Tlakana~~ le le setšexo meralo

16 Melemo ya banna bo Makxake "a Selope **letlakana**.

(14 Their herds together with Makxake of Selope the letlakana.

15 Tlakana who went into oblivion

16 The medicines of the men of Makxake of Selope the letlakana.)

The last example is taken from poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, and it also illustrates both left-right swing and right-left swing type of oblique linking.

(e) 30 Ntsie se-lwa-le-tlou a letlobya;

31 Mabele a sela dikgara Ntsie.

32 Ntsie a bo Pheladi le Mahlako a Ngwako, Mpalabala of Rakabu.

(30 Ntsie, the fighter with the Elephant of Letlobya;

31 Corn is plenty Ntsie.

32 Ntsie, of Pheladi and Mahlako of Ngwako, Mpalabala of Rakabu.)

Ntuli (1978) feels that repetition should serve a purpose instead of just being ornamental. In addition to emphasizing, repeated words become increasingly indispensable when the poet has changed their morphological form by using affixes and other devices, and retaining only their roots. I have the following illustrations of a noun-verb or verb-noun oblique linking taken from poem 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

(f) 4 Theledi ka Borwa o tšo **senyana**,

5 **Masenyeletši** a magadi a batho.

(4 The slippery one from the South where he spoiled everything;

5 The spoiler of peoples **magadi** (dowry). We have a verb-noun pattern of **senyana** and **masenyeletši**.

The following is an example of a noun-verb pattern taken from poem 4 of Kgoši Sekwati:

(g) 33 Ke sefadi, phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka

34 a Mokitlana a **Tšatši**.

35 Ke a fala, ke si'o thula kobo maroba.

(33 I am the potscraper, the scraper of the daughter of Mphaka

34 of Mokitlana of **Tšatši**

35 I scrape, I am afraid of piercing holes through the blanket.

(iii) Alternate Linking:

A process of repetition that occurs in a line where a word appearing in the first line is repeated in the third, or in line two and four, or three and five and so on. To illustrate this my first example is taken from poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

- (a) 30 Ntsie se-lwa-le-tlou a Letlobya;
31 Mabele a sela dikgora Ntsie.
32 Ntsie a bo Pheladi le Mahlako a Ngwako,
Mpalabala of Rakabu.

- (30 Ntsie the fighter with the Elephant of Letlobya,
31 The corn is plenty Ntsie
32 Ntsie of Pheladi and Mahlako of Ngwako,
Mpalabala of Rakabu.)

The pattern diagrammatically is:

a _____
b _____
a _____

Another interesting example of alternate linking is taken from poem 18 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

- 10 Xomme Makxalaka are:Rena kxopa xa re nayo
11 Xomme ba re ena le Mmamabolo a Byatladi;
12 Xomme Mmamabolo a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo;
13 E na le Makubu, Ma-se-axa-ka-mošaša.
14 Xomme Makubu a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo;
15 E na le Dikxale tša molapo

- (10 And the people from Rhodesia said; We do not have the royal jewel,
11 And they said it was with Mmamabolo of Byatladi;
12 And Mmamabolo said; we do not have the royal jewel,
13 It is with Makubu, the one who builds the house with branches.
14 And Makubu said; we do not have the royal jewel,
15 It is with Dikxale of the valleys

I found it interesting to note 'a re' links the first, third and fifth lines together. And we have another example that comes as a final linking or end-rhyme which is, in this instance, an example of alternate linking. The word **nayo** appears in the first, third, and fifth lines together with **a re**.

swing is a correspondence of the same word. This type does not carry much weight because it illustrates more of initial and final linking than cross. Examine the following example from poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune which is considered an example of crossing:

- (c) 3 O retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi,
4 a re: **Phaswa**, a swara **Phaswa** a Makwa,
5 A botša **Phaswa** ka tsebeng, a e botša a re **Phaswa**
6 Šala o bona motse wa Ledimo ke woowe
- 3 He is praised by Mašabane of Maredi,
4 He says: Phaswa, holding Phaswa of Makwa,
5 Telling Phaswa in the ear, saying Phaswa,
6 Remain looking after the village of Ledimo.

2.2.1.3. Alliteration:

A figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated. It is one of the major unities of *direto*.

Abrams (1971:7) says:

Alliteration is the repetition of speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words, the term is usually applied only to consonants, and only when recurrent sound occurs in a conspicuous position at the beginning of a word or of a stressed syllable within a word.

Alliteration is an organizing device of the verse line. It is a technique in poetry that has been very popular in European poetry throughout the centuries, and later on it was also applied in African poetry and especially in traditional or oral poetry. In our praises we often come across sentences that have repeated vowels or consonants which result in an alliterative effect such as in the following examples of consonants and assonance repetition of sounds.

2.2.1.3.1. Consonance:

It is a repetition of a sequence of consonants, but with a change in the intervening stressed vowel. In this instance Moser (1974:46) differentiates between the strong and weak distribution of consonants. In strong distribution he refers to the well-balanced arrangement of similar consonants, for example from poem 3 of Kgoši Sekwati we have the following sentence to illustrate consonance:

(a) 29 *Thamaxa-ma-duma-dinama, Thamaxa
tona, e se iletše xo thoma.*

(29 *The red and white that wishes for meat, Thamaga
the male, it should not be hindered from starting.*)

From poem 4 of Kgoši Sekwati we have the following example:

(b) 12 *Ka lenaka ke hlabile ke epoloditše*
13 *Ke bile ke hlabile Mete kxwadi ya metlaka.*

(12 *With the horn I stabbed and dug out*
13 *I have even pierced Mete kxwadi of metlaka.*)

From poem 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following example:

(c) 22 *E lexo molao o mofsa le file ke mang,*
23 *mola maloba re le laya Mokxoxomeng.*
24 *Xomme lehono molao o mofsa le felwe ke mang.*

(22 *In fact who gave you the new laws,*
23 *Whereas a day before yesterday we were instructing you
at Mokxoxomeng.*
24 *And today from whom did you get the new law?)*

In weak distribution he refers to a pattern where similar segments are grouped in a single portion of the line. From poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we find the following example.

(d) *Ba neantše ke maxeruxeru a sehvirihwiri*

(*They were made to fight because of the lies of a
deceiver*)

This is not very common in Northern Sotho praises, except

that it appears widely mixed. Compare example "b" above which has the same number of "k's" and "l's"

2.2.1.3.2. Assonance

It is sometimes called "vocalic rhyme", it consists of the repetition of similar vowel sounds, usually close together, to achieve a particular effect of euphony.

Consider the following example of a recurrent long "o" in the line from poem 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

(a) 12 Ka Borwa o tš'o senyana, o tš'o thopa tša Radipilwane,
13 O tš'o hwetša thopa di kxokxothetše.

(12 In the South he has destroyed, he has captured from
Radipilwane,
13 He has found houses built.)

From poem 25 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we find the following example;

(b) 12 Mma xo Moxwete o a omana,
13 Xomme o re: kxatswatswa, xa wa ka wa nthlabanela,
14 O Iesa šaba la mahlaka-falala le e ya.

(12 The mother of Moxwete is scolding,
13 And says: Kgatswatswa you never defended me,
14 you left the people of mahlaka-falala to perish

In this example we have a superb illustration of a strong and weak distribution of assonance. In the first sentence the "o" is stronger than the "a". In the second sentence the "o" only appears in a segment in the first part of the sentence while "a" becomes dominant until the end.

Assonance, as is the case with alliteration, is introduced into a poem so as to create a specific sound effect which, as a rule, gives rise to a certain atmosphere in the poem.

1.2.1.4. Refrain:

A phrase, line or lines repeated at intervals during the praise and especially at the end of a stanza.

Ntuli (1978:200) defines refrain as;

..... a line or portion of it which is repeated at regular intervals.

It is a device of great antiquity. A refrain usually adds typical characteristics to the poem or emphasizes a specific idea. This, I must say, is a rare feature in the poems of Sekwati and Sekhukhune. In poem 18 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following example which serves to work out an argument in a most dramatic way.

- a) 10 Xomme Makxalaka a re: **Rena kxopa xa re nayo;**
11 Xomme ba re e na le Mmamabolo a Byatladi,
12 Xomme Mmamabolo a re: **Rena kxopa xa re nayo;**
13 E na le Makubu ma-se-axa-ka-mošaša
14 Xomme Makubu a re: **Rena kxopa xa re nayo;**
15 E na le Dikxale tša molapo

(10 And the Makxalaka said: He do not have the jewel,
11 And they said that it was with Mmamabolo of Byatladi;
12 And Mmamabolo said: He do not have the jewel;
13 It is with Makubu the one who builds with branches.
14 And Makubu said: He do not have the jewel,
15 It is with Dikxale of the valley.)

Another example that is frequently repeated with some slight variations at the beginning of a sentence is taken from poem 4 of Kgoši Sekwati.

- b) 47 Morwa Mamoxaswa mehlaxare ya meno,
48 **Ke Phahle a marumo a mantši.**
49 Lebyana la qa boMankepeng a Mothša;
50 Gomme **ke Phahle a marumo a mantši.**

(47 The son of Mamoxaswa the jaws of the teeth,
48 I am Phahle with many spears.
49 The instrument of Mankepeng of Mothša,
50 And I am Phahle with many spears.)

2.2.1.5. Pun:

Olatunji (1984:37) calls this feature word-play. And in giving

its definition he says:

Word-play is the juxtaposition of lexical items which are somehow similar in shape, to produce an effect of verbal dexterity.

It is a play on the meanings of words. Usually the words are homonymous or similar in sound but have different meanings. Tone plays an important role in the play on words. It is tonal dexterity which is being displayed on such occasions.

From poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following example which illustrates the use of a pun:

a) 60 *Ka ba kwena, **sekatika ba a kata**, a, a, a,!*
61 *Kwena ya morwedi a Phala 'a Matata a Mallexa.*

(60 I became a crocodile, the striker who strikes, a, a, a,!
61 The crocodile of the daughter of Phala of Matata of Mallexa.)

Another example comes from poem 3 of Kgoši Sekwati:

b) 12 *Le xapetše ba Manaka a dipotšane le bo Matlale*
13 *ba rexo: **Re sa šetše, ba šetše ba dišetša***
Matsamaka.

(12 I have driven away the cowards including Matlale
13 who says: He are still there, still herding those
of Matsamaka.)

2.2.1.6. Rhyme:

Rhyme is one of the most obviously aural aspects of poetry and contributes much of the musical quality of verse. It refers to a similarity in the sounds of words or syllables, usually those coming at the end of a line of verse. There exists some controversy as to the use of rhyme in African poetry. It was introduced into African poetry as a result of the example set by hymns and Western verse in general. Composers of traditional poetry, however, never made an attempt to use rhyme in their poetry. This according to Ntuli (1978:203) was obviously because their poems were not

written, and there was, therefore, no opportunity to work out schemes whereby the endings of the verses could be similar. What we find in traditional poetry is the repetition of whole words or sentences, resulting in the features that we have already discussed under aspects of repetition.

According to R Kunene (1962) rhyme is unsuitable, and in this regard he says:

End rhyme is unsuitable for Zulu poetry mainly because changes occur chiefly in the prefix rather than in the suffix...
Some poets, unaware of this fact have made the most fantastic verbal constructions. They have twisted words, coined them without consideration to their poetic effect merely because they wanted to produce rhyme scheme.

But, Vilakazi (1938:129) has defended this aspect by declaring that art should have a form which is the beauty of the poem. This beauty should supply aesthetic pleasure to both the writer and the reader, therefore, the use of rhyme is justified.

Rhyme in poetry must serve a purpose. It is by itself a beauty and it also fulfils a rhythmically constructive function, because it serves as a signal, audibly defining the end of each verse whatever its actual duration. It is in fact a time beater. **Direto**, that is oral poetry, is poetry in its natural form. The composition of **direto** is a matter of here and now. They are of a spontaneous origin through inspiration. In this way we cannot expect to find formal rhyme in them. Rhyme is a foreign technique. Although it will be too much to expect rhyme in **direto**, in the poems of Sekhukhune and Sekwati it is scantily applied without a fixed form. It came in as a work of

art because man is born with an instinct for order. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this feature which is not found in *direto*.

From poem 15 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following example of end rhyme.

- a) 19 Le ihlotleleng, xomme r'o binela koma ga Mampana
20 Bothša bja Sekwati bo roxa mediti ya bona,
21 Re ba beletša melao, ba a akxola,
22 E lexo molao o mofsa le fele ke mang,
23 Mola maloba re le laya Moxokxomeng.
24 Xomme lehono molao o moswa le felwe ke mang?
- (19 Support yourselves, and dance overnight with the initiates at Mampana.
20 The initiates of Sekwati are swearing at their initiation instructors,
21 On teaching them Maxims they picked up so quickly,
22 In fact who gave you the new laws,
23 Whereas a day before yesterday we were instructing you at Moxokxomeng.
24 Today from whom did you get the new law?)

Looking at the example, we find it to be true that rhyme is not a feature of *direto*. The following example from poem 4 of Kgoši Sekwati has what was supposed to be end-rhyme. It is in this instance interrupted by the sudden introduction of an "i" in sentence four.

- b) 30 Ka motswako ntwā ke a xononwa,
31 Nna sešišimale sa morwedi wa Mphaka,
32 Ke šišimetše, ka etša lefswaka,
33 Ke sefadi, phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka a Mokitlana a Tšatši
34 Ke a fala, ke šī'o thula kobo maroba,
35 Ke be ke tšwile le Mabowe xa Ramapulana 'a Tswetla.
- (30 With the mixture I am not afraid of war,
31 I the surprised one from the daughter of Mphaka,
32 I stood still like a rock,
33 I am the desperate, the scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana of Tšatši.
34 I scrape, but am afraid of piercing holes through the blanket,
35 I went out with Mabowe at Ramapulana of Tswetla)

2.2.1.7. Rhythm:

Several scholars, notably Groenewald (1979), Van Zyl (1949),

Moloto (1970), Damane & Sanders (1974), Ntuli (1978), Lenake (1982), have attempted to describe rhythm in African poetry. Some of these people are none - mother tongue speakers whose judgments in this regard are detrimentally affected by this fact. Some confuse rhythm, metre and rhyme. Some think that the most important aspects of rhythm is tone while others dismiss it for length. Some combine tone and rhythm and then add pause or breath-span. Some think of tone and a line length that has a complete unit of thought as the most important aspect of rhythm.

Beier (1958:8) says:

In writing down oral poetry it is even difficult to decide what constitutes a line as there are in fact no regular lines.

With these divergent views in mind, as a young folklorist, I find myself at sixes and sevens now as to what exactly to look for in rhythm. When I consider stress on the syllables I immediately get to a point of regular pattern which then brings in metre, and metre and rhythm are two different aspects of the same thing. On this point Boulton (1953:17) expands as follows:

Rhythm thus includes metre but metre is a relatively small part of rhythm.

We have then to look for other features, apart from metre, which constitute oral poetic rhythm. In doing so we are aware that while all oral poets make use of these features, the degree of their occurrence differs with each artist. Most poets, for instance, make use of syllable lengthening but this is differently manipulated by the individual artist. These introductory remarks bring me to the point where I must

first explain what rhythm is and then give its value and how it is maintained or established.

Rhythm refers to the way in which the lines are actually read. It is the movement of the verse, it is clearly a far more important consideration, but an implicit characteristic of praises. The rhythm of a poem, its movement from word to word and from line to line, carries the "ebb and flow" of the flow of the poet's thoughts and emotions. This is true as Babalola (1966:344) has mentioned that rhythm of Ijala is a free rhythm. Anything is very possible in it. It is used to emphasize crucial areas of the poem - often a single word. It contributes to a more subtle aspect of poetry, its musical quality - whether smooth or lilting or harsh and dramatic. Further more word order and punctuation play an important role in giving us a guide to rhythm.

Ntuli (1978) says that by rhythm in a poem is generally meant a more or less regular recurrence of time patterns and patterns of successive and positional association of emphatic elements to less emphatic ones. That is a recurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables in a relatively regular manner. Whilst I agree with his explanation of what rhythm is, I beg to deviate from the point of "regular recurrence of time patterns". The moment we talk of regular and time it is metre and therefore it is no longer free.

Olatunji (1984:89) says:

There are of course, stresses, but they cannot be regular in their recurrence.

If, however, a pattern could be worked out for incidence of

stress in Northern Sotho, its usefulness would still be debatable.

Van Zyl (1949:5) says:

Though the praises may not be as distinguished as in English poetry as far as the arrangement of verses and staves are concerned, there are definite rhythmical accidents of quantity and accent affected by the law of succession.

This sounds better to me because further on he says that these praises are by no means "perfect poetry", but it must be borne in mind that they are simply an outflow of a creative mind without any pre-arranged plan to work along the line required for the traditional fashioning of poetry. This also accounts for the fact that the rhythm in these and in all other praises is somewhat irregular and does not occur in complete verses of perfect trochaic pentameter or the like.

The whole of the Bapedi child's life seems to be uplifted and heightened by rhythm. Rhythm permeates the whole of his life from the cradle to the grave. Strapped to his mothers back, a Mopedi child will share all his mothers rhythmical experiences.

The truth is, we give a name to the way in which we stress words according to our common, everyday sense of how they must be said. In oral poetry, especially in the poems under discussion, as a result of uneven length of the lines and irregularity, metre is a remote aspect.

Guma (1977:161) states that:

Unlike a Western poet, his poetry does not depend on rhyme and metre, it depends on a balance of thought,

converged by corresponding balance of sentences,
which is accompanied by rhythm.

As a matter of fact, rhythm can exist without any metre at all. Everything a person says, everything a person writes, possesses rhythm. Take for instance the following line from poem 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

Ke nna Mašile a Xatiše a bo Ngwakwane.

(It is me Mašile the trampler of Ngwakwane.)

Can we say this line in a dead, level way, giving precisely the same emphasis to each word? Of course not. The natural speech rhythm, into which we instinctively fall when we say the words, is "Ke' n':na Maší:le a xatí:še á bó Ngwakwá:ne." The rhythm could be different only if the person speaking wanted to make it clear that he, as distinct from someone else, is "Mašile the trampler" or that it was he of **Ngwakwane**, rather than any other one from any family. In that case "ke or Ngwakwane," respectively would be strongly stressed. So, speech rhythm is determined partly by our everyday sense of how words are said, and partly by the particular shade of meaning the speaker wishes to convey. In certain lines, the speech rhythm of the words, and the metre in which they are arranged, might fit into one another exactly. To put it more succinctly, they coincide. They coincide in such a quantity of well-known poems that so many people think that rhythm and metre are the same thing. According to many poets, words are heavily weighted where this metre would lead us to expect a weak accent, and vice versa. But that is by no means the most important of the effects which this device can produce. Much more fundamental is the impression given by it

of absolute naturalness, of listening to a man speaking as though he were a character in a play being performed on the stage. However, there are many ways in which the human voice may speak, and for some poets in some periods the effect of naturalness is caught by a high degree of coincidence between speech rhythm and metre.

A great deal of the poet's handling of his art always depend upon what he has to say. And what is important here is how rhythm is achieved in our declamations. Dr Schweltnuss (1942) recommends that we consider the syllables in a line. He says that we shall find strong and weak syllables, long and short, high and low. They differ in their accent and intonation. And from these differences we get to our rhythmical movement that comes to the ear in different rhythmical patterns according to the manner in which the poet speaks.

I must readily remark here, as did Van Zyl (1949) that the composer of praises knows no parts, no verses, no lines. The praise is a whole. There are not even stops. The longer the reciter can keep on without breathing the more effective becomes the delivery. The verses and lines which we present here are so constructed only for the sake of poetical appearance and it was not the intention of the poet that his praise should be like that. The poems have been divided into lines in whichever way proved to be the most suitable, especially those collected directly from individuals whilst in the field. As a result some lines are much shorter than others in the same verse. In that way the number of syllables in the line will be unequal. Then, a rhythmical line will be any line that consists

of any number of syllables that has a complete unit of thought.

Coming to the gist of the matter, since we are more concerned, in the remainder of this study, with those common features and not with the way they are manipulated by the individual artist, I must say also that there is audible stress in Northern Sotho praises and that this stress is connected with a higher tone in its incidence. Stress is best considered as a physiological feature, the reinforcement of the syllable producing chest pulses. Like Babalola (1966), we should not accept the setting up of rigid stress-tone patterns yielding rhythms which are rigid and regular, such as iambic, trochaic, and anapaestic as alluded to by Vilakazi (1938), Schwelinus (1942) and Dhlomo (1977). Schwelinus knew Northern Sotho well but based his analysis on European influence. Vilakazi and Dhlomo were pioneers in this field of African poetics and depended more on European influence and background.

The occurrence of stress and/or non stress, like the features of prominence, tonal modification, modulation of intervals between tones, and syllable lengthening which are postulated by Olatunji (1984) as concomitants to syllable succession and alternation of tones on the syllables in the creation of rhythm, is unpredictable and subjective.

Though we are conscious of the contextual significance, verbal nuances and emotiveness of these features, they are best regarded as features of performance to be played down in the

examination of rhythm, since they are not inherent in the poems.

At this juncture, the question is what, then, can be said to be the constituents of rhythm in Northern Sotho oral poetry? The features are varied and several, but from amongst them I have picked out the following to be the most important constituents of rhythm. They are syntactic and sense parallelism, tone pattern, pause and syllable lengthening. Each of these features grouped together can be treated separately but more often than not they co-occur, and as such they are treated together. In my illustration, from the point of view that every line is syntactically constructed to make sense, and that parallelism has already been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, they will not be repeated here.

Each line of a praise-poem is made up of a number of groups of syllables, which Moloto (1970) and Lestrade (1935) call nodes, and which may also be called syllable-group units. Olatunji (1984) and Babalola (1966) refer to them as rhythm-units or rhythm-segments. There are usually three or four, with each group containing one stressed syllable and a varying number, usually two, three or four, of unstressed syllables grouped around the stressed syllable. This may be illustrated by the following praise-verses from a declamation of Kgoši Sekhukhune, from poem 16.

Ké n̄na # Maš̄ile # á Xat̄iše # á bó Ngwakwáne #
Mox̄ále # xa á xat̄iš̄a # Ká lek̄ópelo #
Thél̄édi # ká Borwá # ó t̄š̄ó senyána #

Here we have three lines each containing stressed and unstressed syllables. The first has four units of syllables and the second

and third have three each. In the first there are eight stressed syllables according to their tone as alluded to earlier, around which are grouped respectively one, two, two, two unstressed syllables. The second consists of three units containing five stressed syllable around which are grouped two, three, two unstressed syllables respectively. The third consists of three units containing seven stressed syllables around which are grouped respectively one, one, two unstressed syllables.

Malepe (1966:55) says:

It must be pointed out that the grouping of syllables in a praise-stanza does not follow any logical pattern. What is important, however, is the principle of the grouping of unstressed syllables around stressed syllables, which grouping corresponds to what is termed a foot in, for example, English poetry.

The marking off of the lines, was based on the pause between the units of thought. With this idea of tone and length, a rhythmic pattern can therefore be regarded as the organization or arrangement of lines of a poem into various lengths and forms. The lines may be irregular as in our example or equal in length.

Shole (1981:119) says:

In our case length is not based on the number of syllables only, but also on the breath-span: lines are equal length if they can be uttered within equal breath spans.

If I take one line from the above-illustrated verses its length will appear as:

" Thélé: di # ká Bo:rwá # ó tš'ó: senyá:na # "

I have also divided these lines according to the pause which Moloto (1970) regards as something that marks the end of a

stanza in most cases or invariably a group of lines. This helps especially in declamation to give the poet a rest and to allow for digression. In some poems, the ideophones, and interjections such as *šate: e!* *Age:e!* *Ilululu:u!* or *Ekwa:a, Ekwa:a* are employed for this purpose. No where in the poems of Sekwati and Sekhukhune do these examples of ideophones and interjections occur. There is usually a pause at the end of every segment, but the pause at the end of the segments preceding the last segment is not as long as that at the end of the last segment. One striking phenomenon observable in the final segment is the tendency to have a brief pause immediately before the first of the last syllables which carry the two tones at the end of the segment. Let us use lines seven and fourteen to observe the pronounced pause or Caesura and the unpronounced pause.

*Thélé:di á Máró:ta, # Tsotsobí:di, # maána:ká le
phatlé:ng, #*

The comma in this line makes it pronounced.

*Ké tlii'ó: hlao:la ya mampa:m̐pa, #
Thélé:di, # Ka bólá:ya #*

There is no punctuation mark to indicate a pause but because the thought in the stanza is ended, we felt it fitting to put in a pause which indicates the end of a segment. This is unpronounced.

It is easy to indicate lines and pauses by means of punctuation marks and by separating the lines in a vertical sequence when writing a poem down. Most lines are end stopped. There is a pause at the end of each which marks off a phrasal or sense unit. These need not be pronounced or cut off in

reciting, especially when it is recited fast and they may run on into each other if they are a group of lines forming a larger sense unit.

Having said so much about the establishment of rhythm, one will try to illustrate this device by declamation 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune.

The following signs are employed in the poem:

(x) weak beat

(x)
 } strong beat
 (x)

(#) pause

(') high tone which in our case is associated with stress.

(:) length

KGOSI SEKHUKHUNE

Kxomo^xa : t^xswa! # ^xé xáma ké ma;ng? #
 Ké n^x :na # Maš^xí:le á Xat^xí:šé # á bó Ngwakwá:ne, #
 Moxá:le # xa á xat^xí:šša ká lékope: lo, #
 Thé^xlé :di # ká Bo:rwá # o tšó : senyó:na, #
 Masényéle:tšé á máxá:di# á bá:tho
 Maphúmpha:nye # á ma-tswaka-lé -mo:bú, #
 Thé^xlé :di á Máro:ta, # Tsotsobi: di #, maaná:ká
 le phatlé:ng, #
 Na:ká la xa : xwe # lé kile lá palé :la "masó: le," #
 lé palé :tšé Mabú:ru # ka mo llaré:ng, # Ma-bohlá le-
 hla:le Thé lé:di. #
 Hlá le bjá: ka # bó lá la ká "lé kéšé:ng," #
 Bó ró ba:la ká lepókisi:ng, # Thé lé :di #
 Tšá tšó :xa # tšá xá Raka:ú á Mó di :šé; #

dí tse:ba # dí tló :bó la:ya tšó:hle; #
 ké tlií'ó : hlao:la ya mámpa:mpa, # Thélé :di. #
 ka bó lá:ya #
 Selé:pe sé seswe:ú # moxá :tša koxó :la "a'
 moté bé:le, #
 Ngwa:ná Masó:ka 'a ko:bi # ké ba ta boxá:le #
 Ké Hlá bí :rwa á Phá:hla # mo:rwa'
 Kxobotle:le. #

In conclusion, I wish to say that by the use of rhythm the artist engages the attention of the audience and makes them conditioned to receive his message. Rhythm contributes greatly to the emotional effect of poetry, offering sometimes a drug, sometimes a stimulant, under the influence of which we more readily accept the poet's meaning and respond to his magic.

Northern Sotho praise poetry is memorable in no small way because of the rhythm. But there is another reason why poetry is rhythmical. It is intended to be memorized. Through memorization resulting from rhythm, the poems stabilize themselves and are thereby transmitted to posterity. As the poems are oral, memorability is one of the ways through which they ensure their survival.

2.2.2. Imagery:

This is probably the single most vexing aspect of poetic appreciation. Many students struggle through their course without ever feeling confident that they really understand the nature or function of imagery, while at the same time

realizing it is the central characteristic of poetic writing.

He said earlier that a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. Therefore, imagery involves presenting or describing one object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two, it also involves the use of figurative language to create images or pictures that appeal to the different senses. A few exponents in this field have the following to say about imagery:

Cuddon (1979:322) says

Imagery as a general term covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, state of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience.

This is a very important view and enlarges on what I stated in my introductory remarks. Abrams (1971:76) describes imagery as follows:

This term is one of the most common in modern criticism, and one of the most ambiguous. Its applications range all the way from the "mental pictures" which, it is claimed, are experienced by the reader of the poem, to the totality of the elements which make up a poem.

New criticism has stressed imagery as the essential component in poetry, and as a major clue to poetic meaning, structure and effect. Therefore, by creating such pictures as alluded to above, even abstract ideas or complex feelings or experiences can be described in very concrete terms, so that they are immediately perceptible to our senses. Shipley (1972:220) on the other hands says:

An expression evocative of an object of sensuous appeal. It usually serves to make an impression more precise, it may on the other hand, carry the mind from too close a dwelling on the original thought.

From all the quotations, we see an image in poetry as a word that gives rise to ideas of sensory perception, that is to say, it makes one feel as if one is seeing, touching, smelling, or hearing.

A poem often arouses excitement by making a pattern of images, so that the reader becomes not so much fascinated by meanings as stimulated by sensations. In this way poems can be rather like certain abstract paintings - paintings in which there is no obvious reference to recognizable objects or realities, but which are effective because they arrange shapes and colours in an exciting way. One example of this kind of a poem is number 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune cited below. Although the poem has a message, it is the sensual description which is really responsible for the poem's success. Only a few lines and some individual words will be considered to illustrate imagery. Images can, of course, vary considerably in their degree of intensity, and in their degree of definition. We do not, in day-to-day experience, perceive everything with the same clarity and definition. The poem then, in reflecting human perception, must take this into account. In the poem, when we read the word **Ledimo**, we are immediately aware of many associated ideas. We think of the weather with its related aspects such as the whirlwind, the hurricane, a tornado or a thunderstorm. All these are fearful and destructive. Again, because we are talking of people, we may think of a giant, or a cannibal or an ogre. We may still take a word like **tau** used as in the following:

14 Mola Sekwati a tswetš^ye tau ya sexafa, Tau ya Sekwati
ke hlatš^aa marexa.

(14 While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion
The lion of Sekwati I litter in winter.)

In these lines Sekhukhune is associated with a mad lion. With these the reader or listener is immediately filled with fear and a feeling of foreboding like in the case of a cannibal that lives on human flesh. Such images give the poem its effect. We may cite another example such as:

4 a re:Phaswa, a swara Phaswa 'a Makwa a botš^ya Phaswa
5 ka tsebeng, a e botš^aa a re Phaswa:

(4 Saying: Phaswa, holding Phaswa of Makwa, telling
5 Phaswa in the ear, saying to him, Phaswa.)

In these lines he was not only telling Phaswa, but he was actually forcing the news into Phaswa's ears.

In the examples cited above, the images are immediate and all the pictures are clear and definite. Imagery attempts to make communication more vivid, more immediate, or more exact. An image should help us see, or feel, or hear, or focus our thought, more clearly and sharply on what the poet is trying to convey or describe. Its function is basically descriptive, yet in a deep sense of the word, as it does not seek to give simple, factual or physical representations, but more to evoke feelings in the reader and atmosphere within the poem. The reader cannot be passive towards imagery, it forces him to respond in some way, to use his mind, his senses, his emotions, his imagination. It is subjective in that it tells us the poet's feelings - and two poems on the same theme will use different images to convey the different ways the poets feel about the subject - and in that our response to it will

be our own response. If we have read a poem closely and sensitively, we should, no doubt, feel in a certain way towards it, a way others, giving the poem a similar reading will probably share. Yet most of the disagreements about what a poem, or part of a poem, means, together with most of the misreadings or misinterpretations of poetry, stem from the way we perceive imagery in the poem.

Imagery is the hallmark of good poetry. We all use it, almost unconsciously, every day. This means that, unconsciously, every word we use or recognize carries with it a surrounding area of associations. It also means that when we compare, verbally, one thing with another, we call these associations into mind again in order to see to what extent the surrounding areas of the words intersect. This amounts to a recognition that each word has several possible meanings, or shades of meaning. Now, we are told that it is a characteristic of emotionally disturbed people to use words which have many meanings, all packed together into a container. We can easily recognize this in ordinary speech. If someone calls someone else "a swine" (kolobe), we immediately take the word to refer, not to one, but to a number of disgusting qualities. If a person is disturbed, in short, he uses figurative language which brings words into play, not a single but as multiple meanings. Moreover, the more disturbed he is, the more figurative his language is likely to become. In an effort to express the extent, range, and intensity of his perceptions, he makes every word into a whole of world of implications, meanings, and gestures.

Simple phrases such as *ka ponyo ya leihlo* (with a wink of an eye) or *ke tau* (he is a lion) are all technical images. In the poem attached Sekhukhune is a black and white bull, whirlwind, zebra (*pitsi*), *phala* (impala). While strong and destructive, he is also fast and tender. All these are implied in the words I have just mentioned from the poem. In other words imagery covers any usage of language that is figurative - where the words used are not to be taken literally, in the sense of their dictionary definition. As such, it embraces all uses of metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism and figures of speech.

2.2.2.1. Metaphor

This is when a word is made to 'stand for' something different from its usual, literal meaning. In this way it is an implied comparison between the two things being related, that is the normal meaning or association of the word that which it is made to represent in this specific instance. It is an 'implied' comparison because it does not use the words "like" or "as" which is a more direct form of comparison.

On the metaphor, Shipley (1972:197) says:

The substitution of one thing for another or the identification of two things from different ranges of thought... Metaphor is considered by many to be the basic poetic figure; Quintillian calls it the commonest and most beautiful.

It is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. The comparison is usually implicit, whereas in simile is explicit. Therefore, when we read the metaphor of poetry, we intuit the presence of emotion. Consequently the more metaphorical a poem is, all other things being equal, the more passionate it appears to be. The amount of emotion generated by a metaphor appears to be in direct proportion to the amount of

c. 8 Phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka a Mokitlana a Tšatšhi

(8 The scraper of the daughter of Mphaka (knife)
of the secrets of the day.)

Phalo (scraper) is in this case identified with Sekwati, but to say that he is the son of the daughter of Mphaka (knife), is surprising because the knife can also be used for scraping. What imagery, with such deep figures of speech! Further on it is said that the process of scraping could only be done in secret.

2.2.2.2. Simile

Olatunji (1984:53) says :

A simile is an overt comparison. It describes an object as being similar to another.

Sometimes the poet will feel it is more appropriate to make a comparison and actually use "like" or "as". It is chiefly through this comparison that poets try to communicate difficult concepts to their audience in a meaningful way. It is an explicit comparison as opposed to the implicit comparison of the metaphor, yet that does not mean that it is in any way an inferior device. In Northern Sotho, this feature is recognized by the use of conjunctives such as **bjalo ka, ka ka, boka, swana le**. A simile is a feature that is equally common in prose and verse and is a figurative device of great antiquity.

The following examples from the poems of Kgoši Sekwati and Kgoši Sekhukhune were considered to be appropriate examples to illustrate what simile is. I must remark, however, that in the poems of the two kings, the similes are not always immediately apparent. Examine the following example from poem 2 of Kgoši Sekwati.

- a. 5 Ba re : Ke yena yelaa wa kala ya puwane,
 6 Ha Marumo a mantš'i, a sekxoboko,
 7 **Nkexo** ke thaka ya thšimane 'a marole.

(5 They say : There he is with a blooming twig,
 6 with many bundle of spears.
 7 **like** a peer group of boys playing in dust.)

This simile is somewhat more difficult to detect as it does not follow the common conjunctives for simile as identified above. He had many spears that were heaped like a group of dusty boys. The following example from poem 17 of Kgoš'i Sekhukhune is also not very common

- b. 9 Ngwana-mosadi a Phala Sebolai,
 10 Sebata ke a khukhuna,
 11 **Moka** boditse ke hlahla le phoka,
 12 Ka Borwa o lle sehlana a xafela dinong

(9 The child of the wife of phala Sebolai,
 10 The carnivorous one I stalk,
 11 like the hair of a tail I creep in dew
 12 In the South he is from eating the placenta and offering it to the vultures.)

In the following example we have the common conjunctive similes.

From poem 6 of Kgoš'i Sekwati we cite :

- c. 26 A rexo atšhaba a be a ipekenya
 27 **Bjalo ka** monaledi ' a kotse.

(26 Who when running away looks in all direction
 27 Like the twinkling shield.)

2.2.2.3. Personification

Personification is generally understood to be the bestowal of human attributes upon that which is not human. It is a kind of anthropomorphism, and instances of this device abound in Bapedi oral poetry. It has been defined by Cuddon (1979:501) as

The impersonation or embodiment of some quality or abstraction, the attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects. It is a figure of heroic poetry.

Giving weight to Cuddon's definition,

Heese and Lawton (1978:221) say that personification is;

... that kind of image where the
'something concrete' relates to human beings
while the 'something else' is not human.

This happens when an inanimate object or an abstract idea is attributed with feelings, thoughts or sensations normally associated with living creatures. Ntuli (1978:170) calls this a special type of metaphor. Animals, birds and natural phenomena are given the attributes of human speech, actions and emotions. For instance, in poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following examples which features Sekhukhune as the "Cannibal".

(a) 3 A Iaya Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe a e botšša
4 a re:Phaswa, o sware motse wa **Ledimo**.

(3 Instructing Phaswa, holding Phaswa by the ear, saying
4 Phaswa, look after the village of the cannibal.)

It is a metaphor that personifies the cannibal to be Sekhukhune.

It is a natural phenomenon that is being personified.

Another example from the same poem personifies the elephant:

(b) 14 Masebete o dutla dikudumela,
15 o tš'o xapa tlou tšešo Masetlwe.

(14 Masebete is oozing sweat
15 He is from driving our elephants from Masetlwe.)

Elephants are personified. His soldiers were coming back from an expedition and they were also driving their captives. In this poem he calls the captives **ditlou** (Elephants) and in the following poem 14 he calls them **ditau** (Lions).

In another example from poem 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, the axe is given human attributes. He says:

15 Selepe se sešweu moxatšša Koxola 'a Motebele,
16 Ngwana Masoka 'a Kobi, ke bata boxale,
17 Ke nna Hlabirwa 'a Phahla morwa Kxobotlele.

*(The white axe, the husband of Koxola the Letebele.
The child of Masoka of Kobi, I flatten fierceness,
I am Hlabirwa of Phahla the son of Kxobotlele.)*

He know very well that an axe cannot have a wife. In this example, the axe is the husband of Kogola the Letebele, the daughter of Masoka.

Personification by attributing human characteristics to what is non-human, makes more vivid what might perhaps have been less tangible to us. The nature of non-human things is made more real by projecting into them those qualities or attributes that we recognize in ourselves. Abstract ideas are also thereby made concrete.

2.2.2.4. Hyperbole:

Exaggerated description, the attribution, to people or things of values or qualities far beyond the state of things. This is a feature that is much used in Northern Sotho oral poetry.

In defining this aspect, Abrams (1971:75) says :

The figure of speech called Hyperbole is bold overstatement, or extravagant exaggeration of fact, used either for serious or comic effect.

It is understood to be a figure of speech that contains an exaggeration for emphasis. This is the use of deliberate, sometimes outrageous, exaggeration. The main potential for hyperbole is obviously comic or ironic. For example in poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, when pointing to his soldiers, when they were very tired and victorious, coming back from an expedition, he says:

*(a) Marole alee! Le a bonaxo molaaa!
xa se a dikxomo, ke marole a batho.*

*That dust, you see there!
It is not dust from the cattle, but dust from the people.*

A regiment is always orderly in modern times. But when one considers a large number of soldiers that have been inspired or encouraged by their victory, singing and shouting, then one would definitely agree when it is said that their dust filled the whole sky above their heads. The language is meticulously chosen to give us a picture of the large crowd of excited brave men. Another example comes from poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune and says:

(b) 14 Mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya sexafa,
15 Tau ya Sekwati, ke hlatša marexa,
16 Selemo se tlaxo ke a xafaxafa
17 Ke thopa dikxomo, bašimane ba dišitše.

(14 While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion,
14 The lion of Sekwati, I litter in winter,
16 When Summer comes I rave mad.
17 I capture cattle in the face of the herdboys.)

Sekhukhune was not only strong, but also unpredictable. This we see through his madness. This is a true statement because it is said that whenever he was faced with war, he never used to look back, sometimes to his detriment. During winter, because most people like basking in the sun, trying to drive away the cold, it is an opportune moment for him to strike. The literal statement is that "he vomits in winter." Whether it is true, that he could capture cattle in front of their owners is doubtful and perhaps grossly exaggerated.

2.2.2.5. Symbolism:

Shipley (1972:322) defines symbolism as:

The representation of a reality on one level
of reference by a corresponding reality on another.

It is a form of indirect metaphorical speech meant to carry or

suggest a hidden reality.

Cuddon (1979:671) says:

The word symbol derives from the Greek word symballein, to throw together, and its noun symbolon, mark, emblem, token or sign. It is an object, animate or inanimate which represents or stands for something else.

A symbol differs from an allegorical sign in that it has a real existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary. A symbol also differs from a metaphor, and in trying to expand upon the difference, Hellek and Warren (1954:194) say:

An image may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation, and representation, it becomes a symbolic system.

In the following example from poem 14, tau (lion) is both a presentation and a representation of Sekhukhune:

(a) 14 Mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya sexafa,
15 Tau ya Sekwati, ke hlatšša marexa,
16 Selemo se tlaxo ke a xafaxafa,
17 Ke thopa dikxomo bašemane ba dišitše.

(14 While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion,
15 The lion of Sekwati, I litter in winter,
16 When summer comes I rave mad,
17 I capture cattle, while the herdboys are
looking after them.)

The lion represent Sekhukhune, and is therefore, a sign. Madness is also a sign of his cruelty and unpredictability. Metaphorically, the lion is a strong animal as was Sekhukhune.

Three types of images are represented in this stanza, that is metaphor, personification and symbolism.

Another example from the same poem is:

b) 6 Phaswa, o šale o bona motse wa Ledimo ke woowe!

(6 Phaswa, remain looking after the village of Ledimo
(the cannibal), there it is.)

Phasma is a black and white bull which symbolizes strength and ferocity. *Ledimo*, is used as a sign of strength, destruction, and so was Sekhukhune who used to plunder the neighbouring villages like a tornado.

Skelton (1977:71) says:

Many symbols get their symbolic quality through accretion. As a poem progresses it becomes clear that a certain image is being developed in so many ways that it is impossible to say at all briefly what it means. It is a stone thrown into a reader's own pool of associations, the ripples spread over almost the whole surface.

I have tried in this section to indicate as briefly as possible some of the main functions of imagery. Imagery, as we have seen brings to us freshness and intensity, simultaneously arousing our feelings. In Sekhukhune we have seen a big, round and strongly built man who is fearful. In Sekwati, from the imagery contained in his poems, we see a man who is strongly built, short in stature and tough by the nature of his built. So far we have seen pictures made out of words.

CHAPTER 3

COMPOSITION, POET, LANGUAGE

3.1. COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE

The Northern Sotho people are amongst the African peoples of Southern Africa who possess a long tradition of versification in oral form. Poems are still composed in the traditional manner. At ceremonies like the first fruit tasting in traditional communities where many people gather, the composer or poet is provided with a good opportunity for reciting his compositions.

Vilakazi (1938:105) says:

A Zulu man, who is considered to have a natural gift for seeing and feeling most in the make and experience of life, will look at his king, survey him in the light of his ancestors, and then turn over his mind in heroic deeds of his king and even his weaknesses. Suddenly he will spring up in a crowd, with his shield pointed to the sky, and the whole of his body tangling with emotional excitement.

In composition, inspiration manifests itself in a manner which no one can mistake. The poet unaccountably finds himself dominated by something which absorbs his being and excludes other interests from his mind. Such a man is never requested to do his duty, but, stirred by the performance of the tribal ceremony and imbued with national pride, he feels it most opportune to express his feelings, and thus fulfills his self-imposed duty. It is not easy to define exactly what this is, but we may mark certain elements in it. Central to it is something which may be called an idea, though in some ways it is too vague to be named. It has a powerful character and atmosphere of its own, and though at first it is too indefinite for intellectual analysis, it imposes

itself on the poet with the majesty and authority of a vision. Even if he does not fully understand it, he feels it and almost sees it. This is usually accompanied by words which fall into rhythmical patterns, sometimes without the poet knowing what they mean, though he is singularly attracted to them and cannot but make the most of them, confident that they will yield their meaning to him later.

On this issue, Jeff Opland (1980:296) says:

The performer of poetry, however, is not necessarily an imbongi. Among the Xhosa-speaking peoples, potentially anyone can produce a spontaneous poem on the inspiration of the moment—at traditional ceremonies, at sports matches, during church activities or at political meetings

This performance is dynamic and it forces a source of vivid almost violent activity. It begins at once to generate ideas of great force and intensity, and these are often expressed by words which not only clarify them and relate them to the general scheme but are themselves of an unusual force and intensity. Inspiration sets to work with a will which nothing can withstand.

Van Zyl (1949:9) says:

Though the obvious, i.e. the external appearance, is easy to understand and to define, these concrete requirements for poetry prove to be totally insufficient, and to complete a definition with that only, is impossible. A spiritual meaning cannot be omitted, there must be a definite internal side, an ecstasy which fits in with the craft. Poetry also means verse which is inspired by imagination and which attains a measure of perfection in that degree at which it aims.

Vision is the main characteristic of praises. In many cases an idea may move faster than the words which pursue it, and the poet is hard pressed to keep up with it. The process seems to be

done at an extraordinary speed, as if the inspiring thoughts are often too fast for the words which pant after them. In the process, what begins by being almost unconscious becomes conscious, what is at the start an outburst of energy infused with a vague idea or an undifferentiated vision becomes concrete and definite, what is outside the poet's control is gradually made to submit to his will and judgements. Such, or something like this seems to be the usual experience of poets, and this is primarily what inspiration is.

The state of mind is of some importance to the creative act, because it enables the poet to give himself entirely to his task. At such a stage he thinks of nothing else, except to exert every faculty with the assurance that he can now do his utmost and that nothing will hinder him. Only with such an assurance can he put out that last bit of effort and concentration which is needed to make a unique work of art. The visits of inspiration may end as suddenly and as unaccountably as they began, but, while they last, they enable the poet to work at the full stretch of his powers because he feels that anything is possible for him. Paradoxically this condition is one of joy. Whatever disasters or conflicts, whatever grief or anguish may be the start and the subject of the poet's inspired activity, once inspiration is with him, he works in delight, in a rapturous confidence that all is going well and that something ineffably exciting is happening.

Inspiration, according to many poets, creates a state in which they see as a whole what normally they see only in fragments, as parts of a temporal process, and they are able to grasp from

the outside, in the full pattern of its movement, what normally they know only from the inside in separate and limited stages of development. It is not surprising that in such circumstances they feel that they have passed into eternity.

Sometimes the behaviour of inspiration may be even more tantalising than this. To some poets the inspired and inspiring vision seems to come without any great accompaniment of words for its expression. The poet responds to it with all his nature and is obsessed by it, but from the very start he has to work hard to give it shape. Yet it is so powerful that, though the words come slowly and painfully after much search and trial, they catch fire from it because it is so lively and persistent.

Bowra (1970:15) says:

Of course this does not happen unless the poet is a master-crafts man who knows exactly what kind of words he needs, but, if he is, they come in the end with an uncommon force in answer to his patient efforts.

According to Casalis in Damane & Sanders (1974:23) praise poems were inspired by the emotions of war or of the chase. But in none of the poems recorded either by himself or by anyone else are there any but incidental references to hunting, and it would appear that, until the end of the 19th century at least, most poems were inspired by war and were composed during periods of leisure and reflection in the aftermath of battle. Specific to this are the compositions of kings Sekhukhune and Sekwati who fought many battles against each other, and against many nations such as the Zulus and the Boers of the Transvaal Republic.

Let us look at the following lines from poem 16 of Kgoši

Sekhukhune, to support our view:

7 Theledi a Marota, Tsotsobidi maanaka le phatleng,
8 Naka la xaxwe le kile la palela "masole",
9 le paletše Maburu ka mo laareng, Ma-bohlale-hlale
Theledi.

(7 Theledi of Marota, Tsotsobidi with a horn on the fore-
head,
8 his horn once defeated the "soldiers"
9 It beat the Boers in the laager, the clever Theledi.)

Sekhukhune, at one of the fierce battles he fought against the Boers, claims to have defeated them and even beat them in the laager. He is the upright and clever one with a sharp horn on his forehead.

It was around the fireplace at family, clan or tribal festivals, at initiation schools in the pastures, at the grinding stones, at waterwells, and at various gatherings of a formal or informal nature that praises were composed to re-count adventures and escapes from perils to relieve the excitement of the chase and the wilder joys of battle, and to brag about the king's prowess and that of his mighty forebears.

Mafeje (1967:193) says:

These "praises" were recited on any occasion which seemed to call for public adulation of the chief, such as defeat of his enemies, the approach of distinguished visitors, the distribution of royal bounty, and so forth.

Sekwati, like many kings of his time could not miss his praises after his many attacks by night. When driving his captives home, the poet says in poem 1

14 Ke mang yelaa? wa kala a phela...
15 xomme marole a a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana.
16 Xa se marole a dikxokonyane, ke marole a batho.

(14 Who is that yonder with a blooming twig,
15 And the dust coming from Tswetla of Ramapulana,
16 Is not dust of cattle, it is dust of human beings.)

Tired from the long walk, dragging their feet, the whole place was filled with dust. Among the Northern Sotho people wars and kingship were also normal stimuli for the composition of praises. Today, achievement in its various forms: cunning, strength, agility, statesmanship, foresight, plays an important part in the composition of new praises since kingship is at a decline and wars and game hunting are things of the past.

First, one has to consider the effect which the situation may have on the performance. It is a striking characteristic of many performances of oral literature that the performer is affected both by his audience and by the occasion. These can affect his poem, sometimes radically, to an extent where one is forced to speak of composition by the poet rather than memorization, with minor variations of a piece composed by others. One aspect which can be affected by the nature and reactions of the audience is the length of the piece. But this receptivity to the expectations of the audience and to the demands of the occasion is widely documented for oral poetry. The Northern Sotho praises singer is often fired to compose and declaim by some event he observes, he responds to the situation not to a memorized text. Some people believe that a poet may sit down and compose his poetry. This is a false argument. Poetry is the result of inspiration when one sees something as Opland has observed, you know its like a preacher when he preaches the gospel, you feel touched, then you feel like saying some words

yourself, you know that's inspiration strengthening and sustaining you. It is from it that the peculiar energy which enables him to create derives.

Sowayan (1985:92) says:

The poetic genius of an outstanding poet is conceived of as always being at hand, lying dormant like smoldering embers to be set ablaze at the moment of inspiration.

When the poet is inspired, the door of his heart opens and it becomes possible for him to travel the difficult path of poetry. Some poets claim that at the moment of inspiration they become delirious, as if they were intoxicated. During such a state, the heart of the poet begins to bubble with emotions like a boiling cauldron. Notions seeking articulation invade his mind like a swarm of locusts. His breast overflows with words pouring forth like a stream flowing from a spring.

Although poetry is inspired by passions, composition remains a deliberate and reflective process. Poetic inspiration is likened by poets to the blowing of the wind, but the difficult process of composition is likened to the laborious operation of winnowing, or more commonly, to sailing. Poetic reflection is viewed as a mental journey in a turbulent sea of passion whose depths are full of terror. The probing for words and images is like diving for pearls.

The various compositional methods a poet may follow in developing his poem are compared to desert roads that crisscross each other, going up and down over soft sands and hard rocks. Only an expert poet can extricate himself and steer safely through this poetic maze.

Since the poet is always on the run, poetic composition is compared to hunting. Actually famous poets were also famous hunters. Like hunting, poetic composition is an obsession which is toilsome yet enjoyable. It is of equal interest to note that the mental operation of poetic composition is for some poets associated with a vigorous and restless body motion. This physical motion, as we shall see under performance, is a visible sign that the poet is inspired, he feels agitated and burdened and cannot rest until he unloads his heavy burden of passion, that is, until he finishes his composition.

Nothing of course, can be directly known about the methods of composition that were used by unknown bards. Blind poets, for instance, got along without writing, but it is left uncertain as to whether they improvised or memorized. Nevertheless, the praises are there. When they were composed, and who composed them, no one knows. What is known is that they are almost as old as the Bamaroteng people themselves. During the present research I recorded poem twenty of Kgoši Sekhukhune and poem eleven of Kgoši Sekwati from Molwetši Matlala who is blind. Also, poem seven of Kgoši Sekwati and poem twenty-four were recorded from Seraki Thobejane who is also blind.

What is still fascinating about these poets, is that their poems like those of Phala, contain some of the richest literary pieces in the Northern Sotho language, the praises are highly charged with emotion and, in Shakespeare's words, "with wise saws and modern instances." And the thoughts are condensed in terse language making their translation into English a hazardous

venture. See for example the following excerpts from poem 20 of Kgoši Sekhukhune by Molwetši Matlala:

57 Ke Mašile a gatiša ka lekopelo,
58 A re ke tsotsobidi ke tsotsobeke ke tsotsobidi
Mmanaka le phatleng.

(57 I am Mašile the trampler who covers with a piece of a broken clay pot,
58 He says he is tsotsobidi (the lanky), the sharp one with a horn on his forehead.)

Actually, the word **tsotsobidi** is not in any dictionary but it is known in Sekhukhuneland as referring to an upright lankey person. The word **tsotsobeke** also is not found in the dictionary but it is simpler than the former. It refers to the instrument used for piercing.

Seraki Thobejane also employs deep imagery in poem 24 of Kgoši Sekhukhune:

24 Ke thopa thole sa motho,
25 ka tšea lešea ka etetša pele.
26 Ka re gagešo Bopedi thole sa dira ga re se tlaletše.

(24 I capture a young lady,
25 I take the toddler and put it in front,
26 I said at home in Bopedi young girls who obey are not misused.)

We know **sethole** to refer to a young female animal. Seraki has used it to refer to young ladies. We are not sure what he was implying by the obedience of the young girls. But his answer to it is that if they obey they will never be misused. So far, we have seen that their language is just as rich as that of the other poets.

Coming to the gist of the matter, the devices that are going to be employed in this chapter as devices of composition are:

the formula, theme, repetition digression, memorization, and finally performance.

3.1.1. The formula

A formula is, in Parry's famous definition, "an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea" (Parry 1971:13). In composing oral poetry, the poet manipulates innumerable formulas in an original and diversified manner. Only a few aspects of the formulaic system will be mentioned since its exhaustive study would require a more complete knowledge than I possess of the nature of the rhythmic accompaniment and the Northern Sotho prosodic system.

The formula has been defined in various ways, usually with a view to increasing the number of expressions in the text that can be counted formulaic. A repeated phrase is certainly a formula, and Homerists often add; as formulaic expressions that have something other than verbal identity in common with each other, such as metrical shape and syntax. Formulas are of all kinds, sets of lines, whole lines, half lines, subjects plus verbs, verbs plus objects, epithets plus nouns. By far the most conspicuous type to the ordinary reader is the latter, the epithet being often of a highly colourful sort e.g. from poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the phrase;

ke selaiwane, koma ya Rangwakwane.

(I am Selaiwane, the initiation of Rangwakwane.)

Hainsworth (1980:32) says:

The density of formula in the text varies with the subject matter; battle scenes are more formulaic than speeches or similes. How densely formulaic depends on how the formula is defined. But even if the term is defined very narrowly there are few lines in the average passage

that do not contain at least one formula. If the term is stretched to include structural formulas, whole sections may be dubbed totally formulaic.

After a long study of recurrent lines and phrases, Milman Parry arrived at the oral formulaic theory which was further expanded by his student Albert Lord whose expositions are subject to controversy and correction. From his observation of the behaviour of the Homeric verse, Milman Parry (1971) has defined the formula as an idea - conveying expression that has become codified as a result of repeated poetic image. It is a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea. A close examination of the formulaic phraseology in various folk epic traditions indicates that a single, canonical definition of the traditional phrase is not a realistic goal.

Parry's concept of a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea is useful as far as it goes, since it does point the way towards the aspects of surface phraseology, recurrence, metrical texture, and an underlying core idea. But since these metrical conditions may vary widely from one tradition to the next, such as in the case of Northern Sotho, we are now faced with a corresponding variance in wording, pattern of recurrence, and even of morphology. Clear examples come from poem 3 of Kgoš^vi Sekwati. First, what can be regarded as a formula is:

20 Senny^e se lebelo sa Ranth^sudi a thebe.

(20 The fast introvert of Ranth^sudi of Thebe.)

It is repeated twice exactly as it was the first time. Then,

going through the whole poem part of its words are repeated.

Twice *sennyé* is repeated with the following new words :

(1) 32 *Sennyé, motho xa a sa nthete ke pelo 'nthso,*
(32 The introvert, when a person does not praise me,
he is jealous.)

(11) 41 *Nonyana Sennyé se lebelo sa Ranthsudi a Thebe,*
(41 A bird, the fast introvert of Ranthsudi of Thebe.)

What is more, what can be classified as a formulaic system under the metrical rules of one tradition might not qualify for the same designation in another poetry.

It is important at this point to remember that formula in Homer is not necessarily a repetition; just as the repetitions of tragedy are not necessarily formulas. Lord (1986:491) says that it is the nature of an expression which makes it a formula, whereas its use a second time in Homer depends largely upon its appearing more than once in two given poems of limited length. We are considering and taking up the problem of the Homeric formulas from the side of repetitions, but only because it is easiest to recognize a formula if we find it used a second or a third time, since we can then show more easily that it is used regularly, and that it helps the poet in his versification.

To some it is difficult to make out exactly what Parry (1971) meant by the statement "the nature of an expression." But the key to that is in the last clause in the above quotation. The formula "helps the poet in his verse making." It is primarily for that reason that it is repeated to call attention to a previous occurrence, for an aesthetic or other purpose. Formula do not point to other uses

of themselves, they do not recall other occurrences. It might be said that they embody all previous occurrences, and, therefore, not any one other single occurrence. One of the changes that comes about in the transitional stage is that formulas are no longer necessary for composition. They are giving way to true repetitions, which are repeated for aesthetic or referential reasons rather than for case in verse-making.

Biebuyck (1978:75) says:

As is noted . . . , the epics are characterized by an abundance of name, names of persons, animals, divinities, and fabulous beings, names for officeholders, group names and place names, epithets and praise names.

Many of these terms occur repeatedly in the praises. Some are simple, widely used personal names (most having a traceable meaning). Some names are compounds, descriptive terms. The most typical formulas occurring only in epics and heroic tales are descriptive epithets. Understandably, most of them apply to the main hero. Some are self-given, others are applied by the other actors. Sometimes praise names are infrequent and are difficult to distinguish from epithets. The poet uses many standard symbolic expressions, some as discussed in chapter two, as formulas or invents new ones to introduce a proclamation, a conversation or a song; to boast and challenge, to destroy, to die, and to revive, to sneeze and to cough, to bless and to threaten; to evoke beauty, emotion, stress, and physical hardship, and to express strength or weakness. Verbs become formulas by changes of aspect and tense, addition of suffixes and conjunctions, or reduplication of the stem. The repetition of the idea of action is also favoured.

A study of the poems of Kgoši Sekhukhune and Kgoši Sekwati reveal many words and phrases that are supposed to be called formulas. Here are some of the good examples from poems 1 & 2 of Sekwati:

i.4 Sekwati se-hlwa-le-ngwana-ntlong.
(4 Sekwati, the one who indulges in courtship.)

ii.6 Phalo ya Mmabatome 'a Makwa
(6 Scraper of the Mmabatome of Makwa.)

iii.2 Sekwatikwati sa sehula-bošego
(2 Sekwati, the one who invades by night.)

From poems 13 & 17 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following which can also be termed formulaic:

1. 2 Phaswa 'a Makwa
(2 Phaswa of Makwa.)

ii.13 Ke selaiwane, koma ya Rangwakwane
(13 I am Selaiwane, the initiation of Rangwakwane)

iii. Thšithšila 'a Manyama.
(The one that stalks steadily)

These are the supposed formulas because they definitely carry the composition forward. The Northern Sotho **Sereto**, like the folktales as indicated by Makgamatha (1987:62) has a definite form for beginning and ending. The audience is aware of these socially prescribed rules and therefore, they must be used since they also help in the interaction of this oral tradition. These opening and closing formulas as discussed under composition, are what is known in Northern Sotho as formulas. However, this aspect is still subject to investigation in Northern Sotho. Proponents of the Parry-Lord theory hold that the presence of formulas in a poem is unequivocal evidence that it is both composed and transmitted

orally. Magoun (1953:447) states categorically that "oral poetry, it may be safely said, is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic," and concludes on this basis that Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry was orally composed and transmitted. But this conclusion has been challenged by a number of scholars. For instance, Baugh (1967:9) has shown that the middle English Romance, despite an abundance of formulas and recurrent themes, was the work of literate authors who wrote with oral presentation in mind:

Benson (1966:335) says:

To prove that an Old English poem is formulaic is only to prove that it is an old English poem, and to show that such a work has a high or low percentage of formulas reveals nothing about whether or not it is a literate composition, though it may tell us something about the skill with which a particular poet uses the tradition.

According to Benson, literate poets employ formulas in the same way any writer observes a literary tradition. In other words, a formula might be chosen not because the demands of the meter or the pressure of oral composition prevent the poet from pausing to select some more suitable phrase, but because this phrase is suitable, is part of a poetic diction that is clearly oral in origin but that is now just as clearly a literary convention. Many other folklorists also concur with Benson that conventions that are oral in origin, such as various formulas, could be, and were carried into written literature. Curschmann (1967:49) also adds that stylistic techniques which are singled out by proponents of the oral - formulaic theory as characteristic of oral compo-

sition may primarily be a more general reflection of popular taste rather than sure signs of orality.

Such observations are borne out by the example of Northern Sotho poetry. As noted earlier in my introduction on the formula, it does indeed contain many stock phrases such as have been quoted, yet these are essentially stylistic conventions used for their appropriateness to the subject rather than to generate segments of a poem. Essentially, it is impossible then to determine from textual evidence alone whether a Northern Sotho poem was composed by a literate or illiterate poet, as the same conventions will be used indiscriminately by both.

One of the basic problems of the Parry-Lord theory is the rigid distinction it attempts to establish between an "oral" and a "written" mode of composition. Usage of the terms oral and written literature by proponents of the theory is very vague and ambiguous. Lord, in particular, asserts that oral and written techniques of composition are "contradictory and mutually exclusive" (1986:129), an assertion that would deny any essential relationship between poets composing orally and in a written form within the same tradition, or between the "oral" and "written" phases of a given tradition. In Northern Sotho, oral and written composition and transmission (performance) coexist and overlap. Among our poets, some are literate and others, the vast majority, are illiterate. A poem composed in written form by a literate poet may circulate by word of mouth, whereas a poem composed orally by an illiterate poet

may find its way to the written page and be thus preserved.

From a close comparison of poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune and the recorded poem 19 of Ngwanatsomane Sekhukhune and poem 20 of Molwetši Matlala which shows close resemblances, and the resemblance of poem 1 of Kgoši Sekwati and the recorded poem 8 of Ntepane Sekwati, it is apparent that the above explanation is correct. It might be that Ngwanatsomane's recitation was recorded by Phala since his age agrees with the time of recording by Phala. He is the number one Mokgomana (counsellor) at Mhlaletse the royal court of Bamaroteng. Still, it might be the opposite, that is, they might have copied from Phala.

Finnegan (1974) discusses the question at length and gives ample references and examples from various traditions from Africa and Asia to show that it is not always possible to draw a clear distinction between "oral" and "written" literature.

In Africa, for example, Swahili poetry has to be composed and thoroughly studied before performance. The Eskimo also do the same as we have seen from Rasmussen who is quoted by Finnegan (1977:81). Smith (1977) has also observed that even performers of the oral epic in Western India rely on memory to a very large extent.

From the discussion, we should have realized that one does not deny the fact that there are formulas used in Northern Sotho praises. But, I find it difficult to agree with the way it has been designated by its exponents. As shown in this

chapter, exponents have many formulas, but a point of recurrence is completely at a zero point. It should be pointed out that in Northern Sotho, especially in the case of the praises of chiefs, composition does come before performance and a composer and a performer may be the same person doing the act at different times. In conclusion, I do not want to dismiss composition and performance as aspects of the same act as advocated by Parry and Lord, but wish to remark as Finnegan (1976:145) did that, if there is no one simple category called "oral literature" (or oral poetry), but only a complex and relative series of possibilities, the same is likely to be true for "oral composition." It cannot be assumed without a detached investigation of comparative evidence beyond just the Yugoslav case that "oral poetry" and, correspondingly, "oral composition" is of one predictable kind. There may be a number of different social circumstances connected to the literary piece involved or the varying ways in which literary production and distribution is organised in different cultures and periods may play a significant role. This point leads me to the following compositional device.

3.1.2. Theme.

In understanding praise poetry the details become meaningful only as they are related to an overall conception, however tentative, of a story's general point or controlling idea. The subject, the area of a story's focus, and the theme is the general comment on this area of human experience conveyed through such specific elements as plot, characterization, tone, point of view, imagery and symbolism. Theme is derived from

the total effect of all the elements of praise. Long praises are often characterized by many subordinate themes which, for the sake of distinction, are called motifs. Thompson (1946:415) defines the motif as :

... the smallest element in a tale having power to persist in tradition. In order to have this power, it must have something unusual and striking about it.

Motifs are figures or ideas that repeat themselves in the total design and are related to the major theme by being variations or aspects of it.

Themes, according to Lord (1968:4) refer to the repeated incidents and descriptive passages in the songs. In following Parry, we had to call the groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song "the themes" of the poetry. Even though they are verbal, they are not any fixed set of words, it is the grouping of ideas that matters. The oral poet learns some of them and improvises within their system before he can become an accomplished artist. The theme is mostly an extension of the formulaic line in Parry's words "the distinction between the verse and the theme is only one of degree. Expressing in more than a line, a sentiment or idea which the oral poet finds capable of being developed in several like situations."

Formulas and themes are basically mnemonic units of oral composition, from a stock of phrases and lines which tradition and long use have stored in the bard's memory, he constructs fresh lines and scenes and in this way supports the overall fabric of his praise.

A long poem usually consists of several themes strung together and studded throughout with similes and images, all of which are conventional, but each of which is given a slight semantic turn or a new artistic twist. According to Lord, it is not restricted as is the formula by metrical considerations, hence, it should not be limited to exact word-for-word repetition (1968:73). The essential thing in the theme is the idea that it embodies, the order of words can change a little here and there. The goal of the poet being to strike a balance between the familiar and the unique.

In his composition, the poet does not touch upon all the themes at his disposal, nor does he necessarily arrange the themes he chooses in a set and rigid order. There is no rigidity in African poetry as in Homer. Themes in the same poem are not treated at the same length or according to a fixed proportion. The poet has a wide range of options with which to start his poem and develop it to successful completion. He works within a modular structure in which themes are components that can be augmented, truncated, added, deleted, and shifted around for artistic effect. The poet tries as skilfully as possible to relate the thematic components of his poem to each other and coordinate them gracefully into one harmonious whole. This is achieved by the intricate interlacing of themes and by the smooth transition from one theme to the next so that all converge to form a poem that is at once traditional and original.

Most African oral poets sing spontaneously, even if studiedly,

as they go about their daily chores without an audience. While on my research in Sekhukhune land, an old man, very sickly on his 70th or 80th birthday, told me how he came to render oral poetry. He said that he had always appreciated poets as he grew up. This interest made him commit a few of their phrases to memory. If the phrases were mentioned by the majority of the people, that became an approval. He would then, while herding cattle, try to string a few of those phrases together to such an extent that he would even add a few new phrases from his imagination. And one day as they were seated around the fireplace, he told his mother that he could recite the poem he had heard recited at the King's courtyard even better than it had been recited on that occasion. When I requested him to tell me a few of those phrases he had picked up, I realized that he was actually referring to the themes. Some of those he mentioned from poems 2 & 1 of Kgoši Sekwati are the following :

- (a) 2 Ke nna Sekwatikwati sa se-hula-bošexo.
(2 I am Sekwati the one who invades by night.)
- (b) 5 Ba re: Ke yena yelaa wa kala-ya-puane.
(5 They say: He is that one with a blooming twig on his hat.)
- (c) 4 Sekwati se-hlwa le ngwanana ntlong
(4 Sekwati the one who indulges in courtship)
- (d) 19 Ke Phahla 'a Bauba se-feta-methepa
(19 I am Phahla of Bauba, the one who by-passed the girls.)

Also in poem 13 of Sekhukhune, the following were mentioned:

- (a) 2 Phaswa 'a Makwa
(2 Phaswa of Makwa)
- (b) 9 Phahle o letše o nthoxa bošexo.
(9 Phahle kept on reproving me all night long.)
- (c) 13 Ke Selaiwane, koma ya Rangwakwane.
(13 I am the instructed, the initiation of Rangwakwane)

(d) 19 Ke lle ya Mampampa, Theledi
(19 I have eaten the fat one, Theledi)

(e) 26 Tšula-meetse ke ba epetše moreo.
(26 At Tšula-meetse I trapped them with my charms.)

To demonstrate the flexibility in some of the themes mentioned, I will take first the following example, that is;

Ke nna Sekwatikwati sa sehula-bošego.

(I am Sekwati the one who invades by night.)

In one example this theme develops into the portrayal of the character via what the other people say about him. In this case, he is known by the children as the one who always wears a large feather on his head and goes about carrying many spears. In another example, first of all, he is in the middle of a fierce battle, but it is at night, then this time he praises himself as the one who does not worry young ladies. He goes on to describe their beauty and even mentions their names. The wording of the episode varies from poet to poet, and so does the way in which they are joined together, or combined with other themes. But these stock episodes, as well as, wider themes and plots, like attacking, destroying, trapping, fighting, returning and the capturing of villages, are all there as traditional resources on which the poet can draw in order to construct his own poem.

In this section, I agree with what is advocated about the Yugoslav poet. Our poets also base their composition on these known patterns of phrases, lines and themes, without necessarily restricting themselves to them. The formula and the theme, as we have seen, are useful for the horizontal growth of the story. But there is a third category of re-

peated lines and passages which is not that valuable and only contributes towards a fullness of effect in the performance.

3.1.3. Repetitions.

The use of repetition is not limited to epics alone, in fact, it is clearly and eminently linked with orality, and whether it involves formulas or whole sequences, it is important to structuring oral narrative. Indeed, repetition is not only the hallmark of folk poetry, it is the very sum and substance of its being.

In many heroic poems a passage is repeated, almost word for word, very soon after its first appearance. Obviously this is no accident. The repetitive sequences will not be discussed in detail as this aspect has already been dealt with in chapter two. The following six different types of repetitive sequences are found in our praises.

1. The "repetitive group" contains a group of consecutive lines which are repeated almost exactly.

For example, some tell the hero to proceed to a certain place. The singer then recounts in virtually the same words that the hero went to that place. From poem 14 of Kgoš^v Sekhukhune we find the following example:

- (1) 76 Xomme Moletš^e a šupa Ramapulana 'a Tswetla,
77 Xomme ka re: Hee! wena Ramapulana 'a Tswetla.

(76 And Moletš^e pointed at Ramapulana of Tswetla,
77 And I said: Hey! You Ramapulana of Tswetla.)

In this example Moletš^e pointed at Ramapulana of Tswetla and

the hero replied using the same words, that is Ramapulana of Tswetla. Another common example occurs in the stylized traditional formula. At first the hero or poet says; **Kxomo 'a thswa!** and the audience replies with **E gama ke mang** which is then answered by **E gama ke nna** " Each "e gama" is consecutive to the other.

11. The second category, "exact repetitions," is self-explanatory. Miletich (1974:113) says that it is the recurrence of consecutive units in which the diction and syntax are the same or almost the same and the idea remains essentially unchanged. The example of Ramapulana above could still be used in this category. Common in **direto** is the repetition of single consecutive words. From poem 1 of Kgoši Sekwati we find the following example:

9 Tlak'ana la bo-Mpedi 'a xo rekwa,
10 Tlakana la mosadi wa xa Mafiri.

(9 Member of the Tlakana regiment of the Pedi by purchase,
10 Member of the Tlakana regiment of the woman of Mafiri.)

In poem 13 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, the word Phaswa is also repeated consecutively.

2 E xama ke nna Phaswa 'a Makwa
3 A laya Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe, a e botša a re:
4 Phaswa, o sware motse wa Ledimo.

(2 She is milked by me, Phaswa of Makwa
3 Instructing Phaswa, holding Phaswa by the ear and
4 saying: Phaswa, look after the home of Ledimo.)

11. The third category; "semantic repetition," occurs in those consecutive units in which the diction and the syntax

are generally different but the basic idea is the same.

In poem 2 of Kgoši Sekwati we find the following example:

6 *Ha marumo a mantš^hi, a sekhoboko,*
(6 One with many bundled spears.)

In the line, the words, **a mantš^hi** and **a sekhoboko** all refer to many spears although the words used are different. iv. The fourth and fifth categories are much alike. They are both concerned with the consecutive recurrence of identical or similar words at the beginning, middle, or final position of different units.

(a) Similar initial-internal-end repetition. From poem 2 of Kgoš^hi Sekwati we have the following examples which show repetition at the beginning and middle:

26 *Xomme Sekiki xa Phahla a feta methepa,*
27 **A feta** kgaetšedi tša Mošabane,
28 **O fetile** maboloko a Maredi
29 **A feta** bo Kepy^e a Mokxwatšana
30 **Xomme** mola Sekxankxetše **a leba** Lexaletlwa,
31 **Xomme** Tswaledi **a leba** Bo-apea-kxobe.

(26 And Sekiki at Phahla passed the girls,
27 He passed the sister of Mošabane,
28 He passed Maboloko of Maredi,
29 He passed Kepy^e of the Mokxwatšana and Company
30 While Sekxankxetše went straight into Legaletlwa forest,
31 And Tswaledi went to Bo-apea-kxobe.)

Example number one under repetitive groups is also a good example of end repetition.

(b) Distinct initial-internal-end repetition. From poem 2 of Kgoš^hi Sekwati we find the following example:

14 *Xomme Bamanaka e šetše e le masele,*
15 **ba šetše** ba dišetša Matsamaka.

The words are similar but have different meaning .In the first line, *šetše* refers to "already" and in the second line it refers to "still" herding Matsamaka's cattle. What we observed is that "Distinct repetition" differs from " Similar repetition" in that the repetition of the word does not have the same meaning as in its first occurrence, and it may be a different word.

v. The sixth category, " Syntactic repetition", is recognizable enough as one of the basic patterns in a formula (see Lord 1960:41), but only one, and however, it is in itself not indicative of either oral traditional or written style. This is not consecutive in our poems. Sometimes similar lines are repeated word-for-word. From poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we find the following example:

56 Le marutswana a go monwa,
(56 Even the ruins that remain.)

In poem 3 of Kgoši Sekwati we have;

20 Sennyé se lebelo, sa xa Ranthsudi 'a Thebe.
(20 The fast introvert, of the Ranthsudi of Thebe.)

This category has no significance because it can be applied to both written and oral style.

As we look back at the categories, we find that the first four categories contain repetitions in which an idea is repeated, and in the last two, the idea is not repeated. Miletich (1974:115) calls the first groups the "elaborate" mode, and the second the "essential" mode. In the elaborate mode action or forward movement is delayed by repetition, but in the essential mode the forward movement is not interrupted by repetition. From poem 1 of Kgoši Sekwati we have the following example which illustrates

the essential mode, in that the words are repeated with a forward movement :

15 Xomme **marole** a a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana,
16 Xa se **marole** a dikxokonyane, ke **marole** a batho.

(15 And the dust emerging from Tswetla of Ramapulana,
16 is not dust of cattle, it is dust of human beings.)

In the first place the repeated orders show that the details are important and intended to be noticed. Secondly the details do not lose their interest by being repeated. In fact they gain. They somehow assume a special significance suited to the simple mind, which like precise facts and feels at home with them. The repetitions serve to make perfectly clear what the order implies. Emphasis is their special task.

In order to formulate fresh ideas in an unbroken sequence, the creative man employs repetitions. As this is done at a rapid pace, the repeated line is clearly a mark of his groping imagination. But the time may come when he feels that some of the lines and phrases that he has formulated are effective, aesthetically or otherwise. He therefore takes joy in recalling them at several points in his delivery. They are then either used for the purpose of formulating fresh lines that have a kindred message, or else they are re-echoed constantly for their aesthetic appeal.

From the above discussion, we can distinguish three distinct functions of repetition. Repetitions are important for their aesthetic and stylistic function as well as for their semantic and functional aspect. They highlight the importance of the act and the action (or the performance thereof).

3.1.4. Digression:

Further evidence of accretion or expansion in oral praises and epics is perceived in the digression. The standard dictionary defines digression as "a passage which deviates from the central theme", or "departure from the main subject, wandering away from the main topic". BasGoz (1986:5) calls digression, "audience aside or parenthetical remark."

When we examine digression in oral literature in performance situations, definition and identification are facilitated by a new factor the poet standing in front of an audience.

There he plays a social role whose rules and principles are determined by the community and by his own perception of the art. He is an intermediary; in that during the performance he talks for and about other characters, other milieux, and the adventure of the story.

There are two types of digressions according to Okpewho (1979). They are internal and external digression. BasGoz (1986) identifies three types namely, explanatory and instructional, opinion-related and commentative and self-reproaching and confessional digression. There is an overlapping which occurs between the types. A dividing line cannot easily be drawn between, for example, the explanatory and the instructional, the commentative and the explanatory. We shall thus endeavour to follow the first division.

Internal digression is a product of the subtle associative tendencies of the creative imagination, and the potential for

it is particularly high in an open performance in which the poet is under the stress of steady delivery. One word or idea suggests a similar one until the imagination is entangled in a chain of closely connected ideas. This takes place in long performances that last many hours or a whole night. In our shorter praises, it is only incidental. This is mostly experienced with spontaneous recitations at wedding celebrations in areas where the people still delight in their culture and tradition. An old woman or man would stand at the gateway with a broom or a stick to praise the bridegroom or bride. After some time, when feeling the strain of the job, his/her tiredness would find fitting articulation in the plight of the cramped and powerless hero. As he or she wanders, the audience, if impressed by his or her rendition, with its ululations and remarks will try to give him/her new energy. The internal digression merely expands the scope of an idea within the story, giving it added compass and flavour, though the imagination strays, the digression is still conceptually tied to its context.

The external digression; on the other hand, is clearly extraneous, sometimes intended for a humorous effect. It can often be omitted at little cost to the story's integrity or to the clarity of the particular scene. But, it is a sign that the poet is responding to the performance environment. The praise he is reciting or chanting may have been rendered countless times, but for him tradition is by no means frigid and, indeed, receives fresh relevance and appeal from the warm human context in which it is continually

re-created. Hence he feels free to throw in, now and then, comments about himself or observations about members of his audience. This type of digression is proportionately large in the poems of Kgoš¹ Sekwat¹ and Kgoš¹ Sekhukhune. Consider in this regard the following examples : From poem 3 of Kgoš¹ Sekwat¹ we have :

26 Le rakile moš¹imane 'a Metlaka,
 27 a Metlaka ya Mamalema 'a xa Nkwana.
 28 Senny¹e se lebelo sa Rantš¹hudi a Thebe.
 29 Thamaxa-ma-duma-dinama, Thamaxa tona, e se ileš¹e
 xo thoma.

(26 You drove away the boy of Metlaka,
 27 of Malema of Nkwana.
 28 The fast introvert of Rantš¹hudi of Thebe.
 29 Thamaxa ma-duma-dinama, the big Thamaxa, I am not
 restricted from making a start.)

In this stanza, the line **Senny¹e se lebelo sa Rantš¹hudi 'a Thebe** is a digression. It is a repetition that is used for the sake of aesthetic pleasure. In the same poem another digression is as follows :

36 Phalo ya se-fala-mathoko, xare o š¹i'o thula kobo
 maroba,
 37 o š¹ia maboya bo Ramapulana a Thobela
 38 Sefadi, petlo ya Morwedi wa Mphaka, 'a Mokitiana
 'a Tšatš¹i.

(36 The scraper of the sides, in the middle he fears to make
 holes on the blanket,
 37 he is afraid of removing the hairs of Ramapulana of
 Thobela,
 38 the scraper the chisel of the daughter of Mphaka, of
 Mokitiana of Tšatš¹i)

In the verse, **Ramapulana a Thobela** is a digression. During the struggle for kingship, Sekwat¹ had to seek refuge from Ramapulana. In this way, Ramapulana was always at the tip of his tongue and could be remembered at any time. These digression can be removed without much harm to the praises, but the dexterity with which the poet exploits his associative resources is remarkable.

Okpewho (1979:190) comments that :

In all these digressions we are reminded that the oral epic belongs in a lively human environment. If we cannot change the historic truth of the story, we can at least give it a recognisable contemporary stamp and appeal by paying due tribute to the moment and context of its recreation.

Admittedly, the tendency to do this will vary among poets and communities. If the members of the audience are not familiar with the cultural content and orthographic data of the oral poem, the poet increases the number of explanatory digressions. If, however, they are familiar, the incidence of this type of digression decreases. An enlightened and educated audience functions as a stimulant for increased frequency of rationalization of the supernatural and legendary in the form of digression. A friendly and understanding audience leads the poet to open himself up and disclose self-reproaching digressions. For example from poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we get:

70 Bo Dikxale ba re: nna e se nayo
71 xomme ba re :Axaa! xomme le tsebeng, nna ke Mašile,
72 ka batamela ke tlo xo amoxa

(70 And Dikgale and company said: I do not have it
71 And I said: oh yes! And you must know I am Mašile,
72 If I come closer, I will take it by force.)

Sekhukhune was actually referring to himself and to what he was going to do to them if they did not return the royal jewels.

3.1.5. Memorization

A poet who is attached to the court, first of all has to commit some traditions to memory. Lord, also states that there are three distinct stages in the poet's progress. In the first

stage he listens and imitates and by doing this he lays his foundation. Lord (1960:21) says:

He is learning the stories and becoming acquainted with heroes and their names, the faraway places and the habits of long ago. The themes of the poetry are becoming familiar to him, and his feeling for them is sharpened as he hears more and as he listens to the men discussing the songs among themselves. At the same time he is imbibing the rhythm of the singing and to an extent also the rhythm of the thoughts as they are expressed in song. Even at this early stage the off-repeated phrases which we call formulae are being absorbed.

It is clear from the quotation that even in Lord's case, the memory was implied. What Lord was against is verbatim memorization which was not always achieved with absolute precision comparable to that of the printed text. We all know that even in societies where memorization is achieved with the help of writing, misquotations even of well-known lines of poetry are frequent, and poets do not always exactly repeat the lines they have learned. For example, in the recorded poem 14 Phala says:

3 o retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi,
4 a re:Phaswa, a swara Phaswa a Makwa,
5 a botša Phaswa ka tsebeng, a e botša are:Phaswa.

(3 He is praised by Mašabane of the Maredi's
4 Saying:Phaswa, holding Phaswa of Makwa,
5 telling Phaswa in the ear, saying:Phaswa.)

Molwetš¹ Matlala recites an abridged version while Ngwanatso-
mane Sekhukhune embellishes his version. Matlala in poem 20
says :

2 O retilwe ke Mašabane a Maredi,
3 A go reta Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe,
4 a re:Phaswa o tla bona motse wa Ledimo.

(2 He is praised by Mašabane of Maredi
3 Who praised Phaswa holding him by the ear,
4 saying:Phaswa you will look after the home of Ledimo)

Matlala has reduced five sentences to only three.

Sekhukhune:

2 Ke Phaswa a Makwa a retwa Matebeleng,
3 A retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi
4 Morwa Mamagaša a Tšate a swara Phaswa ka tsebe a e
5 botša a re: Phaswa šala o bona motse wa Ledimo ke woo.

(2 He is Phaswa of Makwa praised at the Matebele,
3 praised by Mašabane of the Maredis.
4 The son of Mamagaša of Tšate held Phaswa by the ear
5 and told him, saying, he should look after the home of
Ledimo there it is.)

He has added and somewhere abridged in such a way that you can never pause without reaching the end of the stanza. The "son of Mamagaša of Tšate" is an embellishment.

While involved in the present research one good poet amongst my informants told me that because of careless imitators of poetry, he, Seraki Makweleyane Thobejane, was keeping many beautiful verses jealously hidden in his breast undivulged to the public. I was also surprised when he rendered both poem 7 of Kgoši Sekwati and poem 24 of Kgoši Sekhukhune so well. What I have experienced in Sekhukhune land is that no real new poems have sprung up, except for the ordering and varying of certain phrases such as shown with the examples of accretion and reduction illustrated above.

By closely observing the transmission process of their poetry, the unmistakable signs of rote memorization, such as pausing, hesitation, and attempt to recall, were apparent. I found it common for a reciter to admit that he had forgotten this hemistich or that verse, or to say that the poem is long and he can remember only a few verses. Even poets sometimes forget their own compositions. Because of such lapses of

memory, an orally transmitted poem is bound to become subject to various changes and may eventually be heard in various versions. Indeed, a few men and women I interviewed rendered various versions which were the same in content and phraseology, although not arranged in the same order. For example, while Phala in poem 14 has:

14 Mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya sexafa,
15 Tau ya Sekwati, ke hlatšša marexa,
16 Selemo se tlaxo ke a xafa-xafa

(14 While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion,
15 The lion of Sekwati, I litter in winter,
16 When summer comes I rave madly.)

Matlala has placed the lines in his unique way

13 Mola le bona tau ya Sekwati ke hlatšša marega,
14 Tau ka hlatšša marega ka gafagafa selemo se tlogo
15 Ka thopa dikgomo bašemane ba dišitše.

(13 While you see that the lion of Sekwati, I litter in
14 winter, The lion I litter in winter and rave madly
during the next summer
15 I captured the cattle while the herdboys were looking after them.)

Matlala has joined sentence two and three together. He has even changed the order of the sentences. He talks of "the lion that litters in winter and raves madly when summer comes." The ordering is quite different. His third line is what is fourth in Phala's. So far we have realized the flaws which arise from rote memorization, but we are not immediately going to dismiss it as not employed in composition.

Rosenberg (1987:81) says:

Oral tradition is the transmission of cultural items from one member to another or others. Those items are heard, stored in memory, and they are appropriately recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission.

Memory, to repeat is a vital human process in transmission.

Psychologists such as Clark and Clark (1971:134) break this down into four functioning categories. Verbatim memory is the least frequently used in the real world, though it is not unheard of. Passages are remembered by piecing together retrievable data, and then by giving them coherence by filling them out with supplementary information. It has been shown that people listen for meaning unless otherwise motivated, and not for verbatim wording. You will agree that Finnegan (1974) was right when she said that memorization is the basic vehicle of oral tradition, but that memory is not a simple phenomenon. It is not a reproductive process, for instance, but a procedure of creative reconstruction. A poet who falls into this category, such as the ones I interviewed, are not credited with any creative genius since they are no more than mere conduit pipes for a communally owned material.

Father Ong (1982:34) says:

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic balanced patterns, in repetitions or antithesis, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulaic expressions, in standard thematic settings, in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. Serious thought is intertwined with memory systems.

Father Ong does not mention word-for-word memorization. What he is speaking of is recall of thought rather than of words, although the configuration of the words which express the thought help in remembering it. In memory people store kernel

sentences and the necessary notation that will account for a transformation when the sentences are recalled.

In Northern Sotho, unlike in Yugoslav, we do encounter the process of memorization before performance. As in the case of specialist praise-singers in Zulu, especially those attached to the courts, the poet has to memorize certain stock phrases of the chief and his ancestors and relatives so perfectly that on occasions of tribal importance they pour forth in a continuous stream or torrent. Although he may vary the order of the sections or stanzas of the praises themselves. He commits them to memory as he hears them, even if they are meaningless to him (Cope 1968:27-8).

One of the informants I interviewed told me that his mother was a mistress of the initiation school for girls. As she went through her paces, especially during the time when there was an initiate from the royal family, she would teach them the praises of chief Sekwati. He would pick up a few phrases. At some other time he would try to recall what he heard from his mother teaching the initiates. He would then combine them with what he already knew from other stories about the royal family. One day as the initiates went through their recitation of the praises, inspired, he told the mother that he could do it better than most. Then he was given a chance to recite. As a talented poet he indeed performed better. One day this was extended to the father until it reached the courtyard. In that way, Seraki had acquired the office of praising the king at official gatherings at Mamone and the surrounding districts.

Seraki is a blind poet and a relative of the royal family. He does not know how to read but he can sign his name. Today through improvisation, Seraki can render any praise poem suited to the occasion. I found him to be a poet of good repute and a master of this art.

Like Seraki, Molwetšī Matlala at Madibong referred to his poems as the poems he had heard other recite. And he also claimed that he was reciting the poems exactly as he had heard them. In other words, when a man like Seraki or Molwetšī, also blind, recites a poem he has heard many years ago, he believes that he is reciting it word-for-word. Yet an exact repetition of a poem is not possible in an oral tradition, for in this tradition poems are constantly being transformed as a result of renewed recitations in every changing circumstances.

What they fail to realize, then, is that in each recitation they are composing new poems on the basis of previously recited ones. Rather than repeat words exactly as heard previously, poets in fact recite poems with similar content but with new arrangements of lines, verses and stanzas. Take for example the following from poem 21 of Kgošī Sekhukhune by Mogalaweng Mokgabudi:

- 27 Heee' Wena Mapogo Letebele, afa o a di kwa tau
e di jago ye?
- 28 A o bone ge o thiba tsela leeto,
- 29 Afa o a e kwa tau ye e di jago ye,
- 30 A re ke tau ke mathula a dipitsi.

- (27 Hey! You Mapogo Letebele, do you hear the lion that is eating them?
 28 Don't you realize that you are barricading the way.
 29 Do you hear the lion that is eating them?
 30 He says he is a lion that kills the zebras.)

He has juggled around the arrangement of lines and even repeated some. From Phala in poem 14 the arrangement is as follows:

- 26 Mapoxo Letebele, a *Q* thiba tsela leeto,
 27 A fa kwa e di jaxo, yona Tau ma-thula a dipitsi.

- (26 Mapogo the Letebele, do you barricade the way,
 27 Do you hear the lion that is eating them, the lion that kills the zebras.)

In only two lines, Phala has summarized the four lines above. Perhaps Mokgabudi was trying to add some spice or possibly it was as a case of failure of memory, especially with the first line where Mapogo is always followed by *Q thiba tsela leeto*.

We have seen so far that in no way can we really progress without the use of memory because even Lord (1960:21) agrees that the formula device is simply a case of memory pressed into a pattern of convenience.

3.1.6. Performance

I find it fitting to comment here before embarking on the subject of the performance context which is disappearing so rapidly. In chapter two I hinted at the socio-economic and political changes in Africa which have severely curtailed

the social role of Northern Sotho poetry and have constrained its function. Interest in oral poetry is waning and the number of active bearers of the tradition is becoming ever smaller. Furthermore, radio and television, along with phonographic and tape recording equipment, which have reached even the Bapedi villages, have usurped or radically altered the traditional public roles of composers and reciters of Northern sotho praises. But, in some measure these modern innovations are also contributing to the proper preservation of the praises.

Performance, according to Bauman (1977:11) is the, "assumption of accountability to an audience for a display of communicative competence." Here, performance is not only a process as advocated by Hymes (1975:18), but a mode of action. Such a widening of the focus of performance necessitates the exploration of an indigenous semiotic of audience response, and assigns to the folklorist and the ethnographer of speaking the task of discovering the culture-specific signals, codes rules and symbolic meanings embedded in performance-audience interactions. The discovery of such an ethnic based semiotic should form an integral part of all studies in performance, for it brings into focus the cultural base upon which audiences encode and decode messages, size up performances, and pronounce aesthetic judgement. Furthermore as Lord demonstrates, the mood of the audience may condition the duration of an epic performance (Lord 1960:17)

Instances also abound of the participation of the audience

in the actual performance by way of song, dance, or comment. This was mentioned in the previous chapter as a recipe for spontaneous performance because, by commenting on a performance, the audience, in essence, demonstrates its sensitivity to the expressive quality of the performers enactment. The significant point is that the spatial temporal link between performer and audience in an oral-aural interaction constitutes a challenge to the creative impulse of the performer more than in written communication, where retraction, pause, hesitation and even erasure remain unnoticed.

And now to the mode of composition. Most African oral poets sing spontaneously even if studiedly as they go about their daily chores outside of audience confrontation. The fact of composition at performance is acceptable as regards some poetic forms, for example, the heroic recitation of the Zulu, Tswana chief, Basotho **dithoko** and our praises in particular. Our poets, as remarked under memorization, are not aware that as they repeat their recitations countless times, each time they are composing and recomposing new poems. This is exactly what composition at performance implies.

Of course, one cannot ignore the image boosting potential of performance. Besides conferring psychological satisfaction, the art of performance is an attention ploy, temporally setting the individual apart for contemplation and enhancing his visibility in the performance setting. This is often done through genre-specific communicative devices such as moving to the centre of the circle, standing while the

audience sits, pointing an assegai at the audience, leading a chorus, articulating stylized framing devices that tell the audience, not only **kgomo a tshwa** (the cow spits!) but also **ke nna-** (it is me) **E gama ke nna Sekwatiša-motho-botlakala** (she is milked by me, the one who fools a person). The performers authority may, on the other hand, extend beyond the performance setting. In genres such as the epic and heroic recitation, performance is potentially a display of cultural wisdom and / or an exhibition of the knowledge of cultural history or tradition. The poet in Northern Sotho, for example, not only performs praises, he is also a mediator in family and interpersonal feuds, since he is the custodian of ethnic laws and morality.

The very act of performance, thus, in the terminology of the Prague school, foregrounds the personality of the performer and gives him access to certain privileges and powers that are either restricted to the domain of the performance or are relevant to the wider cultural context.

McDowell (1972:97-106) says:

This status-enhancing potential of performance is meaningful only if projected against the potential hazards of the face-to face interaction, for while a demonstration of expressive wit before an audience may trigger instant or lasting rewards, a display of communicative incompetence instantly calls forth culturally affirmed penalties and sanctions from the audience, which seeks to ensure the preservation and perpetuation of excellence in cultural performance. Each performance then, strives toward the ideal aesthetic state, where there is optimum satisfaction between performer and audience about the emergent quality of performance.

In keeping with traditional emphasis on creativity in all

artistic endeavours, the critical evaluation is considered as a creative act, an artistic performance. No matter how insightful or imaginative a critic might be, if he lacks the art of theatrical rendition, verbal dexterity and especially, the mastery of the rhetorical techniques of delivery, he will hardly find an audience, for it is like dancing with irregular steps.

The atmosphere in which those activities are placed is usually lively and informal (the after-dinner type of affair with the elders sipping Marula beer and occasionally blowing a cloud of smoke into the air from their pipes) so that the critical evaluation is rendered in leisurely, or unstructured form. Ruth Finnegan's study of the Limba arts revealed that, in a creative performance, members of the audience did not listen silently nor wait for the chief performer's invitation to join in. Instead, the audience would break into the performance with their additions, questions and criticisms. This is common in the folktale and in the more formal situations of the complex praise recitations.

The performance by one praise poet would be carefully listened to by the experts present, if another expert thought the performer had made a mistake, he would be corrected as the praises are known to the various members of the village community.

The final element in the performance or the enactment is the artist himself. He is a man who has gained a mastery of his art through imitation, training, and practice. He is endowed with a sweet voice, a swift tongue, and an efficient control of the Northern Sotho language. He stands face to face with a particular situation and a given audience, both of which continually influence every aspect of his performance, and both of which he in turn manipulates to suit his art. It is in the midst of all these influences that the poet composes and performs.

I have so far highlighted the salient points regarding the performance context as a device of composition of oral poetry. The mode of delivery, audience and performer as poet will be discussed in detail in the following section.

3.2. The Poet.

According to Finnegan (1977:170) a poet can be anyone in the community. An immense variety of people are, and are expected to be poets in different groups and societies. A poet in the society is self-appointed, and his success is determined by the response if the people listen to what he has to say.

Mafeje (1967:195) says:

If the people felt that what he said was representative or reflective of their interests and aspirations, then he was generally accepted as the "national poet," *imbongi yakomkhulu* (the poet of the main residence), or, more recently, *imbongi yesizwe* (the poet of the nation).

It is therefore, apparent that the main function of the poet is to interpret public opinion and to organize it, failing

which, he does not achieve the status of national poet.

Opland (1980:296) says

The performer of poetry, however, is not necessarily an imbongi. Among the Xhosa-speaking peoples, potentially anyone can produce a spontaneous poem on the inspiration of the moment at traditional ceremonies, at sports matches, during church activities, or at political meetings.

According to Opland, almost anyone in the society, if he or she produces a praise poem, can be regarded as a poet, but not necessarily as a professional poet. To be a successful candidate, one has to be endowed with certain natural talents. To be a praiser, you should be gifted with a sweet voice, and have a long repertoire of the praise poems of principal lineages in the land. A poet of good repute must have a good memory. According to Cope (1968:27) this art requires natural ability and special application. Before he can become a good poet and a good artist, what Opland calls a poet laureate, and before he can manipulate in his field, he must take to memory all the praises belonging to the genealogy.

Opland (1970:171) says that because of the above-mentioned statements, we are led to believe that the *imbongi* merely uses secondary material to fashion his poems and that he is not a composer of original material in his own right. This account, then seems to contradict what Lord has written about oral poetry namely that, the *guslar* never memorizes but composes his poems spontaneously in performance. Lord's (1960) conclusions are valid for all traditions of oral poetry. This knowledge contributes greatly to an understanding of African oral poetry. The assumption of memorization before

performance is only one aspect of the poets craft. Querying this impression, Finnegan (1976:145) says that memorization cannot be assumed, without detailed investigation of comparative evidence beyond just the Yugoslav case, that "oral poetry" and correspondingly "oral composition" is of one predictable kind.

Northern Sotho oral poetry depends largely on performance, and good performance is judged solely by the quality of the artists voice, his control of language, the correct content of his charts, and the length of his repertoire. Selection for pupilage therefore, is not done by man. It is not based on the will or order of parents and superiors, but on nature, or one may say "divine will", which endows the would-be artist with requisite natural talents and causes him to be born into the right family.

Simply because it is traditional such poetry is passed from one poet to another and, whether the younger poet has a single teacher or picks up his art where he can, it is clear that he must learn it from somebody. Otherwise he would lack the technique which enables him to improvise at short notice and to provide the kind of poem which his audience expects. But this passing on of tradition also has its own characteristics like anonymity.

Anonymity, according to Bowra (1952:404) has been claimed as a characteristic of heroic poetry. It has been thought that this anonymity is a necessary element in heroic poetry and is to be explained by the theory that however inventive the

poet may be he seems to be regarded as a reciter or artist rather than as an author. There is some truth in this. Oral poets, who derive so much of their art from what others have recited before them, make no claim of copyright and are not unduly concerned about being thought original.

The survival of a poet's name, may in some cases, be due to his superior social position, as is the case with personalities such as Maredi, Seraki and Kgoloko at Mhlaletse and Mamone in Sekhukhuneland. However, when we look at poets, we find that they may come from almost any class, nor does their variety of status conform to any sociological scheme. In some circumstances heroic songs are sung by Kings and princes. This happens when the art is enjoyed by a whole society and patronized by rulers who see themselves as heroes, inspired by the prowess of the past and eager to celebrate it. This is a rare case. During my research at Schoonoord, a district of Sekhukhuneland, I only found one Kgoši, namely Kgoši Seopela Kgoloko III, who was a poet. I personally envied Kgoši Seopela for his ability because he was actually living in an heroic age and acting according to heroic standards. This example was reflected even by his companions and courtiers who also wanted to offer a praise.

To be a professional poet is the result of selection and training. One vexing question is, what is their role in society? Many scholars have attempted to provide answers to some of these questions.

Olajobu (1978 :675) says:

Verbal artists have been defined as persons who by conscious art or mere habit imitate and represent various objects through the medium ofthe voice.. The imitation is produced by rhythm, language or harmony, either singly or combined.

There is no formal training for Northern Sotho poets. As mentioned under composition in this chapter, the young aspirant picks up his art by listening and trying his own hand at it. The training seems to begin early in life, no doubt because if a boy has taste and talent for his art he will show it early, but also because the claims which it makes on the memory are in most cases too great for a man starting in adult life. Again, there is no specific time for starting to train in the art. Children who are born into the art and group in it, usually develop interests and talents as they mature. The pupil-poet learns by imitation dummy public performances, but he is never formally tutored on any aspect of the art. Most pupils start their training by chanting refrains to the praises that form part of their poetry.

Later, they try to imitate the words of their masters chants, both during performance and privately when they are alone at work.

The most important aspect of the training of the pupil-poet attached to the court, is the memorization of the content of the poems of the genealogies, Kings and other important members of the community in which they want practice. They must also memorize all the clichés employed for structure and aesthetic purposes because there are set phrases and

utterances for opening and closing as we shall see under the mode of delivery.

During my research, none of the gifted informant poets were professional poets. The recitation of the praises was not the principal occupation of any of them. They were versatile, highly experienced, and intelligent individuals with a variety of interests and activities. Yet many were illiterate. But all were steeped in Northern Sotho culture, especially in aspects connected with Kingship and with the values and problems of their people.

It is hard to say whether the texts they recited were fixed or stable. However one is inclined to think that the texts are not rigid. They have great leeway in formulating thoughts or passages in a new, and to some extent, original manner. Still, they have to work within the framework of rhythmic accompaniment and formulae which set limitations to the range of variability. From my observations I also believe that experienced poets have a standard repertoire of interlinked episodes which they can reduce or elaborate upon, but which reflect the specific praise traditions to which they have been exposed.

3.2.1. Audience

This stands for the immediate audience witnessing the moment and product of composition and performance, participating in and assessing, whilst also affecting the performance.

The performance of praise poetry is governed by the following

elements: the situation or the context, the audience, the structure and the language. Added to these is a personality of the poet himself. Every form of Northern Sotho Verbal art, is performed at the given and specific situation, for example, a funeral ceremony, a wedding, an initiation ceremony, in short a festival of any sort at the king's courtyard. The variation in the nature of situations has its effect on the performance. To illustrate, let us take a "bridal night." In a community scores of girls are given in marriage every year, and each girl has her own parents, relations, personality, and so forth. The time of each bridal night also varies - harvest time, rainy season, a time of famine or war, before or after a major festival. All these help to determine the nature, the language, the composition, and the mood of performance.

A major element that affects the performance is the audience. The nature and composition of the audience depend largely upon the type of verbal art to be performed and the situation of performance. The type of audience to be expected at the annual festival of the first fruit tasting, taking place in the courtyard in the open, would be different from the audience at the same place, attending the funeral of a great warrior or a relative of the King. And still both would be different from the one to be expected at the inaugural ceremony of a new King.

Nixon (1985:57) says:

Clearly the manifestations of audience collaboration will vary not only from culture to culture, but also according to the occasion and the genre.

The audience is perhaps the most important influence on the

performance of any verbal art form. Every performance is for and about the audience, and the main objectives of the artist are to entertain, amuse, and impress the audience so as to earn praise, admiration, and material gifts where possible. The poet or artist is receptive to the reaction of the audience as critic and judge of his art. In the poetic forms, an essential element of the content is the chanting of a praise poem about and verbal salutes to the chief who is a member of the audience. The audience, as referred to earlier, helps in the ring composition, forcing the poet to digress, helping him to fill in the gaps that are caused by the fallibility of human memory. In such situations the audience identifies with the performer.

Often the audience will respond with laughter, dancing, humming, clapping, drumming, whistling, ululating, stamping of feet, rhythmic movements and other forms of paralinguistic behaviour. But in addition to these non-verbal contributions, in many African societies the audience is encouraged and even required to join in verbally. The audience's verbal participation may be highly structured, as amongst the Bapedi, where the verbal repartee between artist and audience is established from the outset with a two part formula, the first line being provided by the artist, and the second line by the audience. The poet establishes immediate contact by declaring to his audience:

Kgomo 'a tshwa'

The cow spits!

to which the audience respond with:

E gangwa ke mang?

(Who milks it?)

The poet stands face to face with the particular situation and a given audience, both of which continually influence every aspect of his performance, and both of which he in turn manipulates to suit his art. It is in the midst of all these influences that the poet composes and performs. The variability of the elements governing the performance is the factor which enables him to produce unique poetry at each performance. It is this factor which makes it impossible for a poet to produce a repeat performance of an earlier work, and each performance yields a new work of art.

In cases such as this, in which every participant is in some degree an active performer, we must recognize that each participant simultaneously plays both performer's and audience's roles.

Fine (1984:77) says:

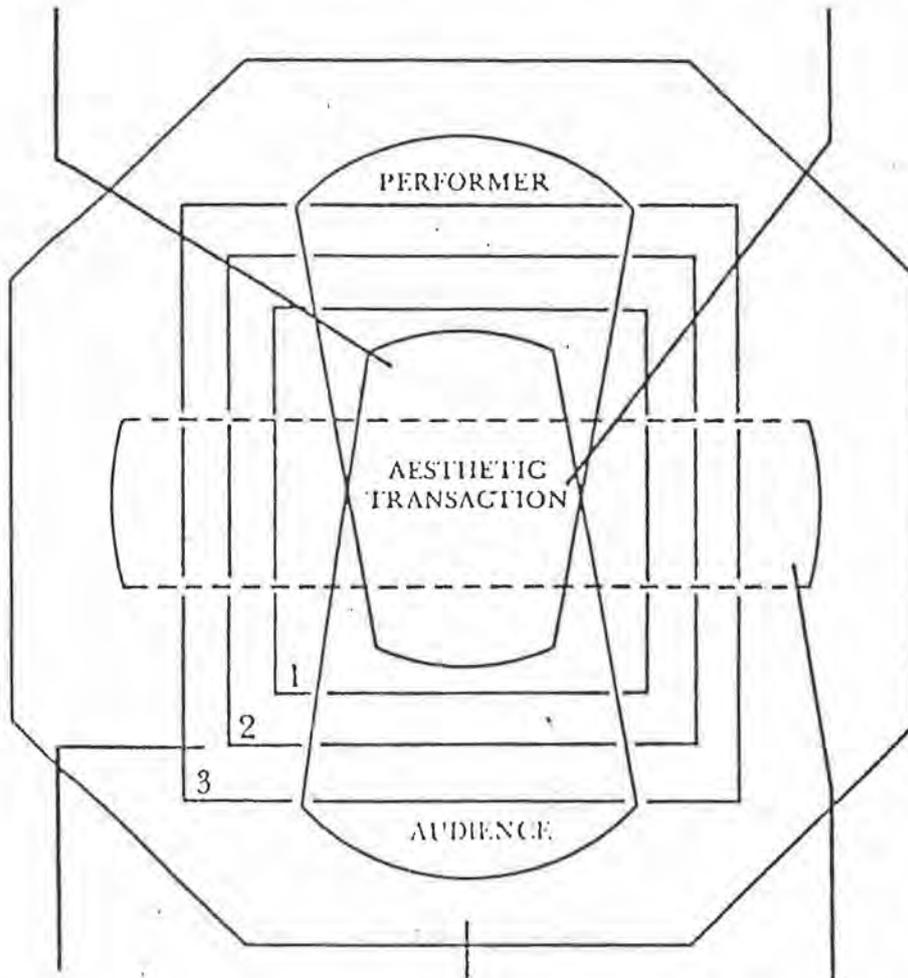
Likewise, we must recognize that any performer is simultaneously his or her own audience, monitoring and adapting the performance to his or her conception of how the performance should sound and look.

Performance should be viewed as a transactional view that involves all participants. There should be no single aspect that is considered more important than the other parts. To illustrate the complex, reciprocal roles of audience and performer the following model from Fine (1984:75) shows that in the aesthetic transaction, the two spheres represent performer and audience intersection.

OTHER MODES OF
SPEECH
COMMUNICATION

ARTISTIC VERBAL PERFORMANCE

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. Active-Receptive | 5. Preanalytic |
| 2. Sensuous | 6. Integral |
| 3. Immediate | 7. Unique |
| 4. Intuitive | 8. Intrinsic |



EVENTS

AESTHETIC FIELD

PERFORMANCE
TRADITION

1. Obligatory Performance
2. High Expectation of Performance
3. Optional Performance

Sociocultural Factors: Shared Knowledge of Genres, Acts, Roles, Events, Themes, Norms of Interaction and Interpretation

Technological

Biological

Psychological

Historical

The diagram is purely illustrative of the intersection between the two sets. Nothing further will be said about the annotations which are elaborated upon in the book.

About audience and performers, Tracey (1967:47) says:

Between the two persons lies a gap, that blank in their reasoning between cause and effect which can only be crossed by the force of artistry or by some magical agency.

To summarize, I wish to point out that in considering the transmission of the praises, therefore, some account needs to be taken of those who listen to them as well as those who relate them. After all, if nobody listened, the praises would not survive for long.

3.2.2. Mode of delivery.

As the verses were collected from the oral rather than the written tradition, we have so far recognized the nature of the influence which this has on the appreciation of the words in the text. A more imaginative reality derives from seeing and hearing the performers.

Northern Sotho oral poetry is a living and dynamic verbal art. It is meant to be chanted or intoned in performance in the presence of an audience. This audience can become divorced from their other thoughts so that they are thoroughly immersed in the mood of the praises. When the performers are thoroughly warmed up, and the audience is in a mood of absolute excitement, one is likely to hear reactions such as 'Ageee...! Ekwa— Ekwa—! or Šateee —! Yo a sa rego mošate o a duma! In that way we know how heated up the audience is.

Since the recitations are mainly fixed and are likely to have been heard by the King and audience over and over again, emphasis is placed on performance, and this is what distinguishes a good reciter. The text and performance features which distinguish folklore from everyday language, and folklore communication from conversational speaking, comprise the stylistic qualities of verbal expression. While there is a personal style in the delivery of folklore, it is subject to cultural constraints and conceptions of excellence in narrative and poetic performance. Hence the aesthetic ideas a society has about folklore are expressed in stylistic terms.

Reciters and storytellers are able to reproduce such ideas by phonic, verbal, and mimetic means. The first relates to the physical production of sounds, the second to the selection and syntactic orders of words, and the third to the dramatic and visual presentation of the text. Not all three types of stylistic features occur simultaneously in the same performance of a single genre. In fact it is quite possible that dominance of, say, sound features would preclude any possibility for mimicry and gestures, on the other hand all three terms of stylization may be present in the same situational context, occurring sequentially to each other, or simultaneously.

The Zulu praise singer, according to Cope (1968:28-29), "recites the praises at the top of his voice and as fast as possible. These conventions of praise-poem recitation, which is high in pitch, loud in volume, fast in speed, create an emotional excitement in the audience...." The phonic

stylistic features of the reciters among the Northern Sotho are similar. In fact, even Van Zyl (1949:11) says:

The traditional way of delivering a praise is to start and proceed with the greatest speed possible, saying it rather softly and pronouncing the words most distinctly.

The professional praiser at court accompanies his recitation of the King's praises not only with walking but also with leaping about and gesticulating as the excitement mounts. He suits the actions to the words, the words to the actions: the performance is indeed dramatic. Acting plays a prominent role here. Movement, both visible and audible, is the essence of praise poem recitation.

Scheub (1975:116) says:

Movement is vital to the tradition; action is all important and character is revealed not by description but through action. Similarly, theme is revealed not by preaching and digressions, but through action.

Available descriptions suggest phonic changes among some African peoples, even in storytelling, though they are to a lesser degree than in the recitation of praises. Among the Northern Sotho people, for example, a person should be able to vary his voice according to the story he is telling. If he is describing hunters stalking their animals, his voice will naturally be gentle and quiet, whereas if it is a raid with the clamour of fighting, he will raise his voice and make it rather rough.

In the actual performance of a praise in Northern Sotho, there is no question of group-singing which we find in folk-song. What we find is one artist at a time, chanting soulfully and in full throated ease in the presence of an audience.

At first, a reciter may either stand idle in front of the King or stand a few meters away from the King and move dramatically towards him if he is inspired. In his right hand holding a spear or a knobkerrie, with which he will from time to time give small forward jabs and stabbing, for emphasis. He usually starts the recitation with an introductory formula which in Northern Sotho is a verse in itself. Dan Ben Amos (1975:173) calls these formulas markers which distinguish the speaking of folklore from non-folklore. Opening and closing formulas serve this purpose. They frame the expressions, setting the boundaries between formal generic expressions and whatever type of verbal exchange preceded and follows them. Such phrases are not so much part of the narrative text as of the verbal interaction between the speaker and his listeners. They signal the nature of a praise and enable the listeners to prepare an attitude of belief; disbelief; or humour towards a forthcoming recitation. The opening formula which is usually declaimed by the poet is:

"Kgomo 'a tshwa!"

(The cow spits!), and the audience respond with an acceptance or an invitation for the poet to proceed with the following words;

"E gangwa ke mang?"

(Who milks it?)

The closing formula of the praises is;

"Ke tshaba mediti?"

(I am afraid of the initiation leaders).

The word **mediti** actually refers to the leaders at the initiation school. That is, the people in authority at the mountain school. Both in prose and in poetry, such formulae are performance markers, signals which indicate to the listeners the intent and purpose of the speaker and provide breaks in the flow of narrating and reciting which enable others to introduce their stories and recitations.

A poet may either stand still while he is reciting or else take small paces backwards and forwards. The speed of reciting is such that only those who are accustomed to this art can attain it, and an indication of this may be given by the fact that the verse of five lines would take only about nine seconds to recite. In their recitation, the use of first second and third persons should be used with some reservation and in exceptional cases. Damane and Sanders (1974:19) try to illustrate that the distinction is not clearly defined. A poet may in his imagination, temporarily identify himself with the chief, for example in many of my collected and recorded examples the poems start with **ke nna** (I am). And these come from the mouths of the poets and not the King. The poet is associated with the King. What is common knowledge is that, in the praises, the poet uses third person singular. The fact that the poets are talking of things that happened long ago, forces them to use the third person.

The poet, with a spear in his right hand, gesticulates and mimes, makes faces and such facial configurations as would depict the mood of the poem he is reciting. The praises are

recited in a relatively higher pitch than that of ordinary discourse. The recital is very rapid. Because the performer is usually in contact with his audience, he is capable of interjecting references to individuals without confusing the audience as to the trend of the main material. He is able to shift from one situation of thought to another, indicating that he is doing so by a mere change of facial expression or a gesture of the hand or body.

The opening of the praise is extremely forceful and the first high tone of the verse is easily the highest in pitch. There is however, as shown in chapter two, a fall in pitch in each line and although the high tones of the next line will lift the pitch of the voice again, the recovery is not complete. In the latter part of the last line, the voice is allowed to tail off completely.

Van Zyl (1949:10) says:

Apparently the reciter says as much of the praise as he possibly can without taking breath and stops to take in more "fuel" whenever he finds it necessary. When he finds it necessary. When the performer stops, he stops for quite five seconds, looks down as if he had been drinking too much beer at a time, swallows once and then proceeds with new and amazing vigour.

You will realize that it is the line and not the verse that is the entity from the point of view of subject matter and it is, therefore, often possible for a verse to be cut in half or joined to the next one if the reciter feels so inclined, his companion supplying the ululation as soon as his voice indicates that he has come to the end of what he wishes to be considered a verse. The small intervals between

the different voices seem to give a kind of colour or texture to the sound. It is again during these small intervals that some among his audience, because of the lapse of memory, tactfully remind the poet of the other relatives he has not alluded to. A praise poem is not a fixed text and a poet may interchange the sequence of his verse, add a verse or omit it as he deems fit. Since, however, he is dependent upon his memory, he usually keeps to the sequence to which he is accustomed. He will very often, however, in the case of a long praise reserve a complete recitation for very special occasions and at other times only provide a portion of it. The poet is to a large extent, circumscribed by the need to follow a certain conventional pattern in his poetry. In the first place each line usually expresses a completely separate idea and a conciseness of style is therefore necessary. From poem 17 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we have the following illustration:

- 13 O hweditš^ve dinong di lle boš^vexo tš^va Mampiri a koto le
Dimo,
14 Thaxala tš^va motse.
15 Mapoxo, xo o thiba tsela-leeto,
16 A fa o kwa tau e di jaxo, tau-ma-thula-dipitsi.
- (13 He found the vultures having killed them during the night,
14 The men of the village,
15 Mapoxo, why do you barricade the way,
16 Do you hear the lion that is eating them, the lion that kills the zebras.)

There is no connection whatsoever between the first two lines and the following two lines. In the first, reference is made to the men of the village, and in the second two lines, reference is made to the Matebele King Mapoxo who is a

hindrance to them. Because of him it seems that they cannot accomplish their mission. Another example may be cited from poem 3 of Kgoši Sekwati. As referred to under the devices of composition such as repetition, the sentence **Sennye se lebelo sa Ranthсуди 'a Thebe** (The fast introvert of Ranthсуди of Thebe) is fitted in anywhere even helping to separate one stanza from the other.

26 Le rakile mošimane 'a Metlaka,
27 a Metlaka ya Mamalema a xa Nkwana.
28 Sennye se lebelo sa Ranthсуди a Thebe.
29 Thamaxa-ma-duma-dinama, Thamaxa tona, ese
iletšwe xo thoma,
30 Xomme nna Kxwadi ka lenaka ke epoloditše.

(26 You drove away the boy of Metlaka,
27 of Metlaka of Mamalema of Nkwana.
28 The fast introvert of Ranthсуди of Thebe.
29 Thamaxa-maduma-dinama, the great Thamaxa,
should not be prevented from starting,
30 And I Kxwadi with my horn I unearthed.)

The performer is expected to show expertise, not the building up of a complicated sequence of thought, but in the variety of expressions with which he can state, expand and deepen a single statement. When this fails the result is uninteresting tautology. When it succeeds it is a marvellous exposition of imaginative wealth.

The ideas which the praise expresses are stereotyped and repetitive and the poet has, therefore, to rely to a great extent upon the manner in which he expresses these ideas in order to give beauty and interest to his poem. Herein lies the art of the accomplished poet who, by the ingenious choice of his vocabulary, can repeat identical themes time and again, always with a different and startling turn of phrase.

This is achieved by his meticulous use of metaphor and metonymy. Unable to fathom this use of imagery, an educated person is inclined therefore, to say that the language of the praises is archaic. After all imagery is known by all to be dramatic.

Coplan (1981:155) using the words of Ngubane, says:

Imagery, in the context of notions of visibility and interconnection, moves the performances of praise poetry in the direction of drama. The recitation of izibongo is a kind of dramatic enactment, in which history is made theatrical by pictorial metaphors and by expressive body movement adjusted in their rhythm to the tempo of the chanted words. On occasion choreography supersedes poetry, for the fewer the words, the better the poet is able to represent history in action.

The ultimate realization of this form of dramatic action is the **Mogobo** the improvised solo dance dramatization of military prowess performed in coordination with the shouting of the dancer's praises by the members of his regiment. While there is a standard vocabulary of **Mogobo** movements, each performer brings to them his own skill and interpretation, an expression of the individual personality in the language of collective values. In our poems, reference is only made to the members of the Makwa regiment in the case of Kgoši Sekhukhune and the Mabyana in the case of Kgoši Sekwati.

One thing is certain, a larger proportion of the vocabulary used, will not be found in existing dictionaries, because it is the vocabulary stored with the uneducated people. Take for instance from poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune sentences such as these ones:

46 Theledi ke wa Kgalatlole a Makwa.

47 Le botšišeng Ngwakwane a Phala 'a Matata 'a Mallexa.

(46 Theledi I am of Kgalatlole of Makwa.

47 You must ask Ngwakwane of Phala of Matata a Mallexa.)

The words such as **Kgalatlole of Makwa** or **Matata 'a Mallexa** are words referring to Sekhukhune's class whilst attending his initiation institution. All the people who attended with him are known by these words.

I have found in general that, in the mode of delivery, spear use, the agility of the singer or reciter, the solemn or robust mood in which the recital proceeds and the totality of the enactment, even without the words of the poetry, vividly bring home the theme of heroic militancy that the poet seeks to associate with the King.

3.3. Language:

Finnegan (1977:107) states that;

It is apparently common for the language of certain genres of poetry to be somewhat removed from that of everyday speech, both in vocabulary and syntax.

Going through Gordon Innes' Sunjata, Three Mandinka versions, I found the above statement to be true as completely different language from the commonly used vernacular is employed. In other works a highly conventional or stereotyped form of language, as already mentioned in the preceding section, is held suitable for poetry. But, more often as in the case of Northern Sotho, it involves relatively small conventional changes from ordinary language.

Poetry is usually a revelation of the beauty of a language. Therefore, poetic language must stand out above the ordinary, but must not be different as experienced with the Mandinka Épic.

Van Zyl (1949:10) says:

A poetical mind does not deal with its subject in the plain manner of ordinary prose but clothes and enriches it with graceful personifications, similitudes and other appropriate figures.

The poets have a thorough knowledge of their language and manipulate it with remarkable skill. We are not going to point out all the figures in these praises as many were discussed in chapter two. From poem 3 of Kgoš¹ Sekwat¹ we find the following beautiful usage of language:

32 Sennyé, motho xa sa nthete ke pelo nthso, pelo phifadi
33 ya moxatš¹a sa mme, le-lebala-xo-reta,

(32 Sennyé, if a person does not praise me, he is jealous,
33 wicked heart of my brother's wife, le-lebala-xo-reta.)

He refers to a jealous person as someone with a black heart. A person whose heart has no distinct colour. This comes from the fact that she does not want to praise him.

Allusions which were not touched on in the previous section will now receive a concise explanation. I have found the language of the praises to be greatly elevated. Compound words, elaborate adjectives, adjectival phrases, noun-adjective formulas, onomatopoeia, metaphor, idiom and the like are all factors which render beauty to the Sotho language.

Their abundant and varied vocabulary and their refined sense of grammar enable them to express the finest shades and the most delicate nuances of meaning. The reciters are poets in

the full sense of the word delighting in well-chosen words, sonorous word combinations, unusual epithets, patronyms, formulas, the poetic turn of sentences, and many other stylistic devices. The texts are formulated in the ordinary Sepedi spoken and understood by the people, but the richness, diversity, amplitude, and poetry of the language is far beyond the capacity of the common speaker. From poem 16 of Kgoš¹ Sekhukhune, we have the following beautiful extract:

4 Theledi ka Borwa o tš^o Senyana,
5 Masenyeletš^e a maxadi a batho,
6 Maphunphanye a ma-tswaka-le-mobu,
7 Theledi a Marota, Tsotsobidi maanaka le phatleng,

(4 Theledi is from plundering in the south,
5 The one who disorganizes the in-laws of others,
6 The wrestler who mixes one with the soil,
7 Theledi of marota, the lanky one with a horn on the forehead.)

We have no doubt that good language suited to the occasion was used. He does not only say that he comes from killing the people in the South, but says that he comes from plundering; wrestling and disorganizing. The language is full of imagery. In the place of his soldiers and their spears that he sends to the front, he talks of his horn which defeated the soldiers. As a speaker of the language, I have also found it taxing to translate the words correctly. I relied heavily upon the assistance of those affiliated to the courts in Sekhukhune land for a meaningful translation. Phrases such as **Kxatswatswa ya Mabjana** (The leader of Mabjana) and **Thaxala tš^a motse** (The men of the village) were especially problematic. Thaxala is an obsolete word which is used by old men to refer to the testicles of a young person. In this context it is used to refer to strong men of the village. The

choice of words and expressions is incredibly rich and charged with nuances. The metaphorical use of standard verbs and other expressions is sometimes carried to an extreme.

Suzan Langer, quoted by Iyasere (1973:449) says:

Language, of course, is our prime instrument of conceptual expression. These things we can say are in effect the things we can think. Words are the terms in which we present our thoughts... Before language communicates ideas, it gives them form, makes them clear, and in fact makes them what they are... without words, sense experience is only a flow of impressions, as subjective as our feelings, words make it objective and carve it into things and facts that we can note, remember and think about. Language gives outward experience its form, and makes it definite and clear.

Early mankind spoke sounds we would recognize as entirely human. Which sounds he and she chose for particular purposes we may never know. On the other hand, it is likely that important utterances, utterances that contained information about the identity and development of the community, occurred in such a way as to be readily retrievable from memory. From poem one of Kgošī Sekwatī we have the following example:

8 Phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka a Mokitlana 'a Tšatšī,
9 Tlakana la bo-Mpedi a xo rekwa
10 Tlakana la mosadi wa xa Mafiri.

(8 The scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana of Tšatšī.
9 Member of the Tlakana regiment of the Pedi by purchase
10 Member of the Tlakana regiment of the women of Mafiri.)

Since each stanza contained an independent thought, this information, together with the repetitions used for ease in composition, made it easy for them to remember the associated ideas. Sekwatī is known as the scraper. In the stanza, he is the son of the daughter of Mphaka. Mphaka is a knife which could also serve as a scraper. Allusions are made to the

group of initiates to which Sekwati's mother belonged. In the three lines, reference is made to Sekwati's mother.

Together with these related ideas, when they wished to preserve utterances important to the community, they invented elaborate gestures to assist the memory and to resist the ever-present drift towards change.

As often as I open a book such as **Kxomo 'a thswa**, I am struck by its imperishable freshness, the vivacity of its diction, the strikingly original sculpture of its images, and I feel grateful towards those great men for having preserved for us this treasure which might otherwise have been lost.

The poets weave poems, songs, proverbs, idioms and meditations harmoniously into their praises. They can also speak faster or more slowly, as required, making sophisticated use of elisions, adding short, well-placed words to their poems to satisfy the rhythm, changing the tense or aspect of a verb, adding suffixes to differentiate the meaning, reduplicating the stem, or repeating the expression. From poem two of Kgoši Sekwati, we find the following example:

2 Ke nna Sekwatikwati sa se-hula-bošexo;
3 Se-kwatiša-batho-botlakala

(2 I am Sekwati that invades by night,
3 The one who likes to fool a person.)

The name Sekwati has been reduplicated in the first line and compounded in the second. The last word in the first line is also a compound consisting of a verb and a noun. In the second line, the noun Sekwati has been changed into a verb- "kwatiša" (to stop). Again, a prefix "se-" has been added to "kwatiša" to change it to "one who stops." (sekwatiša).

Often in their language, the poets embellish their command of the language through recurrent use of allusions. Allusions are important characteristics of traditional praise-poems because they are associative. See for example poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, where an allusion is made to Sekhukhune's father, who is Sekwati.

14 Mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya sekafa,
15 Tau ya Sekwati ke hlatša marexa.

(14 While Sekwati has fathered a mad lion,
15 The lion of Sekwati, I litter in winter.)

Finnegan (1977:115) says :

Allusion is not the same as figurative language, but is very common for praise poetry and official ceremonial poetry to be liberally sprinkled with allusions - to historical events, to the glorious lineage of the rulers and officials, to their great deeds, or to the places they or their ancestors travelled through their ancient times.

In the poem selected for this study, reference is made to the wars against the Boers of the Transvaal Republic, to the laagers which are associated with the Voortrekkers. From poem 16 of Kgoši Sekhukhune we see the following illustration:

8 Naka la xaxwe le kile la palela **masole** ,
9 le paletše Maburu ka mo **llareng** ,
Ma-bohlale-hlale Theledi

(8 His horn once defeated the "soldiers",
9 It beat the Boers in the laager, the clever
Theledi

In another example, allusion is also made to Ramapulana the

Chief of the Vendas where Sekwati had sought refuge. In the following example we find Sekwati with many of his followers coming back from Ramapulana of Tswetla:

Xomme marole a a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana,
xa se marole a dikxokonyane, ke marole a batho.

(And the dust coming from Tswetla of Ramapulana, is
not dust of cattle, it is dust of human beings.)

In both poems of Kgoši Sekhukhune and Kgoši Sekwati reference is made to areas travelled, to their bravery, to their physique and to Lekgolane, a royal name associated with nearly all the queens in Sekhukhuneland. From poem 14 of Kgoši Sekhukhune, reference is made to a river Ngwaritsi. At this river many Bapedi battles were lost and won. The river passes through the middle of the whole Bapedi area and is very significant to their history.

12 Xomme pitsi yona e šupa e šupile batho ka lešika
Ngwaritsi,
13 Ngwaritsi a Lefakana, maru a mang a iša Mašexerepe.

(12 And the zebra keeps on pointing at the people with
a spear at Ngwaritsi,
13 Ngwaritsi of Lefakana, whose clouds cause death.)

Allusion is usually an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. In an allusion an appeal is often made to the audience to share some experience with the poet. Through what D Xunene (1971:47) refers to as associative reference the work of art is given depth.

Malepe (1966:57) says:

Their occurrence is due to the fact that the
traditional praise-poet, in composing his praises, must
also give a brief history of the object of the praise-
poem.

Since some of the praises were inherited, sometimes a child was named after his grandfather or greatgrandfather, for example, he

may inherit his praise poem because it is associated with him and is regarded as his other name. Like a sponsor at church who stands to witness the baptism or confirmation of a child, and promises to look after him to make him grow up in a spiritual atmosphere, if the grandfather whose name is given to the child is still alive, he would definitely teach him his praises as well as the other traditions associated with them. What this means is that the actions or achievements of his grandfather will also be incorporated into his praise poem. This is how some of the other incidence in the praises become unknown to the audience, especially those who are not close to the object of praise.

Sometimes, a person is praised because of some quality or deeds he has performed, and the praise poet must recall all of this. Sekwati is often referred in this instance as, **Sekwati-kwati-sa se-hula-bošego** (Sekwati the one who invades others by night). From what I gathered from my informants, Sekwati was very clever and very sly. He would remain quiet during the day and then strike at night.

When using these allusions a poet tends to assume an established literary tradition, a body of common language with an audience sharing that tradition and the ability on the part of the audience to pick up the reference. However, all these allusions to myths, legends and history have the effect of taking poetry out of the realm of the commonplace, and giving it dignity.

Language in the traditional setting embodies the concept of the creativeness and force of the spoken word. In all magic

the operation is never complete until the material dispositions have been accompanied by an appropriate verbal formula. Language context is largely allusive, symbolic, and transformative. It creates a cosmos out of chaos through magical symbolism. I have no doubt that this is noticeable in the poetry under discussion. It has been called surrealism by foreign commentators, but owes more to a sophisticated exploitation of the traditional belief in the omnipotence of the spoken word.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARISON OF THE WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN PRAISES OF KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE AND KGOŠI SEKWATI

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to compare the poems of Kgoš¹
Sekhukhune and Kgoš¹ Sekwati that were recorded by Phala in
1935 with those that were collected from informants during
research, and which were orally presented. The comparison is
done with the main purpose of establishing the differences
between oral and written poetry, and to verify the fallacy that
some information is lost or discarded as the poems are
handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.
The truth can only be obtained by comparing the written and
oral forms of similar praises of Sekwati and Sekhukhune.

Cuddon (1979:142), in his Dictionary of literary terms says
that comparative literature is the examination and analysis
of the relationships and similarities of the literature of
different peoples and nations.

It is indeed due to the remarkable affinity between the
poems rendered by different praise-singers about Kgoš¹
Sekhukhune or Kgoš¹ Sekwati that an examination is necessary.

When quoting Nichols, Serudu (1987:23) says:

The object of comparative literature is essentially
the study of diverse literatures in their relations
with one another.

Modern critics base their theories on the proposition that a
poem is an object in itself. And all critics endorse enthu-
siatically at least one statement that the function of

criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is. This undertaking is surely valid, and laudable, the results however, are disconcerting. For in this age of unexampled critical activity, as one poetic object after another is analyzed under rigidly controlled conditions, the object proves to be highly unstable, and disintegrates. In the pages of the critics we increasingly find under a single title, not one poem, but a variety of poems.

Quoting Anthony Thorlby, Deeney (1980:4) says:

The comparatist need only accept one self evident principle of aesthetic awareness, which is valid in all arts: that to see one poem or one picture, or one building is to have little feeling for its qualities. To see another work of art is of course not the same but only comparable, is to take the first step towards recognizing what is in each case good, original, difficult, intended.... If he goes far afield for his compassions, this is not in order to prove any thesis universal philology or historical evolution or structural aesthetics, but primarily for the pleasure of the thing, to broaden the basis of his experience, as an adventure.

This broadening of experience, this adventure, by nature is humanistic. When a child is born, it enters the world as helpless and dependent but as someone with a wealth of varied possibilities which are his as a human being. First, the newly-born child immediately finds himself in a situation in which the parent faces the child. And from the very beginning the child is intentionally oriented to the world, and from the very first day begins a journey of discovery to make the world habitable for himself. The borders of his life-world are continually being shifted and he gains an increasing grip on the things in the world. This constitutes a field that is so vast and vague, so centrally located and tangen-

tially defined that one can never be sure where its frontiers lie.

Serudu (1987:23) says that comparative literary study is a very wide field. Here is our child now opened to the outside environment. When seeing strange faces, it shall have to compare whether that face is like the face of the mother, father or brother, or it is like the face that resembles an ogre. Such a subject calls for discussion that seeks common grounds for all traditions by pushing through the cultural and philosophical limits towards the speculative horizons of the various cultures represented in the discipline. Therefore, we must liberate ourselves from rigid conventions and allow ourselves an opportunity for a creative openness to new possibilities.

The poems of Kgošǀ Sekwatǀ and Kgošǀ Sekhukhune are a convenient case in point, because they are short enough to be easily manageable, have been explicated many times, and are almost universally esteemed. When a praise-singer renders a poem for the second time, one must always ask oneself whether he has meanwhile learnt some further traditions. What has to be established is whether the two poems are merely variants of the same testimony, or whether they are two different testimonies. Through direct questioning, the informant will either admit having incorporated further traditions, or will deny having done so. In our case they said that they were reciting them exactly as they did the last time. In that case it meant that a more direct approach was to be employed. That

is the two versions of the poem can be compared as we are going to do in this study. If there is a wide degree of variation between them, it may be assumed with certainty that it is a question of two different poems. Frequently, however, the variants are very slight, being limited to a few details in a free narrative, or a few words in a fixed text.

A type of variation that occurs fairly often in a free narrative is that the second is simply an abridgment of the first. The praise-singer knows that he has already recited the poem for you, and now shortens it or lengthens it when he feels familiar and perhaps he or she would like to make an impression.

Vansina (1965:130) says:

He may hesitate, forget passages, add embellishments, abbreviate, but it is not difficult by comparing the texts of the various versions he has given, to discover what the testimony was that was handed down to him and on which his versions were based.

Then, in such a case one can assume that the Sereti's second attempt is based on the same referent as the first, and that what has been produced are two variants of the same tradition. But in other cases where the variants are slight it is not easy to determine whether it is a question of the same tradition or two different ones. As observed in the poems of Kgoš¹ Sekwat¹ recited by Serak¹, a blind Sereti at Mamone the royal kraal of Kgoš¹ Sekwat¹, in his second version he tried to restore some omissions contained in the first, but still left out certain common themes that he had rendered in his first attempt. In his third version, he still added some,

left out others, while his beginning and ending remains the same. I could not take down all the praises but merely made notes on the common themes such as the following that he had left out and also added them in others. See poems 3, 6 & 1.

4 Sekwati ba banyane ba a mo tseba
(4 Sekwati is wellknown to children)

14 Ke moxale xa a sa ratwa ka xo xolo
(14 He is a warrior and he is no longer popularly loved.)

3 Morwedi wa Mokitlana 'a Tšatšī
(3 The daughter of Mokitlana of Tšatšī.)

19 Ke Phahle a Bauba sefeta methepa
(19 I am Phahle of Bauba sefeta methepa.)

What more, if we compare Seraki's poems with those that were recorded by Phala in 1935? He must bear in mind that many of my informants also had a knowledge of other traditions which may also influence and somehow distort their testimony instead of making them complete. We will now look into the main issue of this chapter, namely a comparison of the written and unwritten poems.

4.2. COMPARISON

In this brief comparison I have selected the following praise-singers to be compared with Phala's collection from **Kxomo a thswa** which was compiled in 1935. In the case of Kgošī Sekwati, I have chosen the poems by Seraki Thobejane and Ntepane Sekwati. For Kgošī Sekhukhune, the poems by Molwetšī Matlala and Ngwanatsomane Sekhukhune will be used. What is interesting about the set up is that on both Kings I have selected one poet who is presently an official **Sereti** at the royal kraal. Seraki is the official **Sereti** of Kgošī Sekwati at Mamone and Ngwanatsomane is also the official

Sereti and a chief counsellor of Kgoši Morwamotšhe

Sekhukhune at Mohlaleetse. All these poems are given fully in the Appendix.

The first aspect we will consider in our comparison is failure of memory. In the previous chapter we remarked that one aspect that may bring about omissions and confusions which will result in a distortion of the praises is failure of memory. A number of folklorists have expressed the opinion that illiterate people possess exceptional powers of memory. Others are of the opinion that only tradition concerning the not too distant past can be relied upon. Others say that neither of these arguments will hold.

Vansina (1965:41) says:

So far there exists no proof that there is any inborn difference in cerebral faculties between the various races of man. Moreover, it is a well established fact that a decisive factor in the tremendous storage capacity of the human memory is the amount of attention given to the data that have to be memorized. Practice in the process of memorization is another factor that comes into play. Consequently, failure of memory is directly related to the method of transmission, the degree of control exercised over recital of the testimony, and the frequency with which the testimony, is repeated.

These three factors, namely, the method of transmission, the degree of control exercised over the recital and the frequency with which the testimony is repeated, provide some means of establishing the amount of attention that has been given to the process of memorization and the amount of training undergone for the purpose.

A good performer, in any rate, will hand down the tradition

without any marked distortion, whereas versions handed down by amateurs bore considerable signs of distortion. In an attempt to render as accurately as possible the poem of Chief Sekwati, Thulare Motubatse had to bring verses from the poem of Thulare into Sekwati. The same happens with Ntepane Sekwati. These are all in the process of learning the traditions. They have lines such as the followings from Kgoši Thulare's poems:

(i) Ke se-ithotledi sa Rakabu ka molamu wa tšhipi

I am the one who walks with iron walking stick of Rakabu.

(ii) 20 Sepelang lo botš'a Sethele-Moletlane

(20 Go and tell Sethele at Moletlane.)

(iii) 4 Modimotsane a noka 'a Tubatse,

(4 The small god of the river Tubatse.)

My observation is that amongst many of my good performers, especially those attached to the courts, because of their controlled testimonies, were subject to less distortion. This is due to the fact that at the royal court there are always members of the royal family who have a vast knowledge of the tradition. To distort them would mean discrediting oneself before them.

Many literate people often term the language of our poetry archaic, and indeed sometimes the traditions are so incomprehensible to the informant who relates them, that in case one would like to have explanation, the informant almost invariably invents some explanation which he incorporates into the tradition itself. Interpolations of this kind are

usually fairly easy to detect. They provide some explanation and interpretation of the original tradition. Our main task as comparatists is to distinguish carefully between the tradition and the interpretation given to it, then the interpolations of this kind will be detected. Here are a few examples of the explanations and interpretations, as compared with the original from Phala.

i) 10 Mamphye a ledimo, se-tla-seloloko.

This sentence from poem 14 of Sekhukhune at first seemed archaic to me until I enquired from the people in Sekhukhune land about its meaning and interpretation. The sentence refers to "the people of God who comes in a queue." This interpretation was further supported by Mogalaweng Mokgabudi who in his poem has the following:

10 Ga Mampshe a Modimo a fihla seloloko.

The word **fihla** became the key word to the meaning of **seloloko** which was twisted from **molokoloko**, a long queue.

(ii) 17 Ke thopa dikgomo bašemane ba dišitše,
18 Makgath'a tšona ke ntšha nathamagana.

(17 I capture the cattle in front of the herdboys,
18 From among them I select a beautiful fat heifer.)

In this verse from poem 14, the first sentence is straight forward, but the second which is very difficult is made easier by later explanations. Ngwanatsomane has **magareng ga tšona** (Among them) that he had captured, he selected the beautiful fat heifer to slaughter. **Nathamagana** actually refers to a young cow with a distinct white stripe on the back or to young beautiful girls from the initiation institution.

In poems 2,3 & 6 of Kgoši Sekwati, Phala talks of many spears but it is not easy from the original to make out what the words refer to. He has the following words.:

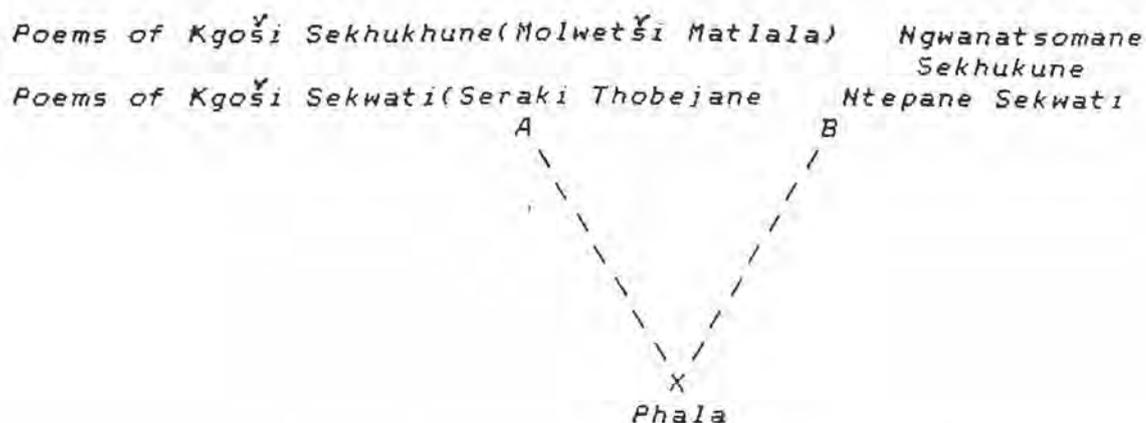
- (i) 6 Wa marumo a Sekxoboko.
(6 With a heap of spears.)
- (ii) 13 Le marumo a ngata
(13 With a bundle of spears.)
- (iii) 6 Ka marumo a thšabahlā
(6 With a crowd of spears.)

The interpretation of all the variants refers to **a mantšī** (with many spears). Seraki also refers to **ke yena yola wa marumo a mantšī** (It is that one with many spears).

A close examination of the poems has shown that the poems correspond completely except in a few instances in the positioning of the verses and lines which will be shown below. While the poems are dependent, they have also included interpolations as I have already shown. This stems from the fact that many of my informants were between the ages of 5 and 10 when Phala recorded his collection. This is enough proof of the fact that they might have borrowed from him and from other sources. Or perhaps they might have got the traditions from the same source where Phala got his. Since there was no proper schooling at that time, many of them might have picked up the tradition from their parents. We know very well that children of those days were very good at imitating and copying from parents.

Vansina (1965:122) has the following diagram which tries to demonstrate when the traditions derive perhaps from a common source. Above and below the letters of the alphabet I have

included the names of the poets whose examples I am using in this comparison. This diagram shows entire dependence.



From their similarities in the poems of Kgoši Sekhukhune and Kgoši Sekwati, both their recitations might have come from a common source which in this case is Phala's poems. In this comparison, Phala's poems will be numbered first, since I regard them as the originals. You will realise that nearly all the lines correspond. As a matter of fact, at a glance I nearly did not endeavour this chapter on comparison because of the ninety percent similarities. But because of a few variations, I was forced at least to point them out. In each case, a few lines will be written parallel with Phala's poem.

4.2.1. Poems of Kgoši Sekhukhune.

The complete poems appear in the appendix. They are poems number 14 by Phala, number 19 by Ngwanatsomane Sekhukhune and number 20 by Molwetš^vi Matlala.

Matlala and Sekhukhune's poems are slightly shorter than Phala's poem. In Sekhukhune, the lines that do not correspond are the following: He starts differently with the following sentence:

Ke wa Kgoši wa se-ja ditona a Makwa thoba dingwe melala.

(I am of the Kgoši that preys on the males of Makwa, the breaker of other's necks.)

This line only correspond with another of my collection by Maredi Mokgabudi.

The lines which are similar are as follows:

Phala : 2 E xama ke nna Phaswa a Makwa o retwa Matebeleng.

Matlala : 2 Phaswa a Makwa a retwa Matebeleng.

Phala starts his second line with the concluding stylized traditional introduction. In line 4 Phala has;

A re:Phaswa, a swara Phaswa 'a Makwa.

Ngwanatsomane Sekhukhune has embellished this line with an addition at the beginning. He says,

Morwa Mamagaša a Tšate a swara-----

In ending this stanza or verse Phala tells us what a village is. He says,

Motse ke thšidi Nkokoto.

(A village is a stronghold)

Matlala also has this explanation of a village, whereas Ngwanatsomane has an abridgement. As a matter of fact, this line is completely left out. In the same stanza they also differ in the verbs they use. Phala uses **botša** (tell) whereas Ngwanatsomane uses **laya** (instruct) and Matlala uses **reta** (praise). Although the verbs differ, their contextual meanings remain the same. They all refer to telling a person. I have found the comparison between Matlala and Phala's poem very interesting. Matlala's poem contains abridgements

and embellishments at the same time. In line 4 and 5, Phala has,

A re: Phaswa, a swara Phaswa a Makwa,
A botšā Phaswa ka tsebeng, a e botšā a re: Phaswa,
Saying: Phaswa, holding Phaswa of Makwa,
and told Phaswa in the ear, he went on to say: Phaswa.

With Matlala the whole verse is summarized into one line which says:

A go reta Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe,
(Who praised Phaswa, holding Phaswa by the ear)

Where Phala has two lines. See the quoted lines above. Apart from the embellishments, Matlala has also interpreted.

Lešika (artery) to be **Lerumo** (spear) which becomes clearer.

Another very important feature of Matlala's performance is the way he employs repetition. At first you will think of failure of memory, but on second thought when you consider his variation in sound which becomes louder in his repeated sentence, then you will see the uniqueness of performance. The following examples are supportive of this type of repetition.

(i) 43 A o Lepelle Mašile ampo o Tubatse,
44 A re aowa Mašile ke noka Mašile ke noka,
45 Ke noka Mašile a ga Rakabu Theledi a Manyama.

(43 Are you Lepelle or Tubatse Mašile,
44 He said no, Mašile I am a river, I am a river,
45 I am a river of Rakabu, Theledi of Manyama.)

Nowhere in the poems of Phala has **Mašile** and **noka** been repeated as it is done by Matlala.

(ii) 58 A re ke tsotsobidi ke tsotsobele,
ke tsotsobidi Mmanaka le phatleng.

(58 He says he is the sharp, the lanky one with a sharp horn on his forehead.)

How interesting is the punning and alliteration that comes from an unrecorded performance. Actually the word *tsotsobidi* derives from *tsotsometsa* which is the synonym of *phuleletsa* (piercing). The horn that is on the forehead refers to his spears that he does not hide. The spears that he uses in the process of piercing.

Another interesting feature about Matlala's performance is that he does not fear to borrow at random from the poems of other Kings. What I found fascinating is that even the borrowing that is only unique to him alone does not go out of context. In his repetition in the first sentences he ends it with a strange word and then uses a common one in the second.

60 Ke paletše Maburu ka mo purupurung,
61 Ke paletše Maburu ka mo Ilareng.

60 I beat the Boers at a place full of soft ground,
61 I beat the Boers in the laager.

First, the word *purupuru* is taken from the tradition of Kgoši Thulare, the father of Sekwati. According to his contact, the word refers to a place full of dust with many people and animals going up and down. When everything was confused, he intervened and defeated the Boers. However, this is a fine inclusion.

Lastly, Matlala does not follow the chronological position of the verses and lines. In his performance, what is supposed to be line or verse one in the original, with him it becomes line or verse 2 or 3. He is free to juggle around with the position of the lines and verses, but as soon as he starts a stanza, he

completes the theme with the correct plot even if it is not sequential. He starts for example with line 5 followed by 4 or 42 followed by 40 and then comes back to 6 or 39 or 41. In the example I have quoted, from line 6, he went to line 8 and 9 and then back to line 7 followed by 10. Going through the whole poem, it is evident throughout for example at line 37, he jumps to line 49 followed by 41 and back to 40 followed by 42. He plays about with the arrangement but never loses context or changes the content.

4.2.2. Poems of Kgoši Sekwati

Like in the case of Kgoši Sekhukhune, the complete poems are written in the appendix. Here, I have taken poems number 6 by Phala, number 7 by Seraki Thobejane and number 8 by Ntepane Sekwati.

Phala: 1 Kxomo 'a thswa' E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna Sekwati, phalo 'a mphaka,
 3 Morwedi wa mokitlana 'a Tšatšī,
 4 Phalo ya xo fala mathoko,
 5 Xa re ke šī'o thula kobo maroba
 6 Ke šia maboya xo bo Radipilong.
 7 Xa le bona marole alee' a thupaxo molaa'
 8 Ke mo xo tlaxo nna Mothšemoxolo,
 9 Sekwatikwati sa se-hula-bošexo,
 10 Se-kwatiša-motho-botlakala.
 11 Sekwati le ba banyane ba mo tseba,
 12 Xomme ba re: ke yena elaa' wa kala ya puwane,
 13 Le marumo a ngata e nkexo ke dihlahlala di
 kxobetše
 14 Ke moxale xa sa ratwa ke xo xolo,
 15 Ke xa a sa tšee kxang le motho
 16 Xa a tšere kxang, boxale bo a fela.
 17 Boxale xo tlo šala bja molomo, Thšabahla 'a malema.
 18 Ma-mošidi a moroba, tsebe makxale ke a hlaba,
 19 Ke bile ke na le pelo ya sehutla,
 20 Moloi a difehla, kitimešito.
 21 Kitimešito 'a Mo-raka-thšimane.
 22 Batho re a lelekwa, re raka ke ba xa moxolle
 23 Ba xa moxolle, Le thako e šilo.

Out of the 23 lines I have quoted above, only 9 lines are found in the first 23 lines by Seraki and they are lines 9, 10, 13, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23. Ntepane's complete poem consists of 25 lines. Out of the 25 lines only lines 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 correspond with Phala's lines.

The same points I have touched above are also observed in the case of the performance of the poems of Kgoši Sekwati by Ntepane and Seraki. Take for example the following repetitions by Seraki from poem 7.

- 14 Ke yena yola wa marumo a mantš^vi,
 15 Ke marumo a tšhabahla, marumo nke ngatana kgobetswe phateng ya mokgoba.
 16 Ke Sekwati tšhaba sa malema marumo a mantš^vi marumo nke selemela.

- (14 He is that very one with many spears,
 15 They are many spears that are like a bundle of sticks heaped on the stem of Mokgoba tree,
 16 I am Sekwati the strong one of malema with many spears.)

Nowhere, in the collection of Phala have Sekwati's spears been so emphasized and exaggerated. A closer examination of all the lines in Seraki and Ntepane's performance, showed that they did not copy directly from one poem. Aware of the tradition which they picked up by ear, they could not follow a fixed arrangement. With Ntepane, the first line is line number 18 in Phala's poem. She also has embellishments and abridgements such as in the following: Lines 20 and 23 have been embellished by Ntepane, while lines 21 and 22 are the same

- Phala: 21 Moloji a difehla, kitimeš^vito
 Kitimeš^vito a moraka-tšimane.
 22 Batho re a lelekwa re raka ke ba ga mogolle.
 23 Ba ga mogolle, le thako e šilo.

- Ntepane: 2 **Yena a rego ke hlaba ka rumo laka** 'a moloji a difehla;
 3 A kit^vi mošito a moraka tšimane,

4 Batho re a lelekwa, batho re rakwa ke ba ga
mogolle.

5 **Ba re hleng** batho ba ga mogolle batho ba thako e
silo.

For interest we can also consider Ntepane's repetition of **batho** (people). While Phala has mentioned the word once, she repeats it three times and her embellishments also brings in some fine colouring to the rendition.

Her arrangement is also unique. Her first line corresponds with line 18 of Phala. From line 18, she goes to 20, 21, 22, 23 and jumps to line 27. And from there she goes back to line 11 until line 27. And from there she goes back to line 11 until line 17. Then the other lines which are not represented are not her own creation, but are found in the other poems by Phala except a few new words, some of which I have already pointed out as embellishments and interpolations.

Ntepane, like in the case of Matlala, has also borrowed from the poems of Mampuru and Ntwampe (Phala 1935) when she says:

17 O re tlaka le lle mang?

18 O re tlaka le lle moisa dihlallegelong.

(17 He says who is killed by the regiment?

18 He says the regiment has killed a certain person at the place of medicines.)

To this, Vansina (1965:122) has a diagram which tries to show that A and B might have made a partial borrowing from a common source which is different from their respective sources. This has been explained when I discussed the training of a poet, who after he has picked up the traditions from the parents or the King, he might still combine them with what he creates or what he perhaps picks up from hear say or from the

are not surprised when we find it in all the traditions. The reigning Kgošigadi at the royal kraal of Kgoši Sekwati today is Kgošigadi Lekgolane. Secondly, we know very well that during the feuds that divided the Bapedi's especially the battle between Sekhukhune and Sekwati, Sekwati had to seek refuge from Ramapulana of Tswetla. (Venda). Sekhukhune knew about this and had to look for him but he could not succeed. The dust was applicable to both as they were travelling in large numbers.

4.3. Conclusion:

Without going into a detailed and laborious type of comparison of the poems under each King, I found it easy to pick out a few of the more important areas of agreement or disagreement. The versions agree in content, themes, formulas and the tradition embarked on. The lines are similar except in cases of repetitions or orthography. The thoughts in the verses are also similar except in cases where the lines were juggled around. However, I found the versions to be covering the whole career of the Kings as far as it is known to Bapedi poets.

One major difference I observed, is that my informants no longer use the stereotyped preamble to praise poetry such as **kgomo e a tshwa/tsha!**

(The cow spits!)

The formula seems forgotten, although some still use the closing formula of **ke tšhaba mediti** (I am afraid of the leader). Second to this is the disagreement in the arrange-

ment of lines and verse. This also brings about the difference in content and thought in a stanza.

Although analysis of an oral poem indicates that the poem retains its original structure, theme and ideas despite repeated recitations, the key attribute of oral poetry is that each recited poem is unique. The uniqueness stems from the fact that traditional poets work without the benefit of written texts and are therefore free to shape their poetry according to their fancy and capabilities. Their repetitions appear both for emphasis and as mannerism. Thus a **Sereti** may introduce a variation in a poem by altering words in a particular stanza or adding entire verses. Or he may inject into a poem peculiar expression or phrase which somehow catches his imagination. The most significant variations in an oral poem, however, derives from the ability of the **Sereti** to employ and to weave the traditions, that is the formulas, themes and other expressions in his recitation.

It will not do to say, as one is tempted to say, that these versions really give us the same poem in diversely selected aspects and details. The versions differ not in selection or emphasis but in essentials. Each strikes for the heart of the poem, each claims to have discovered the key elements, or structural principle, which has controlled the choice, order and in interrelations of the parts, and which establishes for the reader or audience the meaning, unity, and value of the whole. The free ordering is a proof of the flexibility and uniqueness of performance.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is true from what we have been discussing and from what is advocated that the world of orality is a world of talk. One literally hears of what has happened in the past, as well as what is happening in one's own day. It is that simple. Yet perhaps not quite so simple. Sometimes in the past as well as in the present, the talk is poetry, a specially conventionalized medium that serves to filter out some words, to amplify others, and generally to give them all a new poetic form. And what it does for the words it does also for the ideas and images that is serving to communicate.

In general, we do not spend time on the moon, the daffodils or the night sky and so on as things in themselves, but only in relation to social experience. Our poetry is full of animals and plants, but these are used because they provide apt metaphors or simile, or compressed ways of reflecting upon social experience. We have in this study seen Kings associated with the lion, the tiger, the crocodile, the giant, the thunderstorms or the lightning. This means that, unconsciously, every word we use or recognize carries with it a surrounding area of associations. It also means that when we compare, verbally, one thing with another, we call these associations into mind again in order to see to what extent the surrounding areas of the words intersect. After all it is agreed that imagery is the cornerstone of poetry.

In general, our poetry has tended to give prominence to

persons, interpersonal relationships and attitudes and values derived from our conception of the universe. Not surprisingly, the oral poet is frequently a competent historian. He is a composer and public reciter, a person of wit honoured by the community. The poet acts as court attendant. He possesses an intimate knowledge of those subjects associated with his audience, and can freely select details necessary to the composition of the poetic patterns. The poets are usually men set aside in the state to convey poetry through word of mouth. They provide poetry for the useful purposes of communication in ordinary life, in business and commerce. Communication and transmission of knowledge depend almost entirely on word of mouth. And amongst these men who are normally the whip of the community, there are those who are gifted in the art of recitation and are able to bring into their rendition a variety of poetic expressions appropriate to the occasion.

From the foregoing discussion, we have seen that the poetic tradition is still being maintained, though not to the same degree. Some types of poetry, particularly those associated with the court, are not nearly as well known as they used to be only a few decades ago. Many people particularly those who have had the benefit of school education, cannot make any bold claim to a knowledge of the traditions. Nevertheless, poets and custodians of the tradition are still to be found creating and re-creating traditional poetry in appropriate contexts.

Oral poetry, like other aspects of traditional literature, is used as a means of conserving and transmitting knowledge. In this oral medium every generation owes it to itself and to society to pass on the knowledge to the next generation. Literature in the traditional sense by its nature, is pleasurable instruction. It constitutes a form of schooling in the oral milieu, where entertainment is exploited as an effective means of transmitting knowledge. People come together in literary performance because they want to be entertained and to entertain though it is known that in this process they are exposed to more knowledge, linguistic and cultural. They are exposed to knowledge about man and the world around him, of ethical standards, correct forms of behaviour and various forms of language use.

The oral performance itself is a dramatic act where the two most appealed-to-senses are vision and hearing. An essential feature of such performance as well as of speech is the presence of a live audience, who is being addressed directly. The advantage is the person-to-person contact which this oral situation makes possible. Questions are asked and answered, and the oral audience insists not only on hearing an artist but having a good view of him. How fundamental a live audience can be to the oral performance is seen in the nature of the oral poem, which being articulated usually as song has parts specially allocated to the audience as, for example, the ululation and the refrain. The refrain is a structural part of the poem or song and its recitation or singing or lack of it affects the totality

of the song effect. Both the artist and the audience are aware of the central role of the audience. Active interest and participation is expected of an oral audience as the audience affords a necessary feed-back to the artist. The audience criticizes as it praises and is the judge of the merits and success of performance. It is then in the interest of the reciter to woo his audience by fully assessing his acoustic and mimetic skill which must appeal to both their senses and intellect.

To achieve all these, the oral poet must employ an elevated style. Since the **Sereto** is associated with men of valour, his language should be pure, splendid, significant and well-sounding. It ought not only to be beautiful and elegant, but likewise majestic and sublime, otherwise it will not be admirable, as it ought to be. His style should be natural and display pure and decent everyday common language of the people.

It has been discovered also that repetition is a basic principle of oral art and can be viewed as a stylistic and fundamental grammatical form. Speech itself involves the knowledge of limited speech sounds that obtain in the language and their repeated uses in various meaningful combinations. Verbal repetition in oral art is sometimes used as a way of establishing emphasis in which case it becomes a direct carry-over from speech norms. Multiple duplication denotes the extreme or superlative degree as for example:

43 A o Lepelle Mašile ampo o Tubatse,

44 A re aowa Mašile ke noka, Mašile ke noka,
45 Ke noka Mašile a ga Rakabu, Theledi a Manyama.

(43 Are you Lepelle or Tubatse Mašile,
44 He said no, Mašile I am river, I am a river,
45 I am a river Mašile of Rakabu, Theledi of Manyama.)

Each repetition is supposed to portray the depth and the length of the river which symbolizes the strength and robustness of Mašile from a three dimensional view. Usually the repetition may stretch as long as the breath of the reciter holds out, and the emphasis is aided by gesticulation.

It is postulated that the **Sereto** has remained a vital verbal art form because its content and performance still have meaning for both participants and the community as a whole. Glory is the prerogative of the great, and the heroic world is so constituted that they are offered many chances of winning it. With such assumptions about honour, personal worth and aristocratic privilege, heroic poets proceed to construct their stories, and to make action as vivid and interesting as they can. The **Sereto** usually expresses the famous deeds of ancestors and their qualities which are usually alluded to in the praises of the present ruling King. In that way, they present the history of the tribe and the tribe as an object of admiration and give one some idea of quality of the tribe. The Northern Sotho **Sereto** unite the living and their ancestors, for it is often in times of insecurity and need that the help of the ancestors is sought by pleading to them through praise names that are recited at important rituals such as the installation of a King, the request for rain, and thanksgiving ceremonies for the first fruits and in times of war.

The **Sereto**, from what we realized is not only recited but actually improvised. There are degrees and kinds of improvisation, and there are places where poets have passed beyond it to a more considerate kind of composition, but improvisation is common and may well be the fundamental method of performance and composition. The **Sereti** who recites a poem composes it in the act of recitation. This state of affairs would seem almost incredible if it were not guaranteed by impeccable witnesses. A bard may hear a poem only two or three times and be able to reproduce it, but he will not do so in the same words. To some extent each performance is a new creation. No **Sereti** repeats the same poem exactly word for word. As he gets used to a theme, he may expand and enrich it until his final version is two or three times as long as his first. Milman Parry in the thirties of this century also observed that each performance by a poet produced what was virtually a new poem. Indeed, when we asked one informant to recite the same poem in the same words which we have previously recorded on the tape, the **Sereti** agreed to do so but produced in fact something different. What is true of the nature of oral poetry, is that every poet who has the skill at all always improvises according to the inspiration of the moment, so that he is not in a position to recite a poem twice in exactly the same form. The poet recites without reflection, simply from inner being, that which is known to him as soon as the incentive to sing comes from without, just as the words flow from the tongue of the speaker without his producing intentionally and consciously

the articulation necessary to produce them, as soon as the course of his thoughts requires this or that word.

Though each version which he gives of a story may differ in details and turns of phrase, these details come from his repertory and are themselves formalized and traditional. This is based on what Bowra (1952) calls elements of production. This we discussed in chapter three, and they are formulas, themes, repetitions, digressions, memorization and performance mode. The poet learns in the first place a number of themes, formulas and repetitions, memorizes some of them, and these provide him with the material for his work.

In that way, a poet could recite almost any number of lines, fairly representative of the published type with, of course, the typical additions, variations, and adaptations to time and occasion. As we have seen in chapter four, variability could be seen as resulting from misremembered versions of some forgotten original. And indeed it is reasonable to attribute some variants to the fact that reciters may have forgotten verbal phrases and filled the gaps as best as they could, and this is supported by the likelihood that literary pieces got distorted over time or space.

The words could not possibly remain unaltered, considering the fallibility of human memory, which play as many tricks with the unlettered **Sereti** of oral poetry as it does with the rest of us, just as any composition travelling from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation.

APPENDIX

ANNEXURE A.

INFORMANTS AND DATES OF RESEARCH.

<u>PEOPLE</u>	<u>DATES</u>		
	1	2	3
Kgosi Kgoloko Seopela Mongatane Seopela	24/9/86 24/9/86	26/3/88	26/9/88
Kgošigadi Lekgolane	24/9/86	24/3/88	-
Maredi Kgagudi	25/9/86	-	-
Kgoloko Matlhagane	25/9/86	-	30/9/86
Kgolane Hlakudi	25/9/86	-	-
Mtepane Sekwati	26/9/86	23/3/88	-
Seraki Thobejane	"	23/3/88	26/9/88
Thulare Motubatse	"	25/3/88	-
Kgoloko Mampuru	"	22/3/88	-
Sekaboa Sekhukhune	27/9/86	-	29/88
Mirriam Ramaube	"	-	-
Sekgothe Motanyane	"	-	-
Ngwanatsomane Sekhukhune	27/9/86	-	28/9/88
Kgoš ^y i MorwaMotšhe	"	-	-
Molwetš ^y i Matlala	-	21/3/88	26/9/88
Mankepeng Nkadimeng	-	21/3/88	-
Mogalaweng Mokgabudi	-	22/3/88	-
Nkwane Nkahloleng	-	24/3/88	27/9/88
Sekgothe Morewane	-	25/3/88	27/9/88
Papong Maota	-	-	28/9/88

ANNEXURE B

A		B	
WRITTEN POEMS D.M.PHALA		UNWRITTEN POEMS	PRAISE SINGER
i. KXOŠI SEKWATI		i. KGOŠI SEKWATI:	
1	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	7	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati M.S.Thobejane
2	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	8	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati N.Sekwati
3	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	9	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati T.Motubatse
4	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	10	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati K.Maredi
5	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	11	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati M.Matlala
6	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekwati	12	Kgoš ¹ i Sekwati K.Morewane
ii. KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I		ii. KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I	
13	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	19	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune N.Sekhukhune
14	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	20	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune M.Matlala
15	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	21	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune M.Mokgabudi
16	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	22	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune K.Maredi
17	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	23	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune S.Morewane
18	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune	24	Kgoš ¹ i Sekhukhune M.S.Thobejane
25	Ina Ia Kxoš ¹ i Sekhukhune		

1. IHA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI sa I

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
- 2 Ke nna Sekwati-kwati sa bo-Maboforohlwe,
- 3 Bo-Kxomo sekwatiša-motho-botlakala.
- 4 Sekwati Se-hiwa-le-ngwanana-ntlong, e le mano a xo ja tata xo ngwanana.
- 5 Phahle Kxatswatswa 'a Mabyana.
- 6 Phalo ya Mmabatome 'a Makwa, phalo ya se-fala-mathoko,
- 7 A rexo xare: O šī 'o thula kobo maroba;
- 8 Phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka a' Mokitlana 'a Tšatši,
- 9 Tlakana la bo-Mpedi 'a xo rekwa,
- 10 Tlakana la mosadi wa xa Mafiri;
- 11 Makopye Mothša 'a-Malema, Semetša-melao 'a Marota
- 12 'a bo-Mma-Dinkwanyana, 'a Mokxoko,
- 13 Sekwati ba banyane le ba baxolo ba 'mo tseba,
- 14 ba re: Ke mang yelaa? wa kala 'a puwane,
- 15 xomme marole a a tšwaxo Tswetla xa Ramapulana
- 16 xa se marole a dikxokonyane, ke marole a batho.
- 17 Ke mo xo tlaxo Mothše 'moxolo, Se-laiwa-xale.
- 18 Sekwati šoono! O re: Ke Mmibididing, Sexukubyaneng,
- 19 sa Se-hula-bošexo. Ke Phahla 'a Bauba, Se-feta-methepa.
- 20 Ke fetile banana ba bahulwana, boMmaboloko 'a xa Maredi
- 21 le bo-Letlapee 'a xa Mphela.
- 22 Ke Se-ithlotledi sa Rakau 'a Modiši 'a Dihlašana,
- 23 xa a foloxa Leolo la Thsupaxadi 'a Mabetha 'a Bokone.

- 1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
- 2 She is milked by me Sekwati-kwati of Maboforohlwe and company,
- 3 Mr Beast and company, one who fools a person.
- 4 Sekwati, the one who indulges in courtship, tricking to conquer her father.
- 5 Phahle the head of Mabyana regiment.
- 6 Scraper of the Mmabatome of Makwa, scraper of the sides
- 7 Who says in the middle: He is afraid of piercing holes through the hide
- 8 The scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana of Tšatši,
- 9 Member of Tlakana regiment by purchase
- 10 Member of the Tlakana regiment of the woman of Mafiri,
- 11 Makopye the initiated of Malema,
- 12 Despiser of the laws of Marota, of the mother of Dinkwanyana of Mokxoko,
- 13 Sekwati, is known by the young and the old,
- 14 They say: Who is that yonder with a blooming twig?
- 15 And the dust emerging from Tswetla of Ramapulana
- 16 is not dust of cattle, it is dust of human beings.
- 17 It is the work of the head initiate, Selaiwa-xale.
- 18 Here is Sekwati! He says: I am in trouble at Sexukubyaneng,
- 19 of the invader by night, I am Phahla of Bauba, the one who by-passes lasses,
- 20 I ignored light-complexioned girls, Mmaboloko of Maredi and
- 21 company and Letlapee of Mphela and company.
- 22 I am the Self supporter of Rakau of Modiši of Dihlašana,
- 23 When he descends Leolo of Thsupaxadi of Mabetha of Bokone.

2 .INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI I

- 1 Kxomo a thswa! E xama ke mang?
- 2 Ke nna Sekwatikwati sa-Sehula-bošexo;
- 3 Se-kwatiša-batho-botlakala;
- 4 Sekwati le ba banyane ba mo tseba.
- 5 Ba re:Ke yena yelaa wa kala ya puwane,
- 6 wa marumo a mantši, a sekxoboko,
- 7 nkexo ke thaka ya thšimane 'a marole.
- 8 Sebula 'a Mabatome 'a Makwa, sebula ntlo 'a maxolo;
- 9 Ya re mabala a šalela Moxonong, kua xa bo Mašapa 'a Thobela.
- 10 Sekwati se hlwa le ngwanana ntlong,
- 11 e le xore o feka mano a xo ja tat'axo ngwanana
- 12 Xomme ke Leubaubane la bana ba Modiše,
- 13 le tšietše ba Ba-manaka 'a dipotsane;
- 14 Xomme Ba-manaka e šetše e le masele,
- 15 ba šetše ba dišetša Matsamaka;
- 16 ke mahlape a bana le bo Makxake,
- 17 bo Makxake 'a Selope sa Tsaneng;
- 18 Xomme ke Xabaxabe, ke Mošawana 'a Malema e moso,
- 19 ke wa bo Pela 'a Mangana;
- 20 Selepe ke a xana, mmoeletše 'a Madimo a šele,
- 21 motho xa a re a rak'a ke kxoši,
- 22 Ngwan'a-Morwa-Mothše a mo hlomile a se bee kotse a
ithapelela,
- 23 a re ke itše 'ng? Ngwana mokxoko 'a ntwā;
- 24 xomme ke 'xatlapa la Mabyana;
- 25 ka fehla moxale a thšaba;
- 26 Xomme Sekiki xa Phahla a feta methepa,
- 27 A feta kxaetšedi tša Mošabane;
- 28 o fetile Maboloko a Maredi,
- 29 a feta bo Kepyē 'a Mokxwatšana;
- 30 Xomme mola Sekxankxetša a leba Lexaletlwa,
- 31 Xomme Tswaledi a leba Bo-apea-kxobe,
- 32 Tseke a phatša 'hlaka lela la xaxwe.

- 1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
- 2 It's by me, Sekwati the one who invades by night.
- 3 The one who fools a person,
- 4 Sekwati, the young and the old people know him.
- 5 They say: He is that one with a blooming twig on his hat,
- 6 The one with many spears, that form a bundle,
- 7 like a peer-group of boys
- 8 Sebula of Mabatome of Makwa, the one who opens his elder
brothers house,
- 9 And the colours remained at Moxonong there at the Mašapa of
Thobela.
- 10 Sekwati, the one who indulge in courtship,
- 11 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl.
- 12 And it is a feud, among the children of Modiše,
- 13 You have captured from the ccards,
- 14 And those of Bamanaka are stupid
- 15 They are serving those of Matsamaka
- 16 They are a group of children with Makxake,
- 17 The Makxake's of Selope of Tsaneng,
- 18 And I am the active one, I am Mosawana 'a Malema the black
one,

- 19 I am of *Pela* and company,
- 20 The *Axe* I refuse, the returner of foreign domains,
- 21 When a person is driven away by *Kgoši*,
- 22 The child of *Morwa-Motšhe* hard on his heels never hesitates
to surrender and beg for pardon,
- 23 And say what have I done? The child of *Mokxoko* the fighter,
- 24 In fact he is a coward of the *Mabjana*.
- 25 I attacked a hero and he ran away;
- 26 And *Sekiki* at *Phahla* by-passed the girls,
- 27 He passed the sisters of *Mošabane*,
- 28 He ignored *Mmaboloko* of the *Maredi*
- 29 He passed *Kepye* of the *Mokxwatšana* and company,
- 30 While at *Sekxankxetše* he went straight into *Ixaletlwa*
forest,
- 31 And *Tswaledi* went to *Bo-apea-kgobe*,
- 32 *Tseke* moved across the field.

3. INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI I

- 1 *Kxomo* a *thswa!* E xama ke mang?
- 2 Ke nna *Sekwati-kwati*, sa *Se-hula-bošexo*,
- 3 *Se-kwatiša-batho-botlakala*
- 4 Ba banyane ba' mo tseba, xomme ba re:
- 5 Ke yena yelaa-a kala wa puwane, 'a marumo a *thšabahlia*,
- 6 *Thšabahlia* 'a *Malema* 'a *Mamošidi* 'a *Moroba* 'a *Tsebe*
- 7 *Makxale* ke a hlaba ke na le pelo ya sehutla
- 8 *Sehlahlara* sa *Mamatladi* le *Metse*
- 9 Ka na ka jela *Moxabeng*,
- 10 Ke ile *Kxobotlele* xo *Metlakana* ya *Rakxwale*,
- 11 *Tlakana* la bo *Mpedi* 'a xo rekwa,
- 12 le xapetše ba *Manaka* 'a dipotsane, le bo *Matlale*
- 13 ba rexo: Re sa šetše, ba šetše ba dišetša *Matsamaka*
- 14 *Mahlape* a bona le bo *Makxake* a *Selope Letlakana*.
- 15 *Tlakana* le le setšexo meralelo,
- 16 *Melemo* ya bana ba *Makxake* a *Selope Letlakana*
- 17 *Tlakana* la *Mabyana* la *Borwa*, e se tšee ke phefo;
- 18 *Phefo* ya *tloxa* ya tšea *Maholo*, *madixa* a *Ramatabane* a
- 19 *Ramatabane* a a bexo a a taba.
- 20 *Senny* se lebelo, sa xa *Ranthsudi* 'a *Thebe*
- 21 *Kxwadi* lemela *hloxong*, *Madimo*, *nthša naka*,
- 22 di ye *tletlolo*, *moloi* 'a *Difehla*.
- 23 *Kiti-mešito* 'a *Ma-rakaa-thšimane*, batho re a lelekwa;
- 24 Ke lelekilwe ke ba xa *moxolle*;
- 25 Ba xa *moxolle*, Le thako e šilo,
- 26 Le rakile *mošimane* 'a *Metlaka*,
- 27 'a *Metlaka* ya *Mamalema* 'a xa *Nkwana*.
- 28 *Senny* se lebelo sa *Ranthsudi* 'a *Thebe*.
- 29 *Thamaxa-ma-duma-dinama*, *Thamaxa tona*, e se ile tše xo thoma,
- 30 xomme nna *Kxwadi* ka lenaka ke *epoloditše*,
- 31 ke *hlomile* *Metse* *Kxwadi* 'a *Malema* 'a *Nkwana*.
- 32 *Senny*, *motho* xa a sa nthete ke pelo 'nthso,
- 33 pelo *phifadi* ya *moxatš* 'a sa mme, *Le-lebala-xo-reta*.
- 34 O lebetše nna *Moxale* *Kxaladi* ya *Mohlako* 'a *Raphoxole*,
- 35 *Kxatswatswa* a *Mabyana*, *Phalo* ya xa *Mamodiši* 'a *Makwa*;

36 Phalo ya se-fala-mathoko, xare o šī'o thula kobo maroba;
 37 o šia maboya bo Ramapulana a Thobela;
 38 Sefadi, petlo ya morwedi wa Mphaka, a Mokitiana 'a Tšatši,
 39 Ma-nyakelwa-mokxopa mola xo seakwa (xo tsongwa),
 40 xo nthšwa dihlong bo Mafoforang 'a Masoma-hloko-robexa,
 41 Nonyana Sennyse se lebelo sa Ranthsudi 'a Thebe,
 42 Motho a ka re a hlomilwe ke kxošī wa xa Ramorekere
 43 a mo hlomile; xa a se dule fase, a opa leopo,
 44 a re: Ke itše'ng a xa Mokxoko 'a ntwā,
 45 a sela xo-bedi a etša hlwaela,
 46 Pudubudu-kxamana ya Bokxalaka, a re ka wela moetšana ka wela;
 47 xomme ka re: mola O leke O nthšiele ruri,
 48 ke be ke tlo Xo romela "Nthšī-O-moloi,"
 49 wa Difehla Kitī-mešito, Mo-raka-thšimane.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 It's by me Sekwati, the one who invades by night.
 3 The one who fools a person.
 4 The young ones know him, and they say:
 5 He is the one yonder - with a blooming twig, with many spears,
 6 A bundle of Malema of Mamošidi of Moroba of Tsebe
 7 Makxale I stab, I have a cruel heart
 8 The cruel one of Mamatladi and Mete,
 9 I once ate at Moxabeng,
 10 I killed Kgobottlele of Metlakana of Rakxwale,
 11 Tlakana of Mpedi and company, the purchased,
 12 It has driven the cowards, together with Matlale,
 13 Who say: We are still remaining, they are herding Matsaka's
 14 cattle with Makxake of Selope, letlakana,
 15 The Tlakana who has evaded
 16 Medicinal charms of strong men like Selope Letlakana.
 17 Tlakana of Mbjana of the South, I am steadfast, I am not
 18 blown by the wind,
 19 The wind blew Mahofo, the bra thes of Ramatabane, of
 20 Ramatabane which he was piling together.
 21 The fast introvert, of Ranthsudi of Thebe.
 22 Kxwadi raise your horns, Madimo, sound an alarm, let them go
 23 uphill, the wizard of Difehla,
 24 Making boys-like sounds, we are being driven away,
 25 He are driven away by those of our elder brother,
 26 People of my elder brother and company, your expulsion is
 27 evil,
 28 You drove away the boy of Metlaka,
 29 of Malema of Nkwana.
 30 The fast introvert of Ranthsudi of Thebe.
 31 Thamaxa madumadinama, the big Thamaxa, I am not restricted
 32 from making a start.
 33 And I Kxwadi with my horn I unearthed,
 34 I installed Mete Kxwadi of Malema of Nkwana.
 35 The introvert, when a person does not praise me, he is jealous
 36 The wicked heart of my brother's wife, makes her shun to praise.
 37 She has forgotten me the hero of Kxaladi of Mohlako of
 38 Raphogole,
 39 The kxatswatswa of Mbjana, the scraper of Mamodišī of Makwa,
 40 The scraper of the sides, in the middle he fears to make holes

- in the hide
 37 He is afraid of removing the hairs of Ramapulana of Thobela,
 38 The Scraper, the chisel of the daughter of Mphaka of Mokitlana
 of Tšatši,
 39 The one for whom they are searching for a hide while others
 are hunting,
 40 Selecting Mafoforang and company of Masoma
 41 A bird, the fast introvert of Ranthudi of Thebe,
 42 Can a person having being appointed by Kxoši of Ramorekere.
 43 Having appointed him, fail to sit down, to say thank you
 44 And say: If Mokxoko the fighter,
 45 Could jump twice like a duiker,
 46 An antelope of Bokxalaka, he fell into a valley I followed,
 47 And I said: Had you tried to escape from me,
 48 I would have sent you my "hoodoo"
 49 That saps the energy, and scares boys away.

4. INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI I

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna.
 3 Sekwati mohla wola wa ntwala le mo opeleng a le xole
 4 Modimotsana 'a noka ya Tubatse
 5 Bo re ! Tsodi wa Thebe kxokxoro mokxopha.
 6 Sephoko š'o bina kae?
 7 Kwa melodi ya Mexwati
 8 Ke baka naxo boxwadi, Seraki ke re'ng?
 9 Ha re o thamaxa, nna ke thamaxa ya Mabyana;
 10 Ke kxwadi ya bo-Mmamabu 'a Maleka
 11 A Moxoto 'a mabalana 'a Kxwadi,
 12 Ka lenaka ke hlabile ke epolotše.
 13 Ke bile ke hlabile Mete kxwadi ya Metlaka ya Rakxalake.
 14 Sennyane se lebelo sa Ra-moxolo;
 15 Kxomo mmutla ke o šia lesolo,
 16 Ke š'i'o nthša kopo kadi, ke thamaxa tša metse meng;
 17 Ke Motselekatse a Mathšobana;
 18 Ka mo Tswako ka na ka tsokulela, ke be ke rakana le motho
 19 A wela moetsana ka wela, motho eo a nthšia,
 20 Ka sela xobedi ka etša hlwaela,
 21 Ke be ke etša pudubudu ya Bokxalaka a Mapulana a Tswetla.
 22 Mola, o nthšie, Rabatome-a-se-we, ke be ke tlo xo romela ntšhi
 ya moloi.
 23 Ha Difehla kiti-mešito wa Rathšimane.
 24 Batho re a lelekwa re lelekwa ke bo moxolle,
 25 Batho ba lethako lešele. A metlaka le rakile Moisa.
 26 Thetseke o tšwa kxošing, ke Mopedi wa bo Lekxolane,
 27 Ka selepe ke a rema mmoelele
 28 Kxaladi a mmoelele a medimo e šele
 29 A Mohlako 'a Raphoxole.
 30 Ka Motswako ntwala ke a xononwa;
 31 Nna sešišimale sa morwedi wa Mphaka,
 32 Ke šišimetše, ka etša lefswaka,
 33 Ke sefadi phalo ya morwedi wa Mphaka,
 34 a Mokitlana a Tšatši.
 35 ke a fala, ke šio thula kobo maroba,
 36 Ke be ke tšwile le Mabowe xa Ramapulana 'a Tswetla.

37 Ke mošwelešwele wa Borwa o Ila Kxaladi 'a Makxopho,
 38 o Ila o re: Tlaka,šielā kxošī,
 39 Mohube 'a bo Sethale sa Matsedi.
 40 Ngwaxola le lle monna,la mo iša dihlatlexelong
 41 kwa xa bo ngwanana wa Lekxwareng;
 42 Ke Tlakala la Mabyana,la Borwa xa ke tšee ke phefo.
 43 Phefo e tšea madixa a bo Tsedinyane;
 44 Ke Phahle 'a Baube,ke manyobonyobo;
 45 xe ke swere marumo ke a thakxa.
 46 Fala maledu,nke ke tsiba sa kxokong;
 47 Morwa Mamoxašwa mehlaxare ya meno,
 48 Ke Phahle 'a marumo a mantšī;
 49 Lebyana la xa bo Mmankepeng a Mothšā;
 50 Xomme ke Phahle 'a marumo 'a mantšī;
 51 marumo e nke ke Selemela,nke ke thaka ya bašimane,
 52 ke thšabahla ya Malema,mošidi a moroba;
 53 Tsebe makxale ke a hiaba.
 54 Tlakana la Mpilo 'a Boxopa bya Mokxwaxadi,
 55 Ke Letlakana la xo ja merwalo ya batho;
 56 Ke Sekwati,ke se-hiwa-le-ngwanana ntlong,
 57 Ke dira mano a xo ja tata xo ngwanana.
 58 E,ke Sekiki xa Phahla a feta methepa,
 59 bo Tlapea 'a Ramphela le Maboloko ja xa Maredi;
 60 mola Tswaledi a phatšā hiaka lela la xaxwe,
 61 Sekxankxetše a leba lexaletlwa;
 62 Xomme Tseke yena a leba Bo-apea-kxobe.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me.
 3 Sekwati on that day of battle you could have praised from
 far.
 4 The small god of the river Tubatse.
 5 It says: Tsodi of Thebe, the sounding dry hide.
 6 Sephoko where is he going to dance?
 7 Listen to the whistling of Mexwati:
 8 I compete against you for the colour of black and white
 spots, Seraki what should I say?
 9 You say you are the head, yet I am the leader of Mabjana.
 10 I am the tiger of Mmamabu of Maleka
 11 of Moxoto with white spots,
 12 With the horn I pierced and dug out.
 13 I have even pierced the black and white Mete of Metlaka of
 Rakxalake
 14 The fast introvert of my father's brother,
 15 The cattle, the rabbit fears the hunting expedition,
 16 I am afraid of removing the hair of the tail, I am the great
 one of other villages,
 17 I am Motselekatse of Mathšobane,
 18 At Tswako I was confronted, I was chasing a person,
 19 He went across the valley I followed, the person outran me,
 20 I jumped twice like a duiker
 21 I was like an antelope of Bokxalaka of Mapulana of Tswetla
 22 By jove! Had you outrun me, I would have sent you my hoodoo fly.
 23 That saps the energy and scares boys away,
 24 People we are being driven away, we are driven away by our
 elder brothers,

25 People who are strangers of Metlaka you expelled Moisa,
 26 Thetseke is from kxoši, he is a Mopedi of Lekxolane,
 27 With the axe I chop repeatedly,
 28 Kxaladi the repeater of actions of strange gods,
 29 of Mohlako of Raphoxole.
 30 With the mixtures I am not afraid of war,
 31 I am Sešišimale of the daughter of Mphaka,
 32 I stood still like a rock,
 33 I am the desperate, the scraper of the daughter of Mphaka of
 34 Mokitlana of Tšatšī.
 35 I scrape, fearing to make holes through the hide,
 36 I went out with Mabowe to Ramapulana of Tswetla,
 37 It is the bustard from the South which cries at Kxaladi of
 Mokxopho,
 38 Crying and saying: Tlaka leave something for the kxoši,
 39 Mohube of Sethale of Matsedi.
 40 Last year you killed a man and took him to the place of
 medicines.
 41 There at the child of Lekxwareng,
 42 I am Tlakala of Mabiana, from the South, I am steadfast I
 cannot be blown away by the wind.
 43 The wind blows away Tsedinyane's branches,
 44 I am Phahle of Bauba, I am monstrous,
 45 With the spear I do a good job.
 46 But the beard are like the loinskin of a blue wildebeest,
 47 Son of Mamaxašwa the jaws with teeth,
 48 I am Phahle of many spears.
 49 Lebšana of Mankepeng of Motšha,
 50 And I am indeed Phahle of many spears,
 51 Spears that look like the constellation of the Pleiades, like
 a group of boys,
 52 I am the strong one of Malema, Mošidi of Moroba,
 53 Tsebe of Makxale I stab.
 54 Tlakana of Mpilo of Boxopa of Mokwaxadi
 55 I am Letlakana that destroys other peoples properties.
 56 I am Sekwati, the one who indulges in courtship,
 57 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl,
 58 Yes, it is Sekiki at Phahla who by-passed the girls,
 59 Tlapea and company of Ramphela and Mmaboloko of Maredi,
 60 While Tswaledi was moving across the field,
 61 Sekxankxetše went straight to legaletlwa forest,
 62 And Tseke went to Bo-apea-kgobe.

5. INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI I

1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna Ntlabatlababa 'a leselo,
 3 Roto sa xaxo Radipilwane;
 4 Se ba rexo ba ola ka sona molora,
 5 Kxatswatswa, se-bula-'a Mabatome a Makwa,
 6 Se-bula-ntlo-ya-moxolo, mabala a šalela Moxonong,
 7 Tlakana la bompedi a xo rekwa.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by Me the wide opened winnowing basket,
 3 Your basket Radipilwane,
 4 Which they say is used to pick up ashes,
 5 Kxatswatswa, the opener of Mabatome of Makwa,

- 6 The one who opens his brothers house, and his footprints
remained in the house,
7 Tlakana of Mpedi who was purchased.

6. INA LA KXOŠI SEKWATI I

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa' E xama ke mang?
2 Exama ke nna Sekwati, phalo 'a mphaka,
3 Morwedi wa Mokitlana 'a Tšatš'i,
4 Phalo ya xo fala mathoko;
5 Xare ke š'i'o thula kobo maroba;
6 Ke š'ia maboya xo bo Radipilong.
7 Xa Le bona marole alee' a tupaxo molaa'
8 Ke mo xo tlaxo nna Mothš'emoxolo,
9 Sekwatikwati sa Se-hula-bošexo,
10 Se-kwatiša-motho-botlakala.
11 Sekwati le ba banyane ba' mo tseba;
12 xomme ba re: Ke yena elaaa' wa kala ya puwane,
13 Le marumo a ngata, e nkexo ke dihlahlala di kxobetše.
14 Ke moxale xa a sa ratwa ka xo xolo,
15 Ka xa a sa tšee kxang le motho.
16 Xa a tšere kxang, boxale bo a fela.
17 Boxale xo tlo š'ala bya molomo, Thšabahl'a 'a Malema
18 Ma-Mošidi 'a moroba, tsebe makxale ke a hlaba;
19 Ke bile ke na le pelo ya sehutla,
20 Moloi 'a difehla, Kitimeš'ito.
21 Kitimeš'ito 'a Mo-raka-thšimane.
22 Batho re a lelekwa, re raka ke ba xa moxolle
23 Ba xa moxolle, Le thako e š'ilo.
24 Ngwana 'kxoro 'a Metlaka 'a Metlae,
25 Metlaka 'a xa Rakxalake,
26 a rexo a thsaba a be a ipekenya
27 Byalo ka monaledi 'a kotse.
28 Thula 'a Masese, ka tšwa ka latela Lethamaxa-tona.
29 E se ileš'io thoma, Thamaxa 'a Mabyana,
30 Kxwadi 'a Mamabu 'a Maleka 'a Moxoto 'a Morolana;
31 Kxwadi ka lenaka ke epoloditše,
32 Ke beile Meta, kxwadi 'a Malema 'a xa Nkwana,
33 Sefehla sa xa bo Moikwetš'i 'a Maxasa,
34 Se-ya-le-motho-ka-šokeng-le-leso,
35 La morišana wa š'oeee'
36 Kxwadi 'a mosadi 'a Tlopeng Mauše,
37 Mauše 'a Dixolokwane tš'a Dimo,
38 Ntwa e ka re e buša bara ba-ka,
39 E buša Bakone ba mošate Mathamaxeng;
40 E tsomile mokxoba, e ba kxobela,
41 E ba kxobela xo phatana ya mokxoba;
42 Xomme e xana xa re fihla dihlatlexelo,
43 Thake 'kxwadi ya xa Mokxoko 'a ntwā,
44 'A Matlapana 'a Bohlolo bya Tubatse,
45 Ngwana Morwamothš'e, akxa mosepelo;

46 Ha xa Tseke, tloša dinao, Phaswane;
 47 Mokone šolaaa! o tšwile maxolong;
 48 Mokone o tšwile xare xa maxolo.
 49 Xomme Mokone o ithsema nare a re'ng?
 50 Xa a iphetola makxalane, a ithsema makxale a dibotho;
 51 Xa a sa re xo bona lehu le mmatametše
 52 a lahla dikotse a ithapelela;
 53 Xomme a re: Ke itše'ng? a xa Mokxoko
 54 'a Ntwa 'a Matlapane 'a Bohlolo bya Tubatse.

1 The cow spits. By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me Sekwati, the knife scraper,
 3 The daughter of Mokitlana of Tšatšī,
 4 The scraper that scrapes the sides,
 5 In the middle I fear making holes through the hide,
 6 I am afraid of the hair of Radipilong.
 7 As you see yonder dust rising up!
 8 That's my job the great initiate,
 9 Sekwati, the one who invades by night,
 10 The one who likes to fool a person.
 11 Sekwati is known by the young,
 12 and they say: He is that one with a blooming twig on his hat,
 13 and a bundle of spears, that looks like piled sticks.
 14 He is a hero who is no longer popular,
 15 Since he no longer converses with anybody.
 16 If he converses, his bravery fades away.
 17 Bravery will remain in his talk, peer group of Malema
 18 Ma-mošidi of Moroba, the long eared one I stab,
 19 I even have a cruel heart,
 20 The witch who stirs the charms, Kitimešito.
 21 Kitimešito that scares the boys away.
 22 People we are being driven away, we are driven away by our
 elder brother,
 23 Our elder brother and company with unceremonious expulsion.
 24 The child of the kxoro of Metlaka of Metlae,
 25 Metlaka of Rakxalake,
 26 Who when running away looks in all directions
 27 Like the twinkling of a shield.
 28 Thula of Nasese, I went out and followed the great Lethamaxa,
 29 I am not prevented from starting, Thamaxa of Mabyana,
 30 Kxwadi of Mamabu of Maleka 'a Moxoto of Marolana,
 31 Kxwadi with a horn I unearthed,
 32 I put Meta of kxwadi of Malema 'a Nkwana,
 33 Sefehla of Moikwetšī of Maxasa and company
 34 The one who goes with a person to a thick forest,
 35 That causes the hair to stand on ends,
 36 Kxwadi of the wife of Thopeng Mauše,
 37 Mauše of Dixolokwane of Dimo,
 38 War being the controller of my children
 39 Governing the Bakone of the royal place at Mathamaxeng,
 40 It looked for a gathering place, it has gathered them,
 41 Gathering them close to a Mokxoba tree stump,
 42 And refusing when we arrive at the place of herbs,
 43 The youth of Mokxoko the fighter,
 44 of Matlapana of Bohlolo of Tubatse,
 45 Child of Morwa Motšhe hurry up,

46 Child of Tseke quicken your steps, Phaswane,
 47 There is Mokone, he is out of his den,
 48 Mokone is separated from his caves,
 49 And why is Mokone making himself a fierce buffalo?
 50 He has not turned himself into Makxalelane, but
 deems himself Makxale of the people,
 51 Seeing that death is approaching,
 52 he does not throw down his shield and pray for himself,
 53 And say: What have I done people of Mokxoko?
 54 of the War of Matlapana of Bohlole of Tubatse.

7. KGOŠI SEKWATI

Makweleyane Seraki Thobejane

1 Sekwatikwati sa sehula-bošego
 2 Ke Sekwatakwatiša motho nka botlakala.
 3 Ke Sekwati sa Mmaboforohlo a bokgomo;
 4 Ke Sekwati sa bokgothonko bokomo.
 5 Ba re Sekwati ke sehlwa le ngwanana ntlong;
 6 E le maano a go ja tatago ngwanana;
 7 E le maano a go ja Lekgala la Motebele.
 8 Sekwati ke baka boqwadi le bosamma ke reng?
 9 Ke le Seraki sa Kgalantlole a Makwa;
 10 Ka re mola ke re ke kqwadi, wa re ke thamaga 'a Mabjana,
 11 O mpona ke le kqwadi ya bo kgaetšedi;
 12 Ke le kqwadi ya bokgolwana ya boMolefe;
 13 Ke Sekwati sa bošiana a Moraka ke Sekwati sa boMaila a
 Mogoto.
 14 Ke yena yola wa marumo a mantšhi;
 15 Ke marumo a tšhabahla, marumo nke ngatana dikgobetšwe phateng
 ya mokgoba
 16 Ke Sekwati tšhabahla 'a malema marumo a mantšhi,
 marumo nke selemela.
 17 Ke Phahle wa tsebe a Makgale ke a hlaba,
 18 Nna ke hlaba ka rumo laka la kiti mošito la molo a
 difehla.
 19 La molelekišhi marakatšhimane batho re a lelekwa;
 20 Re lelekwa ke ba ga mogolle re reng?
 21 Lena ba ga mogolle le thako e šilo.
 22 Kqwadi ka lenaka ke hlabile e bile ke epoloditše;
 23 Nna ke beile Meta a kqwadi 'a metlaka,
 24 Ke beile Meta a kqwadi ya metlaka ya ga Rakgalake
 25 Gore yo a thibago Ngwaritsi a thiba dikgomo ke marole 'a
 batho;
 26 Ke marole a tšwago Tswetla ya Ramapulana Thobela.
 27 Ke Phalo ya mmasefala a mathoko
 28 Nna gare ke tšo phula kobo maroba;
 29 Re tšhaba maboya ga Radipilong.
 30 Nna Sekwatiba ntlohoile a ba nthete.
 31 Ba ba nthatago ba ntheta ba re Sekwati ga wela mmoetšana ke
 a wela.
 32 Ga o rotoga ga morotoga ke a rotoga;
 33 Ke nna ngwana wa boMorwamotšhe, akga mosepelo Tseke tloša
 dinao.

- 34 O a mmona Mokone šo o fihlile;
 35 A Mokone o tsene gare ga a magolo a reng
 36 O reng a sa re ge a bona lehu la gagwe le mmatametše,
 37 A tšea kotse tša gagwe le marumo a bea fase,
 38 A ithapelela lephelo, a re ke dirilego nwa ya Matlapaneng
 39 A Mokgokwana a bohlole bya Tubatse.
 40 Ke Letlakana Mbjana, ke Letlakana la ngwana mosadi 'a morwedi
 a Mafiri.
 41 Ke nna Makidikitla a thipa tša go sega,
 42 Ke Makgaripanya a mefaka e bogale;
 43 Ke Makokopi a majadifedile,
 44 ke semetsamelao ya batho;
 45 Ya banna boMakgaka 'a Letsedi.

Ke tshaba mediti

- 1 Sekwati the one who invades by night,
 2 The one who likes to fool a person.
 3 I am Sekwati of Maboforohlwe and company,
 4 I am Sekwati Mr Beast and company.
 5 They say Sekwati indulges in courtship,
 6 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl,
 7 Tricking to kill Lekgala of Motebele.
 8 Sekwati, why do I compete for the position against my sisters?
 9 Being Seraki of Kgalatlole of Makwa,
 10 While I say I am the black and white one, you say you are the
 red and white of Mbjana,
 11 Seeing I am the black and white of my sisters,
 12 Being the black and white of Bokgolwana of the Molefi's.
 13 I am Sekwati the relative of Moraka the one of Maila of
 Mogoto.
 14 He is that very one with many spears,
 15 They are many spears that are like a bundle of sticks heaped
 on the stem of a Mokgoba tree,
 16 I am Sekwati the strong one of Malema with many spears.
 17 I am Phahla who when I hear a sound I stab,
 18 I stab with my noisy spear which is fortified with medicines
 19 That of the chaser of the boys people are being driven away,
 20 Why are we driven away by our elder brothers,
 21 You of my elder brothers with unceremonious expulsion
 22 Kgwadi with my horn I unearthed,
 23 I have placed Meta of Kgwadi of Metlaka,
 24 I placed Meta of Kgwadi of Metlaka of Rakgalake.
 25 So that the one who stops cattle at Ngwaritsi is dust of
 human beings;
 26 It is dust coming from Tswetla of Ramapulana of Thobela.
 27 I am the scraper that scrapes the sides.
 28 In the middle I have made holes through the hide,
 29 We are afraid of the hairy one of Radipilong.
 30 I Sekwati they hate me, they do not like me,
 31 Those who like me praise me and say when Sekwati falls again,
 I also fall,
 32 If you go uphill I also go uphill,
 33 I am the brother of MorwaHothše, hurry up, quicken your steps
 Tseke.

- 34 You see Mokone has arrived,
 35 Why has Mokone mixed with great people?
 36 When seeing his death approaching,
 37 why not take his shield and spear and surrender,
 38 And plead for his life, and say I did not declare war of
 Matlapaneng,
 39 of Mokgokwana of Bohlolo of Tubatse.
 40 He is a Letlakana of Mabjana,
 41 he is a Letlakana of the child of the wife of the daughter of
 Mafiri.
 42 I am the sharp cutting knife,
 43 I am the sharpener of sharp knives
 44 I am the stingy one who eats even the last pieces,
 45 I am the one who does not obey the men's laws,
 46 Men like Makgaka of Letsedi.
I fear initiation leaders.

8.KGOŠI SEKWATI

NTEPANE SEKWATI

- 1 Ke nna Sekwati sa Mmamošidi ya Moroba ya tsebe makgale ke a
 hlaba.
 2 Yena a re go ke hlaba ka rumo laka la molo: a difehla
 3 A: kiti mošito a morakathšimane batho re a lelekwa;
 4 Batho re rakwa ke ba ga mogolle.
 5 Ba re hleng batho ba ga mogolle batho ba thako e šilo;
 6 Bona ba rakago Phahle le mekgeledi ya marumo,
 7 Ye a re go a tšhaba a be a ipekenya nke ke molaledi a kotse.
 8 Sekwati ba banyenyane le ba bagolo ba a mo tseba;
 9 Ba re: Ke mang yola wa kalapuana
 10 wa marumo a tššabahlia ye nkego dihlahlana di kgobetše.
 11 O re ke nna mogale ge ke sa tšee bogale le motho;
 12 Phahle ge ke tšea bogale le motho bogale bo a fela.
 13 Ke Tatše ke ngwana wa ga mosadi wa Mafiri
 14 Ke semetšamelao ya ga-Marota a BoDinkwanvana a Mokgoko a
 Tšatši
 15 O re ga le bona marole a tšwago Tswetla ga Ramapulana,
 16 Ga se marole a dikgomo ke marole a batho,
 17 Ke mo go tlogo nna Motšhe yo mogolo Phate selaiwaqale.
 18 O re mošwelešwele wa Borwa o a lla;
 19 O re tlaka le lle mang?
 20 O re tlaka le lle moisa dihlatlegelong;
 21 Ke namane tša mmamošala šuping.
 22 Phahle o re ke fetile Bavenda ka feta methepa,
 23 Ke fetile banana ba bahulwana-!
 24 Ke boTaupe a ga-Mphele;
 25 le boMaboloko a ga Maredi;
 26 le boKeepi a Mokgwatšana.
- 1 I am Sekwati of Mmamošidi of Moroba who when you hear the
 sound he stabs,
 2 The one says I stab with my charmed spear,
 3 That makes a sound like the sound of running boys,

4 People we are being driven away, by our elder brothers,
 5 They say why do our elder brothers drive us away so
 unceremoniously,
 6 They who drive away Phahle with scars of battle spears,
 7 The one who when running away looks to and fro like a
 twinkling shield.
 8 Sekwati, the young and the old know him,
 9 They say, who is that one with a blooming twig on his hat?
 10 with a bundle of spears like piled sticks.
 11 He says that he is a hero who does not combine his bravery
 with another person.
 12 Phahle when I argue with a person the bravery fades away.
 13 I am Tatše the son of the wife of Mafiri.
 14 I am the one who does not obey the laws of Marota of
 Dinkwanyana of Mokgoko of Tšatši.
 15 He says when you see dust coming from Tswetla of Ramapulana,
 16 It is not dust made by cattle, it is dust of human beings,
 17 It is the work of the great Motšhe. Phahle the most reliable,
 18 He says the bustard from the South is crying,
 19 He says who is killed by the regiment?
 20 He says the regiment has killed a certain person at the place
 of Medicines,
 21 They are the calves of the one who remains at the ruins.
 22 Phahle says he by-passed the Venda girls,
 23 He ignored the light complexioned girls!
 24 They are Taupe of Mphele and company, and
 25 Mmaboloko of the Maredi
 26 and Keepi of Mokgwatšana and company.

9. KGOŠI SEKWATI

Thulare Motubatse.

1 Ke kgoši Sekwati sa mmaboforohlo;
 2 Ke Sekwatikwatiša motho botlakala.
 3 Ke Sekwati sehlwa-le-ngwanana ntlong;
 4 E le maano a go ja tatago ngwanana;
 5 Tatago Lekgala la Mmabotebele.
 6 Ke Phahle a ngwato a Bauba kgatswatswa Mabjana
 7 Ke Phalo ya mmasefala mathoko ye ba rego bošego ke phula
 kobo maroba;
 8 Ke ba Phalo ya morwedi a Mokitlana a Tšatši.
 9 Ke ba Phalo ya Bauba thamaga.
 10 Ba boMmamabu wa Maleka a Marolane
 11 E ba rego kgwadi ka lenaka ke epoloditše
 12 Ke bile ke beile moeta wa meetse Rakgalaka a Madila.
 13 Ba re ke marole mang ale a tšwago Tswetla ga Ramapulana
 14 Ga se marole a dikgomo ke marole a batho.
 15 Ke moo go tlogo motšhe o mogolo selaiwa gale a Marota
 16 Ye e lego wa boMmadinkwanyana a Mokgoko
 17 Sekwati ke Phahle a Bauba sefetamethepa
 18 O fetile banyana ba bahulwana.
 19 BoLetlape a ga-Mphela ke boMmaboloko a ga Maredi
 20 Sekwati o re, sepelang lo botša Sethele Moletlane

- 21 Le re: Ke nna ye ke mmidibiding
 22 le dikgokubjana tš'a ngwana wa Sehulabošego
 23 Tš'a makala a puana a Thulare

- 1 I am kgoši Sekwati of Maboforohlwe and company,
 2 I am Sekwati the one who likes to fool a person.
 3 I am Sekwati the one who indulges in courtship,
 4 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl,
 5 The father of Lekgala of Mmabotebele.
 6 I am Phahle of Ngwato of Bauba the head of Mabjana.
 7 I am the scraper, that scrapes the sides which they say at
 night it fears to make holes through the hide,
 8 I become the scraper of the daughter of Mokitlana a Tšatš'i.
 9 I become the scraper of Bauba the red and white one of
 10 Mmamabu of Maleka of Marolane.
 11 Who they say, the black and white one with my horn I unearth,
 12 I have even placed a decorated beerpot of Rakgalaka.
 13 They say what kind of dust is that which comes from Tswetla
 of Ramapulana?
 14 It is not dust made by cattle, it is dust made by human
 beings
 15 It is the work of the great initiate the brave one of
 Marota.
 16 Who is the brother to Dinkwanyana of Mokgoko and company.
 17 Sekwati, I am Phahle of Bauba the passerby of girls,
 18 He ignored the light complexioned girls
 19 Letlape of Mphela and company and Mmaboloko of Maredi and
 company.
 20 Sekwati says, go and tell Sethele at Moletlane
 21 Say: Here I am caught in a cross-fire.
 22 With the children of Sehulabošego,
 23 With the descendants of Thulare.

10. KGOŠI SEKWATI

KGAGUDI MAREDI

- 1 Ke Sekwatikwati sa raboforohlo
 2 Sekwatakwatiša motho botlakala
 3 Ie ba ba nyenyane ba a mo tseba
 4 Ba re ke ofe, ba re ke ola wa kalapuana.
 5 Wa tšhaba sa ga Malema
 6 Ha tedu nke ke setsiba sa kgckong
 7 fela ge a swere marumo o a botsafala.
 8 Sekwati, sehlwa le ngwanana ntlong
 9 E le maano a go ja rragongwanana ye
 10 Kua Moletš'i wa mogolo wa Mabokanyana.

- 1 I am Sekwati of Raboforohlo and company,
 2 The one who likes to fool a person.
 3 Even the young ones know me,
 4 They say, who is he, they say it is that one with a
 blooming twig on his hat,

- 5 of the people of Malema,
- 6 With a beard that looks like the loinskin of a blue wildebeest.
- 7 But when he is engaged in war he becomes handsome.
- 8 Sekwati, the one who indulges in courtship,
- 9 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl.
- 10 There at the great Moletšī of Mabokanyana.

11 .KGOSI SEKHATI

MOLWETŠI MATLALA.

- 1 Ke thamaga Mabjana Thamaga tona ga ke ilo thoma bea Meta Kgwadi a Malema a Rasennye, sa Rakabu se rego mmele ke tšhaba go reta.
- 2 Se se reng nkane ke tšhaba lesolo.
- 3 Se reng ke tšhaba ntsho kopo.
- 4 Se reng ke tšhaba maboya go bonala tlase ga Ramapulana a Tswetla.
- 5 A re Phahle a Bauba ke befile ke manyobohlo
- 6 Ke manyobonyobo, fela ge ke swere marumo lebjana ke a thakgafala.
- 7 Maledu a ka nke ke setsiba sa kgokong.
- 8 Ka re ke rakedisane le ntšhi ya wela moetšana ka wela
- 9 Ka re Rabatome mola o ntšhie ke tlo go romela ntšhi moloi,
- 10 Ke go romela ditshela thaka ratšhimane batho re a lelekwa
- 11 Re lelekwa ke bomogolle batho ba thako e šele.
- 12 Ya Metlaka e raka moisa thamaga
- 13 Ya mo isa mahlatlegelong a ngwanana a Lekgwareng
- 14 Ga se la bona mohlant wola mohlomogolo
- 15 Sekgenketša a phatša mahlaka a gagwe
- 16 Tswaledi a phatša mahlaka a gagwe
- 17 Tseke a leba Galetlwa
- 18 Sekgenkgetše a leba Galetlwa
- 19 Ya methaka ke ge e raka moisa Thamaga
- 20 O mo isa mahlatlegelong kua ga ngwanana a Lekgwareng.

- 1 I am the leader of Mabjana, the great one I am not hesitant to start putting Meta of the black and white of Malema of Rasennye of Rakabu, who says I am afraid of praising,
- 2 Who says I am afraid of going to hunt,
- 3 Who says I am afraid of the black one?
- 4 Who says I am afraid of my hair been seen down at Ramapulana of Tswetla?
- 5 He says Phahle of Bauba I am ugly and monstrous,
- 6 I am ugly but when I engage in war Lebjana, I become handsome.
- 7 My beard is like the loinskin of a blue wildebeest.
- 8 I say I chased a fly and it flew down the drift and I followed,
- 9 And I said if you Rabatome had outrun me, I could have sent you my hoodoo,
- 10 Send you the grey ones, the companions of the boys, we are being driven away,
- 11 We are driven away by our elder brothers, they drive us away

unceremoniously.

- 12 Of Metlaka is driving away one who takes the red and white one.
- 13 And takes him to the place of medicines of the girls of Lekgwareng.
- 14 You have not seen on that big day of war,
- 15 When Sekgenkgetše was moving across his mielle stalks.
- 16 Tswaledi was moving across his field
- 17 Tseke going to Galetlwa.
- 18 Sekgenkgetše also going to Galetlwa,
- 19 It was when I was driving away the one who takes in Thamaga,
- 20 Sending him to the upper place of medicines at the girls of Lekgwareng.

12. KGOŠI SEKHATI

SEKGO THE MOREHANE

- 1 Ke nna Sekwatikwati sa Sehulabošego
- 2 Sekwatiša motho botlakala.
- 3 Sekwati le ba banyane ba a mo tseba
- 4 Ba re ke yena yola wa kalapuane, wa marumo a tšhabahla,
- 5 Wa tšhaba sa Malema wa Mamošidi a Moroba,
- 6 Tseke Makgale ke a hlaba,
- 7 Ke hlahlara sa boMeta le Matladi
- 8 Ka na ka jela leqabateng, ke jetše kgobotlele ya metlaka.
- 9 Nna ke tlakalana la Mabjana
- 10 Tlakana la Borwa ga le tšewe ke phefo
- 11 Ke fo tšea madiga a baMatabane
- 12 E le Ramatabane a go taba
- 13 Kgwadi ka lenaka ke hlabile
- 14 Ke hlabile Meta kgwadi 'a Metlaka
- 15 Sennyane se lebelo serakalala sa mmutla kotse ya lesolo
- 16 Kotse bo ntšha kopo
- 17 Ke Mosilekatse a Matšhobane.
- 18 Ka mo motswapo kana ka tsokula
- 19 Ka na ka rakana ke motho a wela moedi ka wela.
- 20 Ka re hee mola o ntšhie qabedi o etše hlwaele
- 21 O etše pudufudu kgamana ke tlo go romela ntšhi moloi
- 22 Ya difehla kiti maraka tšhimane
- 23 Tša batho re a lelekwa
- 24 Re lelekwa ke bomogolle batho ba lethako le sele.
- 25 Le le rakilego moisa Thetseke
- 26 Le mo raka le mo iša dihlatlegelong
- 27 Kua ga boTsedinyana ga bongwanana a Lekgwareng.
- 28 Ke Phahle a marumo a mantši
- 29 Marumo nke ke selemela
- 30 Nke ke thaka ya tšhimane e tšwa mphatong
- 31 Ke Sekwatikwati ke sehlwa le tatagongwanana ntlong
- 32 E le maano a go ja tatagongwanana
- 33 Mošwelešwele wa Borwa o Ila Kgaladi 'a Mokgopho;
- 34 O Ila o re tlaka le šiele kgoši.
- 35 Mohube wa boSethale sa Matsedi
- 36 Wa bona ngwagola le lle moisa la mo iša dihlatlegelong,
- 37 Kua ga boTsedinyana ga bongwanana wa Lekgwareng.

- 1 I am Sekwati of Sehulabošego,
- 2 The one who likes to fool a person.
- 3 Sekwati, even the young ones know him,
- 4 They say, he is that one with a blooming twig on his hat, with
a bundle of spears,
- 5 Of the people of Malema of Mamošidi of Moroba,
- 6 Tseke Makgale I stab.
- 7 I am the strong one of Meta and Matladi;
- 8 I ate under a bulbous plant, I ate the striped kgcobotlele.
- 9 I am tlakana of Mabjana,
- 10 The tlakana from the South is steadfast unshaken by
wind,
- 11 I only take away the branches of Ramatabane.
- 12 Being Ramatabane who caused trouble.
- 13 The black and white one with my horn I stabbed,
- 14 I stabbed Mmeta the black and white one of Metlaka.
- 15 The fast introvert, the chaser of the hare, the pillar of
hunting,
- 16 The shield that uncovers the rabbits tail.
- 17 I am Moselekatse of Matšhobane.
- 18 At Tswako I had to change.
- 19 I chased a person and he ran down the drift and I followed,
- 20 I said: Hey! If you outran me twice you would be finished,
- 21 Like an antelope I would send you my hoodoo fly,
- 22 a mixture that sends boys away.
- 23 People we are driven away,
- 24 We are driven away by our elder brothers, who drive us away
unceremoniously
- 25 The one that has driven Thetseke away,
- 26 Driving him away to the place of medicines
- 27 There at Tsedinyana at the girl of Lekgwareng.
- 28 I am Phahle of many spears,
- 29 Spears that are like the constellation of the pleiades,
- 30 Looking like a group of boys from the initiate lodge,
- 31 I am Sekwati the one who indulges in courtship,
- 32 Tricking to conquer the father of the girl.
- 33 The bastard from the South is crying at Kgaladi of Mokgopho,
- 34 He is crying and saying, the regiment is leaving a little for
kgoši,
- 35 Mohube of Sethale of Matšedi.
- 36 You see, last year it killed someone and took him to the place
of medicines,
- 37 At Tsedinyane of the girl of Lekgwareng.

13. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE 1

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
- 2 E xama ke nna Phaswa 'a Makwa
- 3 A laya Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe, a e botša a re:
- 4 Phaswa, O swara motse wa Ledimo,
- 5 Motse ke Thsidi Nkokoto, ba se hlwe ba senyetša Theledi metse
- 6 Ba tšea ba e bea Sebyane.
- 7 Mamphse a Modimo, pitsi 'a ngwana Phalase Katane,
- 8 E hlabe motho ka lešika Ngwaritse a Lefakane.
- 9 Xomme Phahle o letše a nthoxa bošexo,
- 10 A nthoxa nokeng ya Molaotse,

11 a re: Ina la xaxo la boxale O mang?
 12 Koma se-laiwa-Moletše, xa Malefofane la Phuti.
 13 Xomme nna ka re: Ke Selaiwane, Koma ya Rangwakwane,
 14 Masebete o dutla dikudumela,
 15 o ts'o xapa tlou tšeso Masetlwe,
 16 di sela ka la kxorwane la Jwale bya Masemola,
 17 bo-hlapa-dlotswa; o senya ka mošola le ka mošono;
 18 Xomme Kxoputšo o lle nala ya mefapa;
 19 Ke lle ya mampampa, Theledi,
 20 'a pitsi morwa 'Kxobotlele 'a Metlaka
 21 ya motswal-ake ya Selai, ba mo nee yela e thšweu;
 22 ya bolawa, la duma, la kwala le Modimole;
 23 le hlabetše Mamaxasane mokxoši.
 24 Thaba ya nthšita Phaka,
 25 ya ke phaphathi kwena ya morwedi wa Boxopa.
 26 Tsula-meetse ke ba epetše moreo,
 27 ka epa moxwadi mahlong a bona;
 28 ke mo ke tšwalaxo dikwena-madiba,
 29 methepa ya motse wono wa Matlapana.
 30 Ntsie se-lwa-le-tlou 'a Letlobya;
 31 mabele a sela dikxora Ntsie.
 32 Ntsie 'a bo Pheladi le Mahlako 'a Ngwato, Mpalabala 'a Rakabu.
 33 Tšišang dikxopa Makxalaka-tenang;
 34 a nthša mothama wa mabele.
 35 Nneeleng ke le fano xo batamela xo amoxa Mašile,
 36 Swana 'a Selema sa ngwana Mamoxakale.
 37 Marole alee! Le a bonaxo molaaa! xa se a dikxomo,
 38 ke marole a batho.
 39 Mašile o lwa le morwa Sekxathume,
 40 Ba neantše ke Maxeruxeru a Sehwiřihwiri,
 42 Tholo 'a molapo a tlotša ba-ipotši.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me Phaswa of Makwa
 3 Instructing Phaswa, holding Phaswa by the ear and saying:
 4 Phaswa, look after the home of Ledimo
 5 The home is a stronghold, they shouldn't destroy Theledi's
 village
 6 They take the home and leave it in the lurch.
 7 The people of God, the children of Phala, be steady,
 8 It stabs a person with an awl at the river
 Ngwaritse of Lefakane.
 9 And Phahle kept on reproving me all night long,
 10 Reproving me along side Molaotse river,
 11 Saying: What is your praise name?
 12 Initiated at Moletši, at Malefofane of Phuti
 13 And I said: I am Selaiwane the initiation of
 Rangwakwane.
 14 Masebethe is sweating profusely,
 15 He captured our elephants at Masetlwe,
 16 As they were crossing at the gateway of the girl-initiate of
 Masemola,
 17 A pool of the disgraced, he destroys hither and thither.
 18 And Kgoputšo has eaten the red-and-white ox,
 19 I ate the fat one, Theledi,
 20 of the zebra the son of Kgobotlele of Metlaka.
 21 of my cousin Selai, they should give him that white one,

22 When slaughtered it thundered, it was heard at Modimolle,
 23 Sounding an alarm to Mamagašane.
 24 The difficult mountain of Phaka,
 25 as if it were a large crocodile, the daughter of Boxopa.
 26 At Tsula-meetse I trapped them with charms,
 27 I dug a charm while they were looking,
 28 Where I bear women,
 29 The girls of this village of Matlapana.
 30 Ntsie the fighter with the Elephant of Letlobya,
 31 The corn is plenty Ntsie.
 32 Ntsie of Phaladi and Mahloko of Ngwato, Mphalabala of Rakabu.
 33 Bring the royal jewels you Makgalaka,
 34 He gave a handful of grain.
 35 Bring it here, because coming closer I will take it by force
 Mašile,
 36 Swana of Selema the child of Mamoxakate.
 37 The dust you see over there! it is not dust made by beasts,
 38 it is dust made by people.
 39 Mašile is fighting against the son of Sekxathume,
 40 They were made to fight because of the lies of a deceiver,
 41 The Kudu of the valley that destroys the self reliant.

14 .INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna Phaswa 'a Makwa o retwa Matebeleng.
 3 O retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi,
 4 a re: Phaswa, a swara Phaswa 'a Makwa,
 5 a botša Phaswa ka tsebenq; a e botša a re: Phaswa,
 6 Sala O bona motse wa Ledimo ke woowe;
 7 O a bona motse ke Thšidi Nkokoto;
 8 Bang ba senyetša Theledi motse,
 9 ba tšea motse wa Ledimo ba o bee sebonq;
 10 Mamphy'e 'a Ledimo, Se-tla-seloloko, morwa' Loiša 'a Rakabu,
 11 Hlwaela 'a Manyama, Pitsi ya ngwana' Phala, se Katane;
 12 xomme pitsi yona e šupa e šupile batho ka lešika Ngwaritsi,
 13 Ngwaritsi a Lefakana; maru a mang a iša mašexerepe,
 14 mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya sekafa;
 15 Tau ya Sekwati, ke hlatša marexa,
 16 Selemo se tlaxo ke a xafa-xafa;
 17 Ke thopa dikxomo, bašimane ba dišitše;
 18 makxath'a tšona ke nthša nathamaxana;
 19 Ke nthšitše nama e botse lehlakore,
 20 se ilexo Borwa se ka se nthšite;
 21 ke tlo šita ke se se ilexo moleteng ka Madimatle;
 22 xomme ke tlo tšea kotse ka di letela;
 23 Kxomo tša phaphathela ka mabye;
 24 kwa xa Phahle di bolokwa Lethšadibya,
 25 le marutswana a no monwa;
 26 Mapoxo Letebele, a O thiba tsela leeto;
 27 A fa O kwa e di jano; yona Tau ma-thula a dipitsi;
 28 Yona Thšithšila 'a Manyama;
 29 Ka Borwa ke lle Sehlanai; ke itše xo ja, ka se xafela dinng.
 30 Ke bile ke xafetše phiri tša tata xo Ngwakwane 'a Hkhumele.

- 31 Xomme ke lle kxomo ka kona rakxadi,
 32 Ke konne Mošopyadi Lekxolane la Molefe;
 33 Ke tšere le mašapyana ka pharela mohlang wola wa mohl-o-
 moxolo
 34 mohlang wola tate a xo lala a mpotš'a a re:
 35 A e lexo leina la xaxo la boxale O mang?
 36 Ka na ka re: Ke Selaiwane,
 37 ke koma ya mma xo Ngwakwane 'a Nkhumele;
 38 Ke koma Se-laiwa-Moletš'e o moxolo wa Mabokanyane;
 39 Ke hlabile motho lesorong la kxoro,-a wa mathsomane;
 40 ya ba ya nke ke pheko tša motse woo,
 41 Kwa Moletš'e o moxolo wa Poo-Thšwene ya Makuba.
 42 Xomme e itš'e xe re xoroxa Marota
 43 Bapedi ba Mo-ja-kxomo-a-mašexwana a Tubatse;
 44 xomme Kxopotš'o a newa nala ya mefapa;
 45 xomme nna ka newa ya nala-Mampa.
 46 Theledi ke wa Kxalatlole a Makwa.
 47 Le botšišeng Ngwakwane 'a Phala 'a Matata 'a Mallexa,
 48 o tlo le botš'a, a re: Kxomo ye ke ngwana' kxomo ya xa-mang
 ye.
 49 Ke ya kxomo ya Lethebela 'a Mallexa,kxomo ye.
 50 Xomme Ngwale a bolaya mmaxwe.
 51 E itš'e 'tseke;ke xo lwa Madingwanyane Theledi;
 52 Ke wa Kxalatlole a' Makwa,Mohlakaru wa xa Rakabu.
 53 Mola a soletšwe moxopo,a je a Khore,a pharela moreba,
 54 a phale le mong'a moxopo,matimetš'e a 'xomo,Se-wetš'a-dingope-
 Mphanama.
 55 Kxomo xa Phahla di bolokwa Thšadiwa,
 56 le marutswane a xa monwa;
 57 ke mohlang wa mohl'o-moxolo,ke epa moxobotlo,
 58 ke epile moxwadi-kxwadi mohlang 'a Mapono;
 59 Mapono a wela ka nthše.
 60 Ka ba kwena;Sekatika ba a kata,a,a,a'
 61 Kwena ya morwedi 'a Phala 'a Matata 'a Mallexa.
 62 Mohlang wola Leola a thšoxa,a kopana le Mosexo,
 63 Mosexo a kabaka Thšathš'a-khubedu,moxatš'a Koxolakae.
 64 Ka re 'faxahla , -faxahla, -faxahla',
 65 Noko di tsoxa,xo tsoxile hlabana 'a naxa ya Madumo,
 66 ka mokokoro a diphaswa,mošito wa ngwan'a Thselane.
 67 Mo-loka-batho ke molate o kwalaxo maxoroxorong a batho.
 68 Xomme Le nee kxopa yeo,Makxalaka-tenang!
 69 Ke ra lena bo Dikxale tša Molapo.
 70 Bo Dikxale ba re: nna e se nayo,
 71 xomme ka re: Axaa! Xome Le tsebeng,nna ke Mašile;
 72 ka batamela,ke tlo Xo amoxa,
 73 Xomme ba tšea monwana ba šupa pele Moletš'e
 74 O mogolo wa Mabokanyane;ba re:kgopa 'na xa re nayo
 75 Axaaa ! Ka batamela ke a le amoxa ke Mašile
 76 Xomme Moletš'i a šupa Ramapulana a Tswetla;
 77 Xomme ka re:Heee ! Hene Ramapulane a Tswetla,
 78 Ka batamela,ke tlo xo amoga,ke Mašile a gatisa
 79 'a Borwa,Theledi 'a Marota.
 80 Ke kxomo e kxwadi ya Maroteng,Mašile;
 81 xomme ke namane ya mešitwana,
 82 ke Mma-naka-di-fetš'a-seatla,Mašile;
 83 ke ntsotsoboko mma-naka-e-phatana,Mašile a bo Diphale.

84 ka Borwa o tš'o senya maxadi a xaxwe ,
85 Maphsikološe ka mobu wa sehlabana, Theledi Marota.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
2 She is milked by me. Phaswa of Makwa who is praised even by
the Matebeles.
3 He is praised by Mašabane of Maredi,
4 Saying: Phaswa, holding Phaswa of Makwa,
5 And told Phaswa in the ear, he went on to say: Phaswa remain
6 looking after the home of Ledimo.
7 You are aware that this is a stronghold,
8 Some destroy the home of Theledi,
9 They take the home of Ledimo and expose it,
10 The people of God, coming in queue, the son of Loiša of Rakabu,
11 The one who brings sorrows, the zebras of the child of Phala,
relax,
12 And then the zebra keeps on pointing a
spear at Ngwaritsi river,
13 Ngwaritsi of Lefakane, whose clouds cause death,
14 While Sekwati has fathered a fierce lion,
15 The lion of Sekwati, I litter during Winter
16 For the next Summer I become more and more ferocious.
17 I capture the cattle in the face of the herdboys,
18 Amongst them I seized a cow with a red and white stripes,
19 I cut off a good portion - the flank.
20 The one that has gone to the South cannot beat me,
21 I can only be beaten by the one that died of natural cause,
22 And I will take my shield and follow them.
23 And the cattle will cross the mountain,
24 At Phahle they will be hidden at Lethšadibja,
25 Even the ruins that remain,
26 Mapogo the Ndebele, do you barricade the way,
27 Do you overhear the one that devours them, the lion that kills
the zebras,
28 The one that steadily stalks in the dark,
29 In the South I ate the placenta, the remainder I offered to
the vultures.
30 I further gave it to the wolves of Ngwakwane of Nkhumele.
31 I ate an ox and did not give to my aunt,
32 I did not offer to Mošopyadi Lekgolane of Molefe,
33 I took even the smallest bones on that day of war.
34 On that day when my father asked me all night long,
35 what is your praise name?
36 Then I said: I am Selaiwane
37 I am the initiation of the mother of Ngwakwane Nkhumele,
38 I am initiated at the great Moletše of Mabokanyane,
39 I stabbed a person at the main entrance,
40 he fell on his back and resembled the charms of
that village.
41 There at the great Moletše of Poo-Tšhwane of Makuba.
42 And when we Marota arrived
43 Bapedi who ate the cow of Masexwana of Tubatse,
44 And kgopotšo was given the red and white ox,
45 And I was given a bellied red and white one.
46 Theledi I am of Ngalatlole of Makwa.

47 You ask Ngwakwane of Phala a Matata 'a Mallexa,
 48 He will ask you, and say: this cow is the calf of whose cow?
 49 It is of Lethebela of Mallexa, this cow.
 50 And the girl initiate killed her mother.
 51 And it glittered, they obeyed like boys at the circumcision
 school.
 52 I am Kgalatlole of Makwa, of Mahlakaru of Rakabu,
 53 Served with a big dish, he would eat to his satisfaction and
 then become aggressive,
 54 Even more than the owner of the dish, who let the cattle go
 astray at Mphanama;
 55 Cattle at Phahla are stored at Thšadiwa,
 56 And the ruins that remain;
 57 It is on that day of war when I dug a trench,
 58 I dug a deep trench on the day of the Swazis,
 59 And they were trapped into it.
 60 I became a crocodile and trampled on them!
 61 The crocodile of the daughter of Phala of Matata 'a Mallexa.
 62 On that day when Leolo mountain moved and collided with
 63 Mosego, Mosego gave the fat red one to the wife of Koxolakae.
 64 And I hastened away,
 65 When the Noko's woke up there was a big sound of war,
 66 On the way to their gods, the sound of the child of Tshelane.
 67 The one heading for the people is a case that is heard by
 many people.
 68 And you give me that royal jewel you makxalaka!
 69 I mean you Dikxale of Molapo.
 70 Dikxale and company said: We do not have it,
 71 and I said: Oh yes! and you must know I am Mašile,
 72 If I come closer I will take it by force.
 73 And then they pointed further to the great Moletše of
 Mabokanyane,
 74 they said: the royal jewel we do not have.
 75 Oh yes! If I come nearer I will take it by force, I am Mašile.
 76 And Moletše pointed at Ramapulana of Tswetla,
 77 And I said: Hey! you Ramapulana of Tswetla, if I come closer,
 78 I will take it by force, I am Mašile the trampler, of the South
 Theledi of Marota.
 80 I am the black and white spotted ox of Maroteng, Mašile,
 81 I am the noisy calf,
 82 I am the big one found at many places, Mašile,
 83 I am the sharp pointed horn, Mašile of Diphale.
 84 In the South he is from destroying his happiness;
 85 The roller on sandy soil, Theledi of Marota.

15. INA LA KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1 Kxomo 'a thswa ' E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna. Ee itše xe re tšwa Bokxatla bya Dithebe,
 3 Xomme Dithšupyane a dutla dikudumela;
 4 O tšo xapa tau tšešo Masetlwa: Xomme diwela ka la Kxorwane,
 5 Letšiboxo la Byale ba xa Masemola.
 6 E itše xa di kxereša letšiboxo la mošola le mošono,
 7 La Byale bo-hlapa-diotswa: Xomme Kxoputšo o lle nala ya
 mefapa;

8 Xomme nna ke lle ya mampampa, Theledi;
 9 Ka ba pharephare dinama,
 10 Ka ba ledimo ka xo ja ka kona mmane;
 11 Xomme ke konne Mošopyane Lekxolane, Theledi a Marota.
 12 Ka Borwa o tšo senyana; o tšo thopa tša Radipilwane;
 13 O tšo hwetša thopa di kgokgothetšwe;
 14 Xomme bata se lle se seng; Xomme bata se lle Maakadikwe
 Manamole.
 15 A r'yeng L' o botša Lekatsa la Marota,
 16 O botše Lekatabidi le lexolo la Ma-dula-a-rarabane,
 17 Ka bomorwa Mankoro a Mathebanye a hloxo ya tau;
 18 Maxohlwane a Mokxwadi, kxobelang, tšeang melamo ya mapara,
 19 Le ithlotleleng xomme r' o binela koma xa Mampana.
 20 Bothša bya Sekwati bo roxa mediti ya bona;
 21 Re ba beletša melao, ba a akxola;
 22 e lexo molao o mofsa le fele ke mang,
 23 mola maloba re Le laya Moxokxomeng.
 24 Xomme lehono molao o moswa le fel(w)e ke mang!

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me. Yes it happened when we came from
 Bokgatla of Dithebe.
 3 And Dithšuppyane was sweating heavily,
 4 from retrieving our cattle at Masetlwa, and they were
 crossing at Kgorwane,
 5 The drift where the Masemola girls are initiated.
 6 It was when they were descending the drift from hither and
 thither,
 7 The pool assigned for the disgraced, and Kgoputšo had eaten
 the fat red and white one,
 8 and I ate the very fat one, Theledi;
 9 I became muscular.
 10 I became a cannibal by eating and stinging my aunt,
 11 And I refused to share with Mošopyane Lekgolane,
 Theledi of Marota.
 12 In the South he is from plundering, he is from capturing
 those of Radipilwane.
 13 He found secrets concealed,
 14 Where the beast have eaten another, And the beast having
 eaten Maakadikwe Manamole.
 15 Go and tell Lekatsa of Marota,
 16 Tell the big Lekatabidi of Madula-a-rarabane,
 17 About the son of Mankoro of Mathebanye with a lion head,
 18 Maxohlwane of Mokxwadi bring together. take your walking
 sticks,
 19 Support yourselves and dance overnight with the initiates at
 Mampana.
 20 The initiates of Sekwati, are swearing at their initiation
 instructors,
 21 On teaching them maxims they picked up so quickly,
 22 In fact who gave you the new laws,
 23 Whereas a day before yesterday we were instructing you at
 Moxokxomeng.
 24 And today from whom did you get the new law?

16. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1 Kxomo a tšwa! E xama ke mang?
2 Ke nna Mašile a Xatiše a bo Ngwakwane,
3 Moxale xa a xatiša ka lekopelo,
4 Theledi ka borwa o tšo senyama,
5 Masenyeletše a maxadi a batho,
6 Maphumphanye a ma-tswaka-le-mobu,
7 Theledi a Marota, Tsotsobidi maanaka le phatleng,
8 Naka la xaxwe le kile la palela "masole,"
9 le paletše Maburu ka mo llareng, Ma-bohlale-hlale Theledi.
10 Hlale byaka bo ka "lekeseng",
11 Bo robala ka "lepokising", Theledi.
12 Tša tšoxa tša ka Rakau le Modiše;
13 di tseba di tlo bolaya tšohle;
14 Ke tlil'o hlaola ya mampampa, Theledi, ka bolaya
15 Selepe se sešweu moxatša Koxola 'a Motebele,
16 ngwana 'Masoka 'a Kobi, ke bata boxale;
17 Ke' nna Hlabirwa 'a Phahla morwa 'Kxobotlele.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
2 It's me Mašile the trampler of Ngwakwane,
3 The hero when he covers with a broken piece of a clay pot,
4 Theledi went to plunder in the south,
5 The one who disorganizes the in-laws of others,
6 The wrestler who mixes one with the soil,
7 Theledi of Marota, Tsotsobidi with a horn on the forehead,
8 His horn once defeated the "soldiers",
9 It beat the Boers in the laager, the clever Theledi.
10 My wisdom lies in the "coffin",
11 It sleeps in the "box", Theledi.
12 And the whites got frightened,
13 when they knew they were going to defeat all,
14 I am coming to select the fat one, Theledi and slaughter
15 The white axe the wife of Koxola of Motebele,
16 The child of Mosoka of Kobi, I am a brave beast,
17 I am Hlabirwa of Phahle the son of Kxobotlele.

17. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

1 Kxomo 'a tšwa! E xama ke mang?
2 E xama ke nna. Sekwati o ntswetše ka loga mano,
3 Tšola-meetse ke ba apetše moreo,
4 Moxwadi šaba la Maswatse.
5 Le nankhono ba sa ile, bo mmaxo Metšete ba sa ila,
6 Ba re Metšete e kae? Ba re e teng ga monn'e,
7 Sehvirihwiri se mano, nta ya ma-lomela-kobong;
8 Theledi ke nna wa Kxalatlole 'a Makwa a dilepe,
9 Ngwana-mosadi 'a Phala Sebolai,
10 Sebata ke a khukhuna,
11 Moka boditse ke hlhla le phoka;

12 Ka Borwa o lle sehiana a xafela dinong.
 13 O hweditše dinong di lle bošexo tša Mamphiri 'a Koto le Dimo,
 14 Thaxala tša motse.
 15 Mapoxo,xo O thiba tsela-leeto,
 16 A fa O kwa tau e di jaxo,tau ma-thula-dipitsi,
 17 Thšithšila-Manyanma šo,
 18 Seala-kukuta o tlil'o ja Mediti,
 19 Bo morwa'kete,e se na ina;
 20 Nka re ke kete nka ithloiša,
 21 Masodi a tholo xa a bolawe,
 22 Ba-molai ba ka ithwala mexono,
 23 Hloxo ya morwa-kete ke e lle,
 24 Mathumaxanye a di botša banna,Mašile.
 25 Kxoputšo xo O lle pududu,ke lle nala va mampampa,
 Theledi,
 26 Kwa lapeng la bo Nthsweng 'a Lethebela;
 27 Morwa'Makau o kata dithoka,
 28 O katana le tlou Lethšadibya,
 29 Ntsie a bo Pheladi le Mahlako 'a Mete.
 30 Ntsie mola mabele a sela dikxora,Thšithšila 'a Manyama.

1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me.Sekwati fathered me and I made means.
 3 At Tsola-meetse I trapped them with charms,
 4 I charmed many Swazis.
 5 Even today they are still gone,Metšete's mother and company
 are still complaining,
 6 They say where are our children,They say it is in the
 stomach of that man,
 7 The deceiver with many plans,the one who strikes in secret,
 8 Theledi I am of Kxalatiolo of Makwa with axes,
 9 The child of the wife of Phala Sebolai,
 10 The carnivorous one I creep,
 11 Yet the hair of a tail drags in dew;
 12 In the South he ate the placenta and offered it to the
 vultures.
 13 On the night when vultures have eaten those of Mamphiri of
 Koto and Dimo.
 14 The real men of the village.
 15 Mapoxo,why do you barricade the way,
 16 Do you hear the lion that is eating them,the lion that kills
 the zebras
 17 The one that stalks steadily is here.
 18 The great one has come to kill all the leaders
 19 The son of so-and-so,I am without a name
 20 If I should say he is so and so,I could provoke hatred,
 21 The big one in the dark is not killed,
 22 His killers could regret it.
 23 I have killed the son of so and so,
 24 The crusher who tells the men,Mašile.
 25 Kxoputšo,if you have eaten the grey one,I ate the fat red
 and white one Theledi.
 26 There at the courtyard of Nthsweng of Lethebela,
 27 The son of Makau is piling up knobkerries,
 28 He is fighting against the elephant at Letšhadibja,

- 29 Ntsie of Pheladi and Mahlako of Mete.
 30 Ntsie when he gives corn to his relatives in secret,
 the one that stalks steadily.

18. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa' E xama ke mang?
 2 E xama ke nna, Seala-Kukuta o tlile,
 3 O tšil' o ja Baditšana bo morwa Rakxamanyane 'a Mo-robela-
 hlaka,
 4 Tsotsoboko 'a thšoša, thšoša khubedu, moxatš'a K'oxola-kae;
 5 Sesenyi bohwele bo-laiwa-dirathana,
 6 Le bo Pitšana-apea 'a Dikxale,
 7 Makhura a tšwa ka dibere;
 8 Nneeleng dikxopa Makxalaka-tenanq;
 9 Xo batamela xo amoxa Mašile.
 10 Xomme Makxalaka a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo;
 11 Xomme ba re, e na le Mmamabolo a Byatladi
 12 Xomme Mmamabolo a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo
 13 E na le Makubu Ma-se-axa-ka-mošaša.
 14 Xomme Makubu a re: Rena kxopa xa re nayo,
 15 E na le Dikxale tša Molapo.
 16 Xomme Sešupyane o dutla dikudumela:
 17 Xomme o tš'o xapa tlou tša Masetle, tš'iboxong la Baale.
 18 A o thsetše ka lefe?
 19 O thsetše ka la Kxorwane letšiboxong la Baale, Bo-hlapa-
 bootswa.
 20 Di itše xa di kxereša letšiboxo la mošola le la mošono,
 21 Xomme Kxoputšo o lle nala ya mefapa;
 22 xomme nna ke lle ya Ma-mpa-mpa Theledi,
 23 A Kxalatlole 'a Makwa,
 24 Seolo-sa-mmataladi Theledi 'a Kxalatlole 'a Makwa,
 25 Se-kxopa-banna-matolo.
 26 Motswako xa a re, lle-le-ruuu' o kwa 'rumo la rona,
 27 La mo-robela-hlaka-a marumo.-

- 1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
 2 She is milked by me, Sealakukuta is here,
 3 He has come to kill the poor, the son of Rakgamanyane of Mo-
 robela-hlaka,
 4 Sharp pointed assegai, red assegai, the wife of Ko-xola-kae,
 5 The plunderer has relaxed at the usual place of the
 initiates,
 6 Where even the girl initiates of Dikxale are instructed,
 7 The fat comes out of the relish,
 8 Give me the royal jewels you Makxalaka,
 9 If I come nearer I will take it by force, Mašile.
 10 And then Makxalaka said, The jewel we don't have.
 11 And they said that it is with Mamabolo of Byatladi,
 12 And Mamabolo said: The jewel we don't have.
 13 It is with Makubu the builder of make-shift dwellings
 14 And Makubu said: The jewel we don't have
 15 It is with Dikxale of Molapo
 16 And Sešupyane is oozing sweat.
 17 And he is from capturing the cattle of Masetle, at the

- gateway of the initiates.
 18 And where did he cross?
 19 He crossed at the Kgorwane the drift of the girl
 initiates, the pool of the disgraced.
 20 And when they destroyed the drift from hither and thither
 21 And Kxopotšho killed the red and white ox,
 22 And I killed a fat one Theledi,
 23 of Kxalatlole of Makwa,
 24 The flat antheap Theledi of Kxalatlole of Makwa,
 25 The one that trips the men and they fall on their knees.
 26 When Motswako says: Illeleruuu! he is afraid of our spear,
 27 Which pierces him through the heart.

19. KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE

NGWANATSONANE SEKHUKHUNE.

- 1 Ke wa kgoši wa sejaditona 'a Makwa thobadingwemelala,
 2 Ke Phaswa a Makwa a retwa Matebeleng,
 3 A retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi.
 4 Morwa Mamağaša a Tšate a swara Phaswa ka tsebe a e botša a
 re
 5 Phaswa šala o bona motse wa Ledimo ke woo,
 6 O a bona bang ba senyetša Theledi motse,
 7 Ba tšea motse wa Ledimo ba o bea sebong,
 8 Mamphše a Ledimo, A Ledimo setla-seloloko, morwa Louiša a
 Rakabu.
 9 Hlwaela manyama, pitsi ya ngwana Phala se katane sa Mallega
 10 Pitsi yona e šupa e šupile batho ka lešika Ngwaritsi,
 11 Ngwaritsi a lefakane, maru a mang a iša Mašeqerepe;
 12 Mola Sekwati a tswetše tau ya segafa,
 13 Tau ya Sekwati ke hlatša marega,
 14 Selemo se tlaqo ke a gafagafa;
 15 Ke thopa dikgomo bašemane ba dišitše.
 16 Magareng ga tšona ka ntšha nathamagana;
 17 Ke ntšhitše nama e botse lehlakore
 18 Se se ilego Borwa se ka se nthšite
 19 Ke tlo šitwa ke se se ilego moleteng wa ditau madimatle
 20 Ke tšea kotse ka di latela
 21 Ga phala kgomodl phaphatha ka mabye Letšhadibya?
 22 Le marutswana a go lewa.
 23 Mapogo letebele, ge o thiba tsela leeto
 24 A fa o kwa tau ye e di jago ka mo morago
 25 Yona tau Mathule a dipitsi
 26 Yona tau tšhitšhila Manyama
 27 Ka Borwa ke lle sehlana
 28 Ka re go ja ka gafela dinong
 29 Ke gafetše diphiri tša tatago Ngwakwane a Nkhumele
 30 Ke lle kgomo ka kona Rakgadi
 31 Ke konne Mošopyadi lekgolane la Molefe
 32 Ka ba ka tšea le Mašatswana ka pharela
 33 Mohlang wola wa mohlomogolo tate ga a lala a mpotšiša
 34 A mpotša a nthoga bošego a re e lego ina la gago la
 bogale o mang?
 35 Ka na ka re ke Selaiwane,
 36 ke koma ya Rrago Ngwakwane a Nkhumela

- 37 Ke koma selaiwa Moletš^vi o mogolo wa Mabokanyane
 38 Ke hlabile motho lesorong la kgoro mothowa ka a wa matshomane
 39 Ya ba nka ke pheko ya motse woo
 40 Kua Moletš^vi o mogolo wa Poo-tšhwene ya Makuba
 41 Le botšišeng Ngwakwane Nkhumele
 42 O tlo le botša gore kgomo ye ke mang?
 43 Ke ngwana kgomo ya lethebega la mallega kgomo ye
 44 Gomme ngwale a bolaya mmagwe.
 45 E itše Tseke ke go lwa madingwanyane Theledi
 46 Mahlakaru wa Rakabu a rego mola a soletšwe a pharela
 mereba
 47 A ba a phala le mong wa mogopo
 48 Matimetše a kgomo Sewetšadingope mphanama
 49 Ga Phahla kgomo di phaphatha ka mabje Lethšadibja
 50 Le marutswana a go lewa
 51 Mohlang wola Leolo a tšhoga ge a kopana le Mosego
 52 Mosego a kabaka
 53 Tšhoša khubedu mogatša Kogolakae.
 54 Ka re fagahla-fagahla
 55 Noko di a tsoga
 56 Go tsogatlhabano ya naga medumo ka mokokoro a diphaswa
 57 Ke meloko a batho
 58 Ke molato o kwalago mogorogorong a batho.

- 1 I am of the kgoš^vi that preys on the males of Makwa, the
 breaker of others necks,
 2 I am Phaswa of Makwa who is praised even at the Motebele,
 3 Praised by Mašabane of Maredi,
 4 The son of Mamagaša of Tšate held Phaswa by the ear and told
 him,
 5 saying he should remain looking after the home of Ledimo
 there it is,
 6 You see that others are meddling with the home of Theledi,
 7 They take the home of Ledimo and expose it,
 8 The people of God, coming in a queue, the son of Loiš^va of
 Rakabu.
 9 The one who brings sorrows, the zebra of the child of
 Phala, relax,
 10 The zebra keeps on pointing a spear at Ngwaritsi river,
 11 Ngwaritsi of Lefakane, whose clouds cause death,
 12 While Sekwati has fathered a fierce lion,
 13 The lion of Sekwati I litter during winter,
 14 For the next summer I become more and more ferocious.
 15 I capture the cattle in the face of the herdboys,
 16 Amongst them I seized a cow with red and white stripes,
 17 I cut off a good portion—the flank.
 18 The one that has gone to the South cannot beat me,
 19 I will be beaten by the one that has gone to the grave,
 20 And I will take my shield and follow them,
 21 And the cattle will cross the mountain of Lethšadibya,
 22 Even the ruins that remain,
 23 Mapogo the Ndebele, why do you barricade the way;
 24 Do you overhear the one that devours them,
 25 the lion that kills the zebras,
 26 The one that steadily stalks in the dark,

27 In the South I ate the placenta,
 28 the remainder I offered to the vultures.
 29 I further gave it to the wolves of Ngwakwane of Nkhumele's
 father,
 30 I ate a cattle and stinted my aunt,
 31 I stinted Mošopyadi Lekgolane of Molefe,
 32 I collected even the smallest bones and made a heap,
 33 On that big day of war when my father asked me all night
 long,
 34 Asking me and scolding me the whole night about my praise
 name?
 35 I said I am the Selaiwane,
 36 the initiation of Ngwakwane Nkhumele,
 37 I am initiated at the great Moletšše of Mabokanyane,
 38 I stabbed a person at the main entrance, he fell on his back
 39 and resembled the medicinal charms of that village,
 40 There at the great Moletšše of Poo-Tšhwene of Makuba.
 41 Ask Ngwakwane Nkhumele,
 42 He will tell you whose cow this is,
 43 It is the calf of Lethebela's cow of Mallega this cow.
 44 And the girl initiate killed her mother.
 45 It was when Tseke performed a circumcision dance of war
 46 Theledi, Mahlakaru of Rakabu who after being served he became
 aggressive,
 47 Even more than the owner of the dish,
 48 The one who let the cattle go astray to Mphanama.
 49 At Phahle the cattle are stored at Lethšadibya,
 50 Where the ruins remain;
 51 On that day when Leolo mountain was frightened and moved to
 Mosego
 52 And Mosego surrendered.
 53 The red spear the spouse of Kogolakae,
 54 And I hastened away,
 55 When the porcupine's woke up;
 56 There was a war cry at Mokororo of Diphaswa,
 57 It is a crowd of people
 58 It is a sound of people that is heard at the cliffs.

20. KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE

MOLHETSĪ MATLALA

1 Phaswa 'a Makwa a retwa Matebeleng
 2 O retilwe ke Mašabane a Maredi,
 3 A go reta Phaswa, a swara Phaswa ka tsebe,
 4 A re: Phaswa o tla bona motse wa Ledimo.
 5 A re ba bang le senyetša Theledi metse.
 6 Le tšea motse wa Ledimo le bea sebong;
 7 Mola le bona metse e le tšhidi nkokoto.
 8 A re Mampšhe a Ledimo ke Theledi
 9 Ke pitsi ya ngwana 'a Phala sekatane,
 10 Pitsi ya šupa batho Lefakeng.
 11 Ka ba šupa ka lerumo Ngwaritsi 'a Lefakeng
 12 Maru a mang ra iša mašegerepe;
 13 Mola le bona tau ya Sekwati ke hlatšša marega,
 14 Tau ka hlatšša marega ka gafagafa selemo se tlogo,

- 15 Ka thopa dikgomo bašemane ba dišitše,
- 16 Gare ga tšona ka ntšha thamagana.
- 17 Ke nthšitše nama e botse lehlakore.
- 18 Ka re se ileng Borwa se ka se ntšhite Theledi 'a Manyama,
- 19 Ke tla šitwa ke se se ilego mošemeng wa madimatle,
- 20 Ke tlo tšea kotse ka di latela.
- 21 Ka re Mapogo thiba tsela leeto,
- 22 A o kwa tau ye di jago;
- 23 A o kwa Ramathula 'a dipitsi Tšhitšhila 'a Manyama;
- 24 A re ka Borwa ke lle tshehlana;
- 25 Ke rile go thula ka gafela dinong,
- 26 Ke gafetše diphiri tša tatagongwakwane Nkhumele.
- 27 A re ka Borwa ke lle kgomo ka kona rakgadi,
- 28 Ke konne Mošupšadi Lekgolane.
- 29 Ke tšere le Mašatšwana kapharela
- 30 Ke mohlang wo tate a ila a ntsene tsebeng
- 31 A re ina la gago la bogale o mang?
- 32 A ke tlo re ke Selaiwane, ka re ke koma selaiwa Moletši,
- 33 Ke wo mogolo wa Mabokanyane ke koma 'a tatagongwakwane 'a Nkhumele.
- 34 Ke hlabile motho, motho a wa matshorwane,
- 35 Motho a wa lesorong la kgoro Moletše wo mogolo wa Poo-
Tšhwene ya Makuba,
- 36 Ya ba nka ke pheko ya motse woo.
- 37 Ba ile ge ba yo goroga Batubatse Bapedi bomoja
Kgomo ya Mašegwana
- 38 Kgoputšo a newa nala ya mefapa,
- 39 Malana ka ja ya mampampa Theledi 'a bodiphalana teng.
- 40 A re re tlo go kwa Mamosele 'a Matuba a re sebata ke nailwe
- 41 A re boditsi bo tšea le phoka Mašile a bodiphalana teng.
- 42 A ralala le dinoka Ntsie 'a boPheladi
- 43 A o lepelle Mašile ampo o Tubatse
- 44 A re aowa Mašile ke noka Mašile ke noka,
- 45 Ke noka Mašile a gaRakabu Theledi 'a Manyama,
- 46 Mola ba bolale Tlou yešo Galetlwa
- 47 Methepanyana Methepa ya ntlha le mo hlaleng
- 48 Ka re goetsa le Maputla ba ntheteng
- 49 Ka moka diphara ka pheta ba nthetebotše
- 50 Ka moka ba tloge ba re re reta diopa
- 51 Manyama mola gaRakabu ga go motho go booa.
- 52 Kgoši e sa le a bopela Matebele Malatane Morwa Mokgoko,
- 53 Malatane morwa 'mpa matlapane a boKgolobje 'a Tubatse.
- 54 A re ke mmabohlale-hlale Theledi
- 55 A re bjakabo ka lekeseng
- 56 A re ke bo kwaletše ka lepokiseng Mašile a bodiphalane teng,
- 57 Ke Mašile a gatiša ka lekopelo.
- 58 A re ke tsotsobidi ke tsotsobeke ke tsotsobidi Mmanaka le
phatleng.
- 59 Ke naka le kile la pobela masole Theledi
- 60 Ke paletše Maburu ka mo purupurung
- 61 Ke paletše Maburu ka mo llareng
- 62 Ke kgapuru ya majaditala, ke thobadingwe melala
- 63 Ba re Hlabirwa ke namane ya mešitwana ba re
ka Borwa o tšo senyana.
- 64 O tšo kgereša dithaba ka ditlhako tša pele le morago
- 65 O tloga a senya thopa mola di agilwe
- 66 O tšo senya thopa manganeng

67 Kua ga Mošopšadi Lekgolane.

- 1 Phaswa of Makwa is praised at the Matebele.
- 2 He is praised by Mašabane of Maredi
- 3 Who praised Phaswa, holding Phaswa by the ear,
- 4 He said: Phaswa you will look after the home of Ledimo,
- 5 He says that some are messing up the home of Theledi,
- 6 You take the home of Ledimo and expose it,
- 7 When you see that a home is a stronghold.
- 8 He said the people of God are Theledi,
- 9 It is the zebra of Phala, relax,
- 10 The zebra pointed at the people at Lefakeng,
- 11 It pointed at them with a spear at Ngwaritsi of Lefakeng
- 12 And whose clouds brought trouble,
- 13 When you see that the lion of Sekwati I litter in winter,
- 14 I litter in winter and rave madly during the next summer.
- 15 I captured the cattle while the herdboys are looking after them,
- 16 Amongst them I selected a red and white striped cow,
- 17 I cut a good portion on the side—a flank.
- 18 I said that which has gone to the South will not beat me, Theledi of Manyama,
- 19 I will be beaten by the one which is lying in the grave,
- 20 I will take my shield and follow them.
- 21 And say Mapogo, barricade the way,
- 22 Do you hear the lion that is eating them,
- 23 Do you hear the one that kills the zebras in the dark,
- 24 He says in the South he has eaten the placenta,
- 25 I ate and even offered to the vultures.
- 26 I offered them to the wolves of the father of Ngwakwane Nkhumele.
- 27 He says in the South he ate a cow and stinted his aunt.
- 28 I stinted Mošopšadi Lekgolane.
- 29 I collected even the smallest pieces of bones.
- 30 It is on that day when father was pestering me,
- 31 Saying what is my praise name?
- 32 Well I say I am Selaiwane, I say I am initiated at Moletsī,
- 33 The great Moletsī of Mabokanyane, the initiation of Ngwakwane Nkhumele's father.
- 34 I stabbed a person, he fell on his knees.
- 35 He fell at the entrance of the great Moletsī of Poo-Tshwene of Makuba,
- 36 And resembled the medicinal charms of that village.
- 37 When they arrived the Batubatse, the Bapedi, the eaters of the cow of Mašegwana,
- 38 Kgoputšo was given a red and white ox.
- 39 The fat red and white cow I ate, Theledi of Diphallana.
- 40 He says we shall hear from you Mamosela of Matuba, the beast is wet,
- 41 He says the hair sweeps over dew, Mašile of Diphallane,
- 42 He wandered along the rivers Ntsie the brother of Phaladi,
- 43 Are you Lepelle or Tubatse Mašile,
- 44 He said no, Mašile I am a river, I am a river,

- 45 I am a river Mašile of Rakabu, Theledi of Manyama.
- 46 While they killed our elephant at Legaletlwa.
- 47 You young ladies you are on the right way,
- 48 I said they must shout even the Maputla must praise me.
- 49 All the women should praise me.
- 50 They should all say that they are praising the great one,
- 51 Manyama while there at Rakabu there is no one who sulks.
- 52 Since the king fought against Matebele at Malatane the son
of Mokgoko,
- 53 Malatane the son of the womb of Matlapane of Kgolobye of
Tubatse.
- 54 He says I am the wise one Theledi.
- 55 He says his cleverness is in the coffin,
- 56 He says he has hidden it in the box, Mašile of Diphallana.
- 57 I am Mašile the one who covers with a broken piece of a clay
pot,
- 58 He says he is the sharp, the lanky one with the sharp horn
on his forehead,
- 59 He is the horn that once pierced the soldiers, Theledi.
- 60 I beat the Boers at the place full of soft ground,
- 61 I beat the Boers in the laager.
- 62 I am the invisible one the breaker of others necks.
- 63 They say that Hlabirwa is a noisy calf. In the South he
is from plundering,
- 64 He is from demolishing mountains with front and rear
hooves,
- 65 He actually spoils established agreements.
- 66 He is from destroying peace at Manganeng,
- 67 There at Mošopšadi Lekgolane.

21. KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE.

MOGALAHENG MOKGABUDI

- 1 Sekhukhune ke Phaswa 'a Makwa ge a retwa Matebeleng
- 2 Phaswa 'a Makwa e lawa ke Mašabane
- 3 A tloga a lawa ke Mašabane 'a gaMaredi
- 4 Ke morwa Mmamagaša ge a laya Phaswa
- 5 A tloga a swara Phaswa ka tsebe a e botša
- 6 A re: Phaswa o šale o bona motse wa Ledimo ke woowe
- 7 Wa bona motse ke tšhidi 'a kokoto
- 8 Mola mathaka ba senyetša Theledi motse
- 9 ba tšea motse wa Ledimo ba o bea sebjana
- 10 Ga Mampšhe a Modimo a fihla a seloloko, Ga morwa Loiša a
Rakabu;
- 11 Gwa hlwaela manyama,
- 12 Wa pitsi ya ngwana Phala sekatane
- 13 Pitsi e ile e tloga e tšhuma e tšhumile
- 14 Pitsi yona e tšhuma batho ka lešika Ngwaritsi 'a Lefakane,
- 15 Mola le bona maru a mong a iša mašegerepe,
- 16 Le mmona Sekwati a tswetše tau ya segafa
- 17 Tau ya Sekwati e hlatša marega selemo se tsena ke a gafagafa,
- 18 Nna ke thopa dikgomo, makgatha a bašemanyana ba ci dišitše
- 19 Ge ele makgatha 'a dikgomo ke kgethe nathamaqana
- 20 Ke tloga ke kgethile nama e botse lehlakore

- 21 Ka re se se ilego Borwa se ka se ke sa ntšhita
 22 Nka šitwa ke se se ilego moleteng, ka Madimatle
 23 Le sona ke tlo tšea kotse ka di latela
 24 Kgomo ke tlo phaphathela ka mabye.
 25 Mola kua ga Phahle di bolokwa Letšhadibja
 26 E le marutswana a go monwa
 27 Heee-wena Mapogo Letebele, afa o a di kwa tau tše di jago ye
 28 A o bone ge o thiba tsela leeto
 29 Afa o a e kwa tau ye e di jago ye
 30 A re ke tau ke mathula a dipitsi
 31 Ke tšhitšhila manyama
 32 Ka Borwa tau ke ile tshehlana
 33 Ke itše go senya ka ba ka se gafela dinong
 34 Ke se gafetše diphiri, tlou tša tatago Ngwakwane 'a Nkhumele.
 35 Ke mohlang wola ka go ja kgomo ka kona rakgadi
 36 Ke tloga ke konne Mošopšadi Lekgolane la Molefe
 37 Ka ba ka tšea le mašatšwana ka pharela,
 38 Ke mohlang wola wa mohla wo mogolo
 39 Mohla wola ba go lala ba mpošša,
 40 Ba re: E bago leina la gago la bogale o mang?
 41 Ka re: Ke Selaiwane sa gaRakabu,
 42 ke koma selaiwa Moletšši wo mogolo wa Mabokonyane
 43 E itše ge re goroga Moletšši, nna ke teile
 44 motho sorong la kgoro motho wa ka a ba a wa matshomane,
 45 Ya ba nke ke pheko ya motse woo.
 46 Gona kua Moletšši wo mogolo
 47 Ke mohlang wola ka go ja ka khora,
 48 Ka ba ka pharela moreba,
 49 Ka ba ka phala le mong wa mogopo.
 50 Ke mang a le neileng dikgopa tšeo tšeo lena Makgalaka
 tenang?
 51 Ke tloga ke thomile ka Dikgale tša Molapo
 52 Dikgale ena a tšea monwana a šupa pele,
 53 A re nna kgopa ga ke nayo
 54 Kgopa e na le Ramapulana 'a Tswetla.
 55 Ga nka go batamela, ke tlo go amoga ke Mašile,
 56 Ke nna kgomo ya kgwadi ya Maroteng sethakga,
 57 Ke nna namane ya mešitwana le immanaka difetša seatla Theledi
 58 Ha bo Diphallane teng.
 59 Ka ge Borwa ke tšo senyana ke Maphumphanya a Maphšikološa a
 matswaka le mobu,
 60 Ke Theledi a Marota, wa Diphallana teng.

- 1 Sekhukhune is Phaswa of Makwa when he is praised at Matebele,
 2 Phaswa of Makwa is advised by Mašabane.
 3 He is actually advised by Masabane of Maredi.
 4 He is the son of Mamaqaša when he was advising Phaswa.
 5 He actually held Phaswa by the ear and telling him.
 6 He said: Phaswa remain looking after the home of Ledimo here
 it is.
 7 You see that a home is like a stronghold.
 8 When others were messing up Theledi's home,
 9 Taking the home of Ledimo and exposing it.

- 10 When the people of God arrive in a queue, at the son of Loisa
of Rakabu,
- 11 Causing bitterness,
- 12 Of the zebras the child of Phala relax,
- 13 There is the zebra bent on burning and destroying
- 14 The zebra is pointing at the people with a spear at Ngwaritsi
of Lefakane,
- 15 While you see the clouds are causing death.
- 16 When you are aware that Sekwati has fathered a mad lion
- 17 The lion of Sekwati litters in winter, when summer comes I
rave mad.
- 18 I capture cattle amidst the herd boys who look after them,
- 19 As far as the cattle are concerned, I select the red and white
striped cow,
- 20 I cut off a good portion of the flank.
- 21 I say that which has gone to the south will not beat me,
- 22 I can be beaten by the one that has died,
- 23 Theretoo I will take my shield and follow them.
- 24 The cattle I will drive across the mountain,
- 25 While at Phala they are kept at Letshadibya .
- 26 At the ruins that remained.
- 27 Hey! You Mapogo the Letebele, do you hear the lion that is
eating them?
- 28 Don't you realize that you are barricading the way?
- 29 Do you hear the lion that is eating them?
- 30 He says he is a lion that kills the zebras.
- 31 He is the one that stalks steadily.
- 32 In the South I ate the placenta,
- 33 After eating I offered some to the vultures.
- 34 I even offered them to wolves, the elephants of Ngwakwane
Nkhumele's father.
- 35 It is on that day when I ate a beast and stinted my aunt,
- 36 I actually stinted. Mošopšadi Lekgolane of Molefe.
- 37 I collected even the smallest pieces of bones.
- 38 It is on that big day of war,
- 39 On that day when they were telling me all night long,
- 40 Saying: what actually is your praise name?
- 41 I said: I am Selaiwane. of Rakabu, the one initiated at
- 42 the great Moletšī of Mabokanyane
- 43 When we arrived at Moletšī, I hit a person at the entrance
- 44 and the fellow fell on his knees,
- 45 And he resembled the medicinal charms of that home,
- 46 There at the great Moletšī.
- 47 It is on that day I ate to my satisfaction,
- 48 I even became pugnacious.
- 49 I even ate better than the owner of the dish.
- 50 Who gave you our royal jewels you Makgalaka?
- 51 I actually started with Dikgale of Molapo,
- 52 Dikgale lifted his finger and pointed in front of him,
- 53 And said: The jewel I don't have.
- 54 The jewel is with Ramapulana of Tswetla.
- 55 If I come close to you, I will take it by force, I am Mašile,
- 56 I am the black and white striped ox of Maroteng, the gentleman,
- 57 I am the troublesome calf with five horns, Theledi,
- 58 The relative of Diphilana.
- 59 Since I am from plundering in the South, I am the wrestler, who
tumbles one in the soil,
- 60 I am Theledi of Marota of Diphilana.

22.KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE

KGAGUDI MAREDI

- 1 Ke kgapuru wa maja-di-tala thobadingwe melala,
- 2 E a re go Sekwati o ntswetše ka loga maano.
- 3 Tsula-meetse ke epetše moreo
- 4 Bogwadi šaba la Maswatsi le nankhono ba sa ile
- 5 Bana ba Mapono ba letše ba lla
- 6 Ba tsoma metšete kae?
- 7 Ba re metšete teng gare ga monna ye
- 8 Nna wa mosadi a phala
- 9 Sekatane, sebatana, ke a khukhuna.

- 1 I am the invincible eater of the uncooked foot one who breaks
- 2 other's necks,
- 3 He who says Sekwati has fathered me and I devised means,
- 4 At Tsula-meetse I trapped them with charms.
- 5 With my herbs many Swazis are still missing up to today,
- 6 The Swazi children were crying all night long,
- 7 Where do they look for their parents?
- 8 They say their parents are in the stomach of that man,
- 9 I the son of Phala's wife, I relax,
- the carnivore, I creep.

23.KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE

SEKGO THE MOREHANE

- 1 Ke nna Phaswa' Makwa o retwa Matebeleng
- 2 O retwa ke Mašabane a Maredi
- 3 Morwa Mamagaša o swara Phaswa ka tsebe a e botša a re Phaswa
- 4 swara motse wa Ledimo ke woc.
- 5 Bang ba senyetša Theledi motse
- 6 Ba tšea motse wa Ledimo ba o bea sebjana
- 7 Mampšhe a Ledimo setlaseloloko
- 8 Pitsi ya ngwana Phala sekatane
- 9 Pitsi e šupa e šupeletše
- 10 Maru a mang a iša mašegerepe
- 11 Mola ba bona tau ya ga Sekwati e hlatša Marega
- 12 Selemo se tala ke a gafagafa
- 13 Ke thopa dikgomo bašemane ba dišitše.
- 14 Magare ga tšona ke ntšha nathamagana
- 15 Ke ntšhitše nama ye botse lehlakore
- 16 Ka re go ja ka pharela moreba
- 17 Ka ba ka phala le mong a mogopo.
- 18 Hee Mapogo letebele, a o thiba tsela leeto,
- 19 A fa o a kwa tau ye di jago ka mo,
- 20 Yona tau Mathula a dipitsi
- 21 Tšhitšhila 'a Manyama
- 22 Ka Borwa ke lle sehiana
- 23 Ka re go ja ka gafela dinonyana
- 24 ke gafetše phiri tša tatago Ngwakwane Nkhumele.

- 1 I am Phaswa of Makwa who is praised at the Matebele,
- 2 He is praised by Mašabane of Maredi,
- 3 The son of Mamagaša is holding Phaswa by the ear and he tells him,
- 4 Phaswa look after the home of Ledimo there it is,
- 5 Others mess up the home of Theledi,
- 6 They take the home of Ledimo and expose it,
- 7 The people of God are coming in a queue.
- 8 The zebra of the child of Phala relax.
- 9 The zebra keeps on pointing.
- 10 Some clouds are causing trouble,
- 11 While they see the lion of Sekwati littering in winter,
- 12 During mid-summer I rave mad.
- 13 I capture cattle while herdboys are looking after them,
- 14 Amongst them I select red and white striped cow,
- 15 I cut off a good portion, the flank.
- 16 After eating I became pugnacious
- 17 I even ate better than the owner of the dish.
- 18 Hey! Mapogo the Letebele, why do you block the road,
- 19 Do you hear the lion that is eating them this side,
- 20 The very lion that kills the zebras,
- 21 Stalking steadily,
- 22 In the South I ate the placenta,
- 23 After eating I offered them to the birds,
- 24 I even offered them to the wolves of Ngwakwane Nkhumele's father.

24. KGOŠI SEKHUKHUNE

MAKHELEYANE SERAKI THOBEJANE

- 1 Ke nna Sekhukhune sa Marota
- 2 Ke sa Mamosela a Matuba,
- 3 Kua fase Botswetla ga Mmatšhaka Maimela
- 4 Nna le a mpona ke Mopedi ke sekobo ke manyobonyobo
- 5 Bapedi ga re botsefale re a tlenyalala
- 6 Ngwana Mopedi ke petlile dipetlo ke tlenyaletše
- 7 Ga ka tlenyalala fela, ke tlenyaletše ke eya marumong
- 8 Mokgomana ge ke eya marumong ke tšea molata ke eteletša pele,
- 9 Nna kgoši ka dula fase, ka dula setulo,
- 10 Ka šala ke tenegana monagano
- 11 Ka re ga nke ke roma ngwana a hlonama a teka molala
- 12 Ga a boa a tšama a ithwele megono.
- 13 Nna ge ke ema ga ke eme fela ke a tokelela.
- 14 Ke topa kotse ke topa lerumo
- 15 Kotse ke phema ka yona marumo,
- 16 Marumo a fete.
- 17 Marole šia a thunya ke dithunthung tša marole a Tubatse.
- 18 Ke marole a Bapedi ba tšo hlasela,
- 19 Ba nthopetše merafo e šele,
- 20 Ba thopa bana ba Mokgoba
- 21 Ba tloga ba ba apeša lekgeswa
- 22 Nna Mašile a gatiša a boNgwakwana a Nkhumele,
- 23 Ga nke ke thopa bana ba Mokgoba
- 24 Ke thopa thole sa motho

25 Ka tšea lesea ka etetša pele.
 26 Ka re gagešo Bopedi thole sa dira ga re se tlaletše.
 27 Re tloga re se bea moseo re se batametša difokeng
 28 Ka moswana re tloge re se alela mathebo
 29 Ke nna ngwana Tšhidi ya marumo
 30 Ka na ka tšea tšhidi ya marumo ka fehla lerole.
 31 Ka re lerole ntšhale nthago
 32 O tšamo o mphušeletša lenao
 33 O a bona koto la kale tsoma ke mahlalerwa
 34 Ke Phaswa e nala e retwa Matebeleng
 35 Ka na ka ja dijo ka kona Mmane
 36 Ka tloga ke eja nama e bose sehlana
 37 Ka kona mosadi wo mošweu Mošopšadi Lekgolane.
 38 Ka tšea legopo ka pharela dinama
 39 Ka tšea maratswana ka pharelela.
 40 Ka re ko fa mogwera, a ke Sethele Moletlane Matebeleng
 41 Ka hwetša Sethele a tšhabile a ile ga gabomogolo Bokgalaka
 42 Ka tsena ka kgoro ya Botswetla ka dula fase,
 43 Ka pharela mereba, ka ba ka phala le mong a mogopo
 44 Ya šala nke ke nna pheko tša motse woo
 45 Mašile a na a tšea mogopo wa gagwe wa bjala a nwa a kona basadi,
 46 A ba a kona le mmamoratiwa wa gagwe, a kona le ene Hunadi a
 Mphela.

1 I am Sekhukhune of Marota,
 2 I am of Mamosela of Matuba,
 3 Down at Botswetla of Machaka Maimela,
 4 You see me, I am the Mopedi, I am ugly, I am monstrous,
 5 We Bapedi never become handsome, we pull faces,
 6 Mopedi child I twist my mouth and pull faces,
 7 I have not only pulled faces, I pull faces while going to the
 war,
 8 Nobleman when I go to battle, I take along my subjects and put
 them in front,
 9 I, kgoši, I sit down, I sit on the chair,
 10 And remain meditating.
 11 I say I never send a child who refuses to be sent,
 12 When he returns with his hands on his head.
 13 When I stand up I don't do it for fun, I do justice,
 14 I pick up my shield and my spear,
 15 and ward off the spears,
 16 And the spears pass on the side.
 17 Here is dust blowing up, they are blasts of dust from Tubaše,
 18 It is dust made by Bapedi from war.
 19 They have captured foreign nations for me,
 20 They captured the children of Mokgoba
 21 They clothed them in loinskins.
 22 I Mašile the trampler of Ngwakhwane of Nkhumele.
 23 I never captured the children of Mokgoba,
 24 I capture a young lady.
 25 I take the toddler and put it in front,
 26 I said at home in Bopedi a young girl who obeys is not
 misused,
 27 He actually put her deep in next to the throne.
 28 And tomorrow we lay down karroses for her,
 29 I am the child of a brave warrior,

- 30 I once took a war charm and kicked dust,
- 31 I said dust follow me,
- 32 And cover my footprints en route.
- 33 You see that my footprint is wanted by the enemies,
- 34 I am Phaswa the red and white ox that is praised at the Matebele.
- 35 I once ate food and stinted my mother,
- 36 I actually ate good meat from the back of a cow,
- 37 I stinted the light complexioned woman Mošopšadi Lekgolane.
- 38 I took a dish and filled it with a lot of meat,
- 39 I took even the smallest pieces of bones,
- 40 I said I am going to give to my friend Sethele at Moletlane of the Matebele.
- 41 I found Sethele had run away to his grandparents home in Bokgalaka.
- 42 I entered the royal court of Tswetla and sat down.
- 43 I became aggressive even more than the owner of the dish,
- 44 I resembled the medicinal charms of the village
- 45 Mašile took his wooden pot of beer drank and stinted the women,
- 46 He even refused to offer to his beloved, He stinted even Hunadi of Mphela.

25. INA LA KXOŠI SEKHUKHUNE I

- 1 Kxomo 'a thswa! E xama ke mang?
- 2 E xama ke nna Mašile, Tsotsoboko Mma-naka le phatleng,
- 3 Mma-naka le mphatane, Mašile.
- 4 Mašile ke namane ya mešitwana;
- 5 E se seala, ke se-thšōša-baeng.
- 6 Se thšōšitše ba ba tšwaxo Moxomatse,
- 7 kwa xa Serutle sa Makotopo 'a Konyama.
- 8 Madimabe a xaxo, morwa' Sennyane sa Ramaxohle 'a kxomo.
- 9 Madimabe a xaxo a tšwa xo feng;
- 10 Theledi 'a Marota, ka Borwa o tš'o senyana.
- 11 O tš'o senya thopa tša Radipilwane.
- 12 Mma xo Moxwete o a omana,
- 13 Xomne o re: Kxatswatswa, xa wa ka wa nthlabanela;
- 14 O lesa šaba la Mahlaka-falala le e-ya.

- 1 The cow spits! By who is she milked?
- 2 It is milked by me, Mašile, the lanky one (tsotsoboko) with a horn on the forehead
- 3 The one with a sharp-pointed horn Mašile.
- 4 Masile I am a noisy calf,
- 5 It is not a plumage it is a long forehead.
- 6 It frightened those who came from Moxomatse.
- 7 There at Serutle of Makotopo of Konyama
- 8 Your misfortune, son of the introvert of Ramaxohle of the beast.
- 9 Where does your misfortune come from?
- 10 Theledi of Marota, in the South he has plundered.
- 11 He has messed up the affairs of Radipilwane.
- 12 Moxwete's mother is scolding,
- 13 and she says: Kxatswatswa, you never defended me,
- 14 You left the people of Mahlaka-falala to perish.

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