

**NAMING AS A TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION IN  
S.P.P. MMINELE'S NOVEL, *NGWANA WA MOBU***

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that

Naming as a technique of characterization in S.P.P. Mminele's novel,  
**Ngwana wa Mobu**

is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this mini-dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

  
.....  
K.P. NOKANENG



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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people who are no more:

My son Tebogo, my in-laws, Henock Shima and Lefentše and my mother Emmy Ngokoana Moleele

This work is also dedicated to:

My husband, Prof. M. Nokaneng



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## SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which naming is used in the development of plot structure, characterization, theme and style in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. This technique which is concerned with the significance of names in literary works is called literary onomastics. However, characters are given names but more importantly to show their significance in the development of plot structure, characterization, theme and style in literary art.

In literary works, choice of names should not be undertaken in random fashion, but should contribute to the development of the elements of a genre, for example a novel, as in the case of **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

The interpretation of names in literary art should assist the readers or audience to penetrate the meaning of life as a whole and should be relevant to the portrayal of a particular character.

The afore-mentioned assertion implies that in naming, one is communicating certain ideas about events. These ideas mirror the cultural background of a certain community namely the norms, beliefs and values. Hence the giving of names in African societies is regarded as sacred.

Names should be bestowed on characters with a purpose. Ultimately, the quality of a narrative would be enhanced by the manner in which the naming technique is used in a book.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one contains an orientation of the research problems, the aim and objectives of study, scope, method of research, author's biography and a summary of the selected novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

Chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework that encompasses the three levels of onomastics, namely lexical, associative and onomastic; as well as a brief exposition of naming as a cultural phenomenon.

Chapter three consists of the application of the naming technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. The following are briefly discussed:

- Plot-structure.
- Naming and development of plot structure in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.
- Characterization.
- Naming as a characterization technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.
- Theme.
- Naming techniques as an expression of theme in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.
- Style.
- Naming as a stylistic technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

In Chapter four attention is given to the structure of names in the selected novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**. Amongst other things, the structure of the following names is discussed.

- Personal names.
- Place names.

Chapter five is a summary of all the findings from the previous chapters.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Declaration .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Dedication .....	iv
Summary .....	v
Summary of chapters .....	vi
 <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 AIM OF STUDY .....	2
1.3 METHOD OF RESEARCH .....	2
1.4 SCOPE .....	3
1.5 THE AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY .....	3
1.6 SUMMARY OF NGWANA WA MOBU .....	5
 <b>CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF ONOMASTICS</b>	
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	7
2.2 DEFINITION OF LITERARY ONOMASTICS ...	8
2.2.1 Levels of onomastics .....	10
2.2.1.1 <i>Lexical level</i> .....	10
2.2.1.2 <i>Associative level</i> .....	10
2.2.1.3 <i>Onomastic level</i> .....	11
2.3 NAMING AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON ...	12
2.3.1 Babyhood .....	16
2.3.2 Graduating from initiation school .....	18
2.3.3 The incorporation of the new bride .....	19
2.3.4 Adulthood .....	20
2.4 CONCLUSION .....	21

**CHAPTER 3: NAMING AS A TECHNIQUE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLOT, CHARACTERIZATION, THEME AND STYLE**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>PLOT</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.2.1</b>	<b>Naming and development of plot in Ngwana wa Mobu</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>CHARACTERIZATION</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>3.3.1</b>	<b>Naming as a characterization technique in Ngwana wa Mobu</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>THEME</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>3.4.1</b>	<b>Naming technique as an expression of theme</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>STYLE</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>3.5.1</b>	<b>Naming as a stylistic technique in Ngwana wa Mobu</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>43</b>

**CHAPTER 4: THE STRUCTURE OF NAMES**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>STRUCTURE OF NAMES</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>4.2.1</b>	<b>Personal names</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>4.2.1.1</b>	<i>Verbal personal names</i> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>4.2.1.2</b>	<i>Personal name derived from nouns</i> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>4.2.1.3</b>	<i>Adoptive names</i> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>4.2.1.4</b>	<i>Personal names derived from ideophones</i> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>4.2.1.5</b>	<i>Compound nouns</i> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>4.2.1.6</b>	<i>Names derived from the imperative</i> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.2.2</b>	<b>Place names</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.2.2.1</b>	<i>Locative nouns</i> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>4.2.2.2</b>	<i>Diverbative nouns</i> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>4.2.2.3</b>	<i>Compound nouns</i> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>56</b>

**CHAPTER 3: NAMING AS A TECHNIQUE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLOT, CHARACTERIZATION, THEME AND STYLE**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>PLOT</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>CHARACTERIZATION</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>THEME</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>STYLE</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>43</b>

**CHAPTER 4: THE STRUCTURE OF NAMES**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>STRUCTURE OF NAMES</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>4.2.1</b>	<b>Personal names</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>4.2.1.1</b>	<i>Verbal personal names</i> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>4.2.1.2</b>	<i>Personal name derived from nouns</i> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>4.2.1.3</b>	<i>Adoptive names</i> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>4.2.1.4</b>	<i>Personal names derived from ideophones</i> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>4.2.1.5</b>	<i>Compound nouns</i> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>4.2.1.6</b>	<i>Names derived from the imperative</i> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.2.2</b>	<b>Place names</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.2.2.1</b>	<i>Locative nouns</i> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>4.2.2.2</b>	<i>Diverbative nouns</i> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>4.2.2.3</b>	<i>Compound nouns</i> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>56</b>

<b>CHAPTER 5:</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS</b> .....	<b>58</b>
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<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>61</b>
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature is a mirror that reflects customs, beliefs, values, social behaviour, knowledge, aesthetics and other aspects of a particular society. The naming technique is typical of Northern Sotho culture as is reflected in some Northern Sotho novels, particularly in **Ngwana wa Mobu** by S.P.P. Mminele. It is unfortunate that this technique is not optimally used by Northern Sotho authors in general. Serudu in Gerard (1983:95) comments that S.P.P. Mminele came to the forefront with a work of better quality. This implies how Mminele utilises the naming technique in a meticulous way. The creation of satire and humorous names which possess certain semantic qualities helps to give the book a high degree of literary value. What has made **Ngwana wa Mobu** a success, is the author's use of the naming technique in this work. The objective of this research is to demonstrate how the naming technique can enhance the quality of Northern Sotho literary works and culture in general. It will be important to indicate the significant role which is played by this technique in Northern Sotho culture, especially at this time when African languages are accorded an official status. It will be argued that some Northern Sotho authors such as Matsepe and Ramaila did make attempts to implement this technique. Mminele seems to have succeeded in linking this technique with other aspects of the novel such as - plot structure, theme, characterization and style.

The findings of this research should promote literary appreciation and literary criticism. Future authors need to develop new techniques of writing and not only to dwell on techniques which have been exhausted by earlier writers.

## **1.2 AIM OF STUDY**

The aim of this study is to determine the extent to which the naming technique is used in the development of plot structure, characterization, theme and style in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. The inclusion of all these aforementioned aspects seems to cover a very wide field and they are inseparable, but distinguishable. There are various techniques that are used by Northern Sotho authors to enhance the quality of their novels, for example the third person narrator. To achieve this aim, different methods may thus be employed in this research work.

## **1.3 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

A topic of this nature does not lend itself to one method of research. A literature review will be employed as a basic method from which to describe and compare data collected. The literary review will be supplemented by interviews which will be conducted with community elders, language practitioners and specialists. Interviews are useful in the sense that they are highly flexible, particularly if information is sought from community elders and language specialists.

## 1.4 SCOPE

This study comprises five chapters.

Chapter One contains an orientation to the research problem, aim and objectives of study, scope, method of research, author's biography and a summary of the selected novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

Chapter Two focuses on the theoretical framework that encompasses the three levels of onomastics, as well as a brief exposition of naming as a cultural phenomenon.

Chapter Three considers the application of the naming technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

In Chapter Four attention is given to the structure of the names in the selected novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

Chapter Five is a summary of all the findings from the previous chapters.

## 1.5 THE AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Solomon Pihlo Mminele, was born on the 10th June 1937 at Magakala in the Dilokong district of Lydenburg, where his father Rev. Filippus L.

Mminele served as a pioneer teacher and pastor. In his novel **Ngwana wa Mobu**, it can indirectly be realised that he has inherited a Christian spirit from his family. He received primary education at Magakala and Magabaneng schools in the Dilokong area where he passed Standard Six in 1952. In 1955 he obtained a first class Junior Certificate at Botšhabelo High School. He passed the Joint Matriculation Board examination at Sefakaola High School (Mokopane) in 1957. He obtained the Secondary Teachers' Diploma at Pretoria Bantu Normal College in 1959. In 1973 he obtained the following degrees, namely B.A. in 1973, B.Ed. (1979) from Unisa, M.Ed. (1984) cum laude and D.Ed. (1989) from the University of the North.

Mminele taught at Sefakaola High School (Mokopane) from January 1960 to March 1963 and then proceeded to Maripi High School (Acornhoek) which is presently known as Orhovelani High School, from April 1963 to December 1966. He became the principal of Mokoneamabula Secondary School from 1974 to 1976. In 1977 he was promoted to the position of inspector of schools. He was appointed as an interim principal of Dr C.N. Phatudi Training College and became the head in 1982. In 1986 he joined the staff of the University of the North as a senior lecturer and Acting Head of the Department of History of Education. In 1990 the University promoted him to the position of Associate Professor in History of Education. To date he is still serving as Acting Head.

Mminele is a novelist, educationist and a grammarian. He has published the following works, some under his name and others as co-author:

- **Ngwana wa Mobu** - a novel

### ***Grammar***

*Mošupatsela* (co-author) - Std 9 & 10 study guide based on the 1<sup>st</sup> paper, namely essays, letters, reports and memoranda.

*Ditlalemeso* (co-author) - a Northern Sotho handbook on development in society such as phoning, taxing, telegrams, e-mail, as well as how to conduct meetings, how to register births, deaths, marriages and also how to conduct general elections.

It is inadequate to evaluate an author on only one work. However, with reference to the novel **Ngwana wa Mobu**, Mminele can rightly be referred to as an outstanding writer because in this novel he utilizes the naming technique which has not been used by many Northern Sotho authors with the exception of O.K. Matsepe. **Ngwana wa Mobu** has remained a household name among Northern Sotho readers for a very long time.

## **1.6 SUMMARY OF NGWANA WA MOBU**

In **Ngwana wa Mobu**, Mminele narrates the story of Phankga Mootli, a talented and a very enthusiastic student, who has just completed his studies at the Kopanong College of Education. Phankga's success in his examination makes his widowed father a very proud parent. It also earns him a teaching post at Rethuše Primary School in his home village of Makgwareng in the area of Bakantirang. Phankga is a gifted musician, a good Arithmetic teacher and is proficient in Afrikaans.



The school is headed by Lahlang, who is a foreigner at Makgwareng. Phankga is gifted and employs new methods of teaching. This earns him popularity at Makgwareng and neighbouring villages. Whenever there is something involving new approaches in teaching, Lahlang asks for help from Phankga. This makes Phankga highly conceited. He feels that he is the appropriate person to head this school and not Lahlang. Phankga becomes more involved with the pupils than any other person and as a result he is able to influence them. He conspires with Mokhura, the chairman of Rethuše school committee, who happens to be his uncle, and another member of the school committee, Mafamo, a distant relative. They plot to oust Lahlang from his position as principal. They go about influencing the community to complain about Lahlang's credibility and recommend Phankga as the appropriate person for the position. It is through the level-headed inspector of schools that Phankga fails to succeed in his evil tricks and is instead transferred to Ntotolwane. Peace and order are restored in the community.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORY OF ONOMASTICS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is apparent that Northern Sotho authors have employed various techniques in their writing in order to enhance the quality of novels for example, first person narrator, but the naming technique, which is embedded in the Northern Sotho culture, is sparingly used. This technique which is concerned with the significance of names in literary works is called literary onomastics. Naming as a literary device in literary onomastics is employed in the development of plot, characterization, theme and style in a novel. Choice of names in literature should not be undertaken in random fashion but should contribute to the development of the elements of a novel. This is endorsed by Alvarez-Altman and Burelbach (1987:1) by saying “We all agree that just collecting and listing names for a work of literature is not enough and not realistic”.

This statement implies that names should not be regarded as labels but should have meaning. When one interprets names, they should help one to penetrate the meaning of life as a whole and should be relevant to the portrayal of character. The choice of names in literature should be directed towards a specific purpose. Alvarez-Altman and Burelbach (1987:151) quote Shawcross in saying:

The competent author is, I am sure, aware of the effects of names and employs specific names to achieve desirable effects.

In other words, the “desirable effects” suggest how the naming technique contributes to the development of plot, characterization, theme and style. Furthermore, Shawcross points out what the effect of the name would be if any name was given instead of the one chosen in the novel. It would be appropriate to define the concept literary onomastics before it is investigated in this research work.

## **2.2 DEFINITION OF LITERARY ONOMASTICS**

According to Alvarez-Altman and Burelbach (1981:1) literary onomastics is:

... a more specialised literary criticism in which scholars are concerned with the levels of significance of names in drama, poetry fiction and folklore. These include names of places, characters, cosmic symbols etc., as they relate to theme structure and other literary considerations.

Ashley as quoted by Alvarez-Altman and Burelbach (1987:11) defines onomastics as “A study of the origin and history of proper names”.

Furthermore, Ashley points out that the way in which names reflect or expand the author's intentions can add to our understanding and appreciation of a work in literature.

It is quite clear that onomastics means the naming of characters and places in a literary work. It is of utmost importance that an author employing this technique should take cognisance of the relevance of the names to the plot, characterization, theme and style. It would be proper to deal with the classification of these names because they do differ. Alvarez-Altman (1987:2) declares that this projected analytical guide to literature gives three general focuses within which literary names may be approached namely:

- \* Families or classes of names
- \* The techniques used by authors in naming
- \* Typologies or functions of names

Her families or classes of names and typologies or functions of names seem relevant to this study, as one attempts to elicit the role that is played by personal names and place names and their significance in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. It will be realised that these names belong to Alvarez-Altman's second family, namely diactinic names or attributive names. According to her, these names are capable of transmitting intellectual actinic rays of light upon the characters, intellectual attributes which play an important role in the development of plot, theme and style. Nicolaisen in Neethling (1984:89) maintains that names reflect three levels of meaning, which will be discussed as follows:

## **2.2.1 Levels of onomastics**

Onomastics operates on 3 levels, namely lexical, associative and onomastic. These will be briefly examined:

### **2.2.1.1 *Lexical level***

Lexical refers to the dictionary meaning of the word or words comprising the name. Proper names are lexically meaningless but people was given names which have a lexical meaning e.g. Tlou (elephant) which may be interpreted as quadruped, having a trunk. But as soon as this name has been given to a person the lexical meaning now becomes irrelevant but application will be dependent on its associative semantic elements.

For certain reasons such names in Northern Sotho and other African Languages are given to people. The objective is to use characteristics and attributes to designate a particular character in literary works for example, a well-known person. If an author uses such a name for a character in literature then the literary critics will have to analyse the characteristics and attributes of that animal to find out reasons for naming it in such a way.

### **2.2.1.2 *Associative level***

Associative level answers why particular lexical or onomastic items were used in the naming process. Neethling (1985:89) says:

Many authors therefore realise the potential regarding the using of proper names because they are loaded with associations in condensed form.

Northern Sotho people and most African people do not just give a name to a child without a reason. This also applies to nicknames and place names. The name might be given to a person based on its association with an incident which happened during the period of that particular child's birth. This is endorsed by Endemann in Herbert and Bogatsu (1985:5) saying "Names given by Northern Sotho mothers, related to some prominent event at the time of birth".

For example a child may be called Maletšema (mother of work-group) from the word letšema meaning work-group and this refers to a group of people working together on a project e.g. weeding or ploughing or even building a kraal. The events surrounding the child's birth have an influence on the naming of the child.

### ***2.2.1.3 Onomastic level***

Nicolaisen in Neethling (1985:89) defines onomastic level as follows:

The meaning of a denotative name as a name i.e. its application based on lexical and associative semantic elements but usually no longer dependent on them.

From the above postulation we realise that these types of names have a combination of elements namely lexical and associative meanings.

### **2.3 NAMING AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON**

Name-giving is an old human activity among African societies. It is an integral part of African culture. In other words, it is a concern for all cultures, but varies from one social group to another. It would be appropriate to define the concept “culture” at this juncture as it plays an important role in this part of the study. Norbeck in Thipa (1984:85) says:

It refers to innumerable aspects of life, inter alia the social, the religious, the economic and the legal. Culture is an integrated unit which can be analysed into certain interrelated components. These components fall into three categories, namely: ideas, activities and objects or artefacts.

In naming, surely one is communicating certain ideas about events. Hence in this analysis one will accept the scenario that one is dealing with communication in naming, which is used or shared by people from the same cultural background. Through naming, as a cultural phenomenon, the norms and values of the people are mirrored. Norbeck in Thipa (1984:85) comments further:

It is in terms of ideas in particular which will be considered. Ideas will be taken to embrace values, attitudes and beliefs.

To endorse what is being expressed in the above definition concerning beliefs, some African societies conduct a special ceremony when a newborn child is to be given a name. Hence Thipa (1987:108) says:

In African society the naming of a child assumes some very particular significance. A child, especially in very traditional homes, is regarded as belonging not only to his immediate biological family but also to the extended family and eventually to the community.

This implies that the child is born into a particular society with its own culture and as a result its coming into this world involves many people besides its parents. Herbert and Bogatsu (1990:6) point out that:

In addition to the giving of an infancy name, traditional N. Sotho society was characterised by a ceremony known as “**rela maina**” (giving of names) in which young children were given family commemorative names drawing on the existing stock of names within the family.



This also depicts the belief in the role played by their ancestors. Giving a child a name such as Relebogile (we are grateful), Tšhegofatšo (blessing) or Mpho (gift) is a token of gratitude to the supernatural, for the child who is regarded as a blessing. According to the Northern Sotho culture, the name of the child was given by the father's eldest sister who is regarded as one of "badimo" ancestors of the child even if she is still alive. The mother can do the initial naming but the name will be used temporarily until such time as the family name is given according to Northern Sotho culture. Herbert and Bogatsu (1990:6) further state:

This ceremony marked the introduction of the children into the status of members of the corporate patrilineal group.

This type of ceremony also embraces the introduction of the child to the "badimo" (ancestors). If in most cases the baby cries to the extent that the mother spends sleepless nights and yet is healthy, it is normally said that the child is declining the name (o gana leina). Then the diviner or traditional practitioner should be approached to determine the appropriate name for the child. This is regarded as a sacred ceremony in African communities. To endorse that naming is a cultural phenomenon, Sekeleko (1993:26) puts it thus:

Naming is also a social and or a community activity. The elder in the family i.e. parents of the newly-born child and grandfathers and grandmothers are involved

in the naming process. They formally or informally gather around the “lelapa” (traditional courtyard) to make a selection of names in order to give a baby a better name.

This also reveals the African culture that whenever they indulge in any activity, in most cases becomes communal. In other words, this indicates co-existence and belonging. Through this process the child can be identified as an individual member of that society. Hence Akinnaso (1981:49) comments that the Delaware people believed that personal names remain the most valuable resource for individual identification in day to day interaction.



In other words, naming is a social activity. This is also endorsed by Pirie who in “The naming of Soweto” (1984:44) says:

... naming is not only the outcome of private and impenetrable contemplation. In varying degrees the naming of places is a social activity. This is either by virtue of it involving joint decision making and or in respect of it occurring within a given social milieu in which there are formal or informal conventions of names selection, assignment and adoption.

There are various stages in one's life during which names are bestowed upon a person, namely in babyhood, graduating from the initiation school,

when the new bride is incorporated into the new family, nicknames and adulthood. These various stages will be briefly discussed.

### **2.3.1 Babyhood**

The naming process is done immediately after childbirth. Usually names are bestowed for a short while until the naming ceremony is conducted. The child may be given family commemorative names which are drawn from the existing stock of names in the family, for example, the name of a great grandfather. Sometimes the baby will be named according to circumstances surrounding its birth, for example if there was a misunderstanding in the family then the child may be named Mantwa (mother of disputes, misunderstanding) or Motlanalo (the one who came with problems). It is clear that parents are expressing their sorrow concerning their disputes or misunderstanding. Further, sorrow can be expressed by naming a child who was born after a death in the family, for example: Mahlodi (tears), Sello (a cry). In cases where a woman gives birth to children who die at infancy, sorrow descends on the family. A derogatory name is given to a child who is born under such circumstances as Mpšanyana (puppy), and Diboko (worms). This is to mislead the gods whom they believe would deprive them of such a child or children - thus the gods would not be in the position to trace the spirit as the child would not be named after one of the ancestors. Eiselen and Molema in Herbert and Bogatsu (1990:6) point out that:

a derogatory name is given in order to confuse the ancestor spirits and have them believe that the parents do not care for the child and therefore taking him/her away will not be a punishment.

This clearly indicates that Africans believe that the death of a baby is a punishment following a violation of some sort against the gods or ancestors. Thipa (1987:10) concurs with this where he says:

Basotho and AmaXhosa, especially traditional ones (and, I believe, other Africans as well), do not regard the birth of the child as the result of any physical and physiological actions. Instead, they regard such birth as a result of some supernatural benevolence. For Christians, the supernatural is God, while for the traditional type of person it is either some God (for example Qamata for AmaXhosa).

In other words, for the Northern Sotho, it will be the badimo (gods or ancestors). To indicate that the child is regarded as a gift from the supernatural such names as Molebogeng (thank Him) or Refilwe (we are given) or Rešoketšwe (mercy was given to us) are given to children as a sign of appreciation to the gods or God. Sometimes the child is named after one of the deceased's family member for example, Lefentše (you have conquered) or Baatseba (they know). The reason behind this is that the child should be a remembrance of one's family member i.e. mother, aunt

or father - so that the family should not forget him or her. Sometimes the child is given a certain name because the family anticipate that the child will display that person's character traits e.g. Mabothiso (mother of kindness). It is clear why, traditionally, the daughter-in-law has to ask the name of the child from the in-laws. Akinnaso (1981:42) mentions that the Yakima traditionally believed that a child is born with the spirit of some deceased loved one. Naming the child after that person is therefore considered most appropriate.

On the same page, Akinnaso says:

The Yakima usually wait six to twelve years before giving a child its personal name, giving a temporary nickname until then. The major reason for the delay in Yakima naming is the need to ascertain the identity of the deceased relative reincarnated in the child.

In conclusion one can state that the aforementioned quotation clearly indicates that naming is a cultural phenomenon and is based on people's beliefs.

### **2.3.2 Graduating from initiation school**

In Northern Sotho and many other African cultures the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood is marked by the child being initiated into manhood or womanhood. Thus these children are sent to an initiation school for a prescribed period of three or six months.

From initiation school the child is assimilated into society as a full member. Graduation of initiates draws a line of demarcation or marks a transitional stage from childhood into adulthood. It must be realised that circumcision is a very important ritual among the Northern Sotho people, as with other African communities. With the Northern Sotho people, there is a circumcision school for boys as well as a circumcision school for girls as this is a preparation for adulthood. At this stage the names are bestowed on graduated initiates and people no longer use their childhood names, that is, those names which they used before they went to the initiation school. It is interesting to note that girls are given names such as Raisibe, Raesetša, Ramokone, with the masculine prefix ra-. One may make the assumption that it may designate bravery as these children have undergone a difficult process i.e. initiation. Traditionally it is believed that males are the only people who can participate in such processes.

### **2.3.3 The incorporation of the new bride**

With traditional Northern Sotho people, marriage is an important event in a woman's life. Thus they believe that during the wedding ceremony, they are initiating the bride into the new family, the community and also the ancestors - hence the slaughtering of a beast. The bride is being initiated into the status of parenthood and will no longer be regarded as a girl (mosetsana), but a woman (mosadi). To ensure that she is acquiring this status the family of the in-laws will give her a name with which they will address her, for example, Mmamolatelolo meaning mother of the follower. These names are also bestowed on the bride according to circumstances

surrounding the marriage, if, for example, the bride is being married to her cousin - it means she is following the aunt; that is why she is being named Mmamolatelolo. If the bride is married into a strange family, names such as Mmantotole (let her look after us) are given. The first-born of this couple will take his or her name from the mother, for example, Molatelolo. Thipa (1987:116) is of the opinion that:

Such names have two components, namely politeness and status. Their use with respect to parents is regarded as a polite form of address in so far as it reckons with their enhanced status in the community. Such names express the aspirations of the family in which the new bride is being incorporated.

#### **2.3.4 Adulthood**

It is worth noting that people of the same community happen to be aware of one another's behaviour, mannerisms and talks. These repeated actions in one's life make the observers give that person a name. These names initially function in an exclusive circle but eventually run into an inclusive circle, even to the extent that the person bestowed with that particular name knows it. It is interesting to realise that such names are not given after the birth of the child but during adulthood. These names are given by people in the community and not necessarily by the family members.

Usually one encounters names such as Mmenyane meaning "what's name". This particular person is called Mmenyane because whenever he talks he

never mentions the specific name of what he wants to talk about, but he will always say: Mmenyane o kae? (where is so and so) instead of saying: where is Mokgadi or where is the knife? Sometimes a senior person always draws the attention of the subordinates by telling that he is the most senior and no one else is above him or her - thus this results in names such as Kgošikenna meaning I am the chief or I am the boss. This illustrates how people acquire nicknames in life. These nicknames may be used as permanent names.

Sometimes a person is bestowed with a name like “Tau”, a lion, to designate his heroic deeds in war or hunting. The name Tau may also have a different connotation - thus it may imply that the person is cruel. Such names sometimes coincide with that particular person's totem of a lion or elephant.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an investigation of a theoretical framework that encompasses the three levels of onomastics has been expounded. It is worth noting that the naming technique is a cultural phenomenon as illustrated in the foregoing discussion. It is evident from the aforementioned discussion that names play a very indispensable part in African cultures and societies, for example, naming of a graduate initiate.



## CHAPTER 3

### NAMING AS A TECHNIQUE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLOT, CHARACTERIZATION, THEME AND STYLE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a brief exposition of the application of the naming technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu** is given. It will be shown how this technique has been used in the development of plot, characterization, theme and style to enhance the quality of the novel. These four elements are not separable but can be distinguished from one another as is illustrated in this discussion.

It would be appropriate at this juncture to define the concept of plot before detecting how the name-giving technique has been employed in **Ngwana wa Mobu** in the development of plot.

#### 3.2 PLOT

The concept of plot in literary works means the arrangement of incidents in a novel or drama in a certain pattern. This pattern of events induces curiosity and suspense in the reader. Plot in other words, is a story line, where one event is the cause of the one that follows it. Hence the following definitions by different scholars:

Abrams (1981:137) defines plot as follows:

The plot in dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects.

Furthermore Abrams (1981:137) points out that:

... plot has a unity of action if it is perceived as a single, complete and ordered structure of actions, directed towards the intended effect.

Msimang (1986:39) remarks that "... it has become conventional to speak of the structure of a novel as its plot".

From the foregoing definitions, it is evident that plot is regarded as a structure found in literature, implying that the actions have been organised in a certain pattern to relay the meaning to the receiver. Fowler (1987:182) endorses the above assertion by pointing out that plot is "... a compositional whole that consists of actions, events and messages".

In other words, genres such as the novel have a structure. These actions or events in the narrative work have been arranged in a certain pattern in order to achieve an artistic objective. It is for this reason that the events have a certain sequence in which they are told. This is what is generally referred to as style. In this regard, Serudu's (1987:86) definition of plot

is worth noting namely that it is a "... logical arrangement of message ... into a definite pattern which forms unity of its development".

Mminele has exploited this naming technique meaningfully in **Ngwana wa Mobu** so that each name contributes to the total effect of the development of plot structure as shall be indicated subsequently.

Most of the names of the characters in **Ngwana wa Mobu** can be regarded as names that reveal the attributes of characters. Alvarez-Altman and Burelbach (1987:6) have this to say about names:

I've chosen the word diactinic because these names are capable of transmitting intellectual actinic rays of light upon the character and the attributes.

In other words, the name enables the reader to determine the character traits of the particular character.

Ducrot and Todorov (1983:225) endorse the above view thus:

... they (characters) are manifested by the name that announces in advance the properties that will be attributed to a character.

Characters are given specific names which reveal their traits which make them indulge in different events, which will have cohesion and unity so as

to contribute towards the development of plot structure in the narrative. The names designate certain actions which will bring about conflict among the characters. Conflict is at the centre of plot structure as shall be illustrated by Mminele's technique of naming.

The seed of conflict is embedded in the very title that has been given to the novel **Ngwana wa Mobu** (Son of the Soil) which provokes one to think immediately of nepotism and discrimination which prevail.

The centre stage for the conflict is occupied by characters like Lahlang (throw away), who is a foreigner, and who is to be ousted from the position of principalship as he is not a child of the soil. On the other hand, Mminele has named the main character of this novel Phankga, meaning a well-built person, fearless, provocative and an extrovert. He is respected as a distinguished musician by his final year students at Kopanong college of Education. Phankga's attributes earn him a teaching post in his birth place, at Rethuše school, headed by Lahlang. He excels in Arithmetic, Afrikaans and Music. His success makes him conceited to the extent that he undermines Lahlang and regards him as being incompetent and a leader who cannot execute his duties.

The conflict is intensified by characters like Mokhura. The name Mokhura designates stoutness (fatness), as endorsed by the writer when he describes him (Mokhura) as someone with a protruding belly. Such people are usually regarded as respectable people in the community. The perception is that bellied people are progressive just as Mokhura was a progressive

butcher. They are highly regarded and normally hold senior positions in most communities. This becomes evident with Mokhura who holds the position of chairperson of the local school committee and who is also one of the church elders. Hence the writer sometimes addresses him as “mokgomana” which means a member of the royal family. It is thus understandable that Mokhura joins forces with Phankga in their conspiracy to oust Lahlang.

In contrast, the writer names Phankga's antagonist, Lahlang. These contrasting names create conflict. Lahlang should be thrown away because the son of the soil, who is armed with new methods of teaching and who is also good in Afrikaans, which is a rare commodity, will come to their rescue - hence the name of the school Rethuše (help us). Lahlang is being done away with because he is an alien. The writer uses the name “Lekomofere” (alien), a derogatory name, to humiliate him. Usually anything which is of no value should be thrown away. Lahlang has to be ostracised as he is a foreigner, old and not good at the mentioned subjects above.

Among Northern Sotho people, it is a cultural phenomenon to name people according to their totems, which bear names of certain wild animals with specific attributes. It will be realised that Mminele has exploited this in naming Phankga - Tau and Lahlang - Nkwe. Lahlang is comparable to a tiger because before attacking, it crouches. Phankga is comparable to a lion which storms onto its prey. Hence the conspiracy to oust Lahlang. The writer has also made use of characters such as Mafamo - meaning a person with wide nostrils which depict anger. He does not like peace.

Mashabela (1975:19) regards him as "... a scaremonger outwardly, yet inwardly an idiot".

Mafamo fumes with anger persuading the community to revolt openly against Lahlang. Therefore, such names intensify the conflict in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

To bring about further complications the writer names one character Mokgonoana. Mkhono - meaning hand in Northern Ndebele, signifying a writer. It is metaphorically used to symbolise a secretary. Mashabela interprets Mokgonoana as the little arm - the little hand that is opened for bribes, (1975:19). Mokgonoana is also a foreigner like Lahlang but he is favoured by the community of Makgwareng. Perhaps it is because he accepted bribes from the community. That in itself creates a conflict situation. The name suggests that Mokgonoana was easily manipulated. Instead of supporting his fellow stranger Lahlang, he advocated that Phankga as the son of the soil should become the principal of Rethuše Primary School.

To develop the plot structure in **Ngwana wa Mobu**, Mminele uses names such as Kopanong College of Education - that is a place where people from different places come together with one objective. This name implies that there is no discrimination, there was room for everybody irrespective of tribe or creed. Makgwareng, meaning a gravel or a stony place, is the physical background or milieu. A stony soil cannot yield good harvest. In other words the name symbolises the unpleasant atmosphere which

prevails in this village. It also depicts Lahlang's dilemma of moving on an uneven ground which is uncomfortable. The author sometimes calls it "naga ya Bakantirang" (the land of what can they do to me). This place name suggests stubbornness and conceit. In other words, nobody can do anything to them in their birth place, because it is their fundamental right to be there.

Mminele names the community school at Makgwareng, Rethuše (help us). This is an appeal to any person, even the foreigners to come to their rescue to educate their children.

Lahlang came to the rescue of the community of Makgwareng but now the community is casting him out. Mashabela (1975:19) comments about Lahlang as "... a very unpretentious man - a rough diamond that fools may easily throw away".

From the above comment, one can deduce that the community was blinded by nepotism and failed to appreciate the good services that Lahlang rendered while Phankga was still at college. Names are capable of transmitting insight into the character traits of the characters which are elicited by their actions and form the plot structure. The names given to the characters in **Ngwana wa Mobu** have a direct bearing on characterization which is an aspect of plot structure.

### 3.3 CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization in literary art refers to character portrayal in a specific work of literary art. In other words, this implies the presentation of characters to the reader. In this regard Cohen (1973:137) defines characterization as follows:

The art of creating fictional characters in words which give them human identity is called characterization. It is an art of illusion whereby the characters created seem to become people with traits and personalities which the reader can recognize, respond to and analyse.

Sharing the same opinion Abrams (1981:20) says:

Characters are the persons presented in dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say - the dialogue - and what they do - the action.

Msimang (1986:99) echoes the same sentiment as expressed by Abrams when he defines characterization as:



... a sum total of techniques employed by an artist in presenting characters in a literary work of art so that such characters are perceived by the audience/reader as persons endowed with moral and dispositional as well as physical qualities.

It must therefore be realised that different scholars are in agreement when defining characterization. They all share the opinion that characterization is the manner in which an author displays the qualities, thoughts, actions and reactions of characters in a novel. Therefore, the reader is enabled to recognise the characters as people in reality, as resembling actions of people one lives and shares his or her experiences with. In presenting his characters Mminele relies heavily on naming as a characterization technique.

In the second chapter it was pointed out that at times a child is given a name in anticipation that she or he will display certain character traits. Mminele has exploited this technique to the full in this novel.

In using naming as a characterization technique Alvarez-Altman (1987:1) gives the following guide:

We all agree that just collecting and listing names for a work of literature is not enough and not realistic .... There need to be other consideration to make the

literary name relevant to the work. Scholars must be able to determine what the author intended names to mean and then what they really mean to us.

In this novel, Mminele does not merely collect and list names. His literary names are relevant to the narrative as a whole. A name may be seen as forming an integral part of a character's behaviour and personality. The character's name will reveal his attributes, feelings, thoughts and disposition in a particular setting. This view is supported by Kunene in *Serudu* (1979:15):

In naming a child, the Basotho did not as a rule, choose a name simply because the parents liked it, but for its relevance to a given situation, or for a certain purpose that the name was supposed to fulfil, naming the child after someone, usually a relative.

To this effect, there was a belief that when a child grows, he might act according to his name. Northern Sotho people normally say: "Leinalebe seromo" (an ugly name makes its bearer behave accordingly).

Names are capable of transmitting insight into the character traits of characters which are elicited by their actions, and form part of plot structure.

The names given to the characters in **Ngwana wa Mobu** have a direct bearing on their character traits. It is understandable why Mminele has exploited this technique fully in his novel.

There is a character with the name Phankga (a well-built person, fearless, provocative and an extrovert). He is a talented young man who is identified as an outstanding conductor at the final farewell function, at Kopanong college. Mminele also displays Phankga as the best teacher in Mathematics, Afrikaans and Music at Rethuše Primary School. No one outclasses him, not even his principal Lahlang, nor any other teacher in that particular circuit. Phankga's talents earn him fame among young and old. By naming Phankga according to his totem Tau (lion), the author depicts him daring and bravery.

The author names Phankga's antagonist as Lahlang, (throw away). He is being expelled from principalship at Makgwareng village. Hence he is referred to as Lekomofere (a stranger) who cannot enjoy the same rights as Phankga, the son of the soil. He is to be ostracised because Phankga and his co-conspirators depict Lahlang as being useless, as compared to Phankga, the great. In other words he does not deserve to be a headmaster of the local school, Rethuše. His manner of dress depicts him as somebody of a lower status to that of Phankga and Mokhura. Because of his humbleness, he is generally regarded as a fool. His good qualities are, in most cases, overlooked.

Another character whom Mminele presents in **Ngwana wa Mobu** is Mokhura, Phankga's co-conspirator. He is depicted as someone who is fat and stout. Traditionally a fat person is regarded as being wealthy and of high standing in the community hence the saying "o a khora" meaning that a person has enough to eat. Mokhura's stoutness symbolizes wealth and pompousness. One notices that when a stout person walks, he walks with his legs apart. This manner of walking with his hands deep in his pockets and trousers slightly lifted up reveals that he is a conceited person. The manner in which Mokhura takes his seat in church, attracts the attention of the congregation who immediately recognise the arrival of a great man. In view of his stoutness, he does not want to mix with other people when entering the church - hence he enters long after everybody else is seated. He does this in order to establish his dignity as a respectable person. In other words, all Mokhura's actions which are related to his stoutness reveal pompousness. From one's experience, one will realise that if a drop of fat falls onto a piece of cloth or paper, it spreads through its tissues and leaves a big stain. Mokhura has this attribute because he is influential, he is thus able to incite the Makgwareng community against Lahlang.

Another interesting character portrayed in this novel is Mafamo, a man with wide nostrils, always indulging in inconsequential talk. Wide nostrils inhale lots of air. They depict how Mafamo is easily influenced to take sides before analysing the facts. He is therefore misused and abused by Mokhura. According to this technique one will realise that the author has used metaphorization in portraying his characters. As characters are linked to certain events and actions, it is appropriate to look into the concept theme and how the naming technique relates to the theme in Mminele's novel.

### 3.4 THEME

The concept theme is inextricably interwoven with the other aspects of imaginative work which is designed to inform the reader. This implies that the theme cannot be isolated from plot, characterization and style. It is an essential meaning of any literary work. In this regard Shipley (1970:33) says:

(Theme is) the subject of discourse; the underlying action or movement, or the general topic, of which the particular story is an ...

In support of this assertion Fowler (1987:248) points out the following about theme:

... a branch of the subject which is indirectly expressed through the recurrence of certain events, images or symbols.

From the above definitions the following can be deduced with regard to the concept theme:

That theme unfolds as the plot unfolds. Theme is expressed through the actions of the characters, that is why it is essential to understand the role played by each character in a literary work, to enable the reader to determine the theme.

It is evident that certain actions develop into certain events as shall be indicated in Mminele's novel. Lastly, theme is expressed through images or symbols which constitute the style of the author.

It is worth noting that all the above-mentioned scholars are of the same opinion that theme is a central message which carries the moral lesson which can be relayed to the readers. It will be interesting to see how Mminele uses the naming technique as an expression of theme.

Names of characters employed by Mminele in his novel express sarcasm. In other words, they express a certain degree of mockery and also expose wickedness which prevails in this novel.

In determining the theme in **Ngwana wa Mobu**, one is virtually forced to acknowledge that the novel is satirical. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines satire as follows:

Satire, in its literary aspect, may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly, provided that humour is a recognisable element and that the utterance is invested with literary form. Without humour satire is invective, without literary form, it is mere clownish jeering.

One may ask what are the themes which Mminele is satirising? The answer is easy if one looks closely at the author's characters and their actions. The hero of the play, Phankga, is depicted as a great man with many talents. His greatest asset is that he is the son of the soil, a fact that is exploited by characters such as Mokhura. The stage is prepared for conflict and the naming technique is clearly evident in aggravating conflict. Phankga's talents earn him fame among the young and old. By naming Phankga in conjunction with his totem Tau, the author depicts his daring behaviour and bravery.

Instead of making good use of his talents, Phankga boasts of being the son of the soil and uses this as a criterion for merit and promotion. He undermines his principal, who happened to be a stranger in the semi-enlightened community. Mminele seems to share with the reader that change is necessary but change for the sake of change is undesirable. Mminele seems to make the reader aware that tribalism cannot be used as a criterion for progressives. The satire in this novel is enhanced by contrasting names.

Lahlang, meaning to throw away, whose totem is Nkwe (tiger) has all the qualities of a good principal. Lahlang becomes a victim to Phankga and his co-conspirator Mokhura. His only crime is being a Lekomofere i.e. an outsider and his so-called outdated methods of teaching.

The theme becomes very clear when Mokhura comes into the scene. Mokhura is depicted as someone fat, stout, pompous, conceited and a so-

called devout Christian. He is also referred to as “sebata”, beast of prey; a concept with many connotations. It may refer to Mokhura's totem, the lion, (Ke Mminatau, Mminašoro). It also indicates that Mokhura is a prominent businessman, a member of the school committee, an elder in church, and can maintain order and discipline. Although Mokhura has all these qualities of leadership, there is something radically wrong with his leadership, both as a parent and community leader. This is the moral message that Mminele would like to leave with readers by using Mokhura, to the broader community, to parents, to Christians, to educators of the youth, who have just completed school, to businessmen, etc. The many wrongs that Mokhura and his fellow co-conspirator perpetrate cannot be listed here, as they are self-evident. The attitude of the author to Mokhura is one of disdain because of his pomp. The overall theme that can be drawn from this novel, is that society has a gloomy future if led by characters such as Mokhura, Phankga and Mafamo or by leaders who carry such names.

The discussion of naming as a technique in **Ngwana wa Mobu**, will not be complete if no mention is made of Mminele's style.

### **3.5       STYLE**

In this section, style will first be defined and thereafter an exposition of naming as a stylistic technique be given. There are various interpretations of this concept of style, though some critics regard it as a technique employed by an author in using the language to express his thoughts. One would say Mminele has also used naming to express his ideas.



Mminele's style is characterised by the usage of imagery, a sense of amusement, a sense of ridicule and humour that is satirical. To achieve all these the author makes use of naming as a technique. Cohen (1973:49) explains style as an author's "... choice of words and their arrangement in patterns of syntax, imagery and rhythm" and on the same page, he further says:

These arrangements of words constitute the author's rendering of whatever thoughts, emotions, situations or characters he chooses to create and communicate.

Expressing the same sentiment, Fowler (1987:237) defines style as:

... a manner of expression, describable in linguistic terms, justifiable and valuable in respect of non-linguistic factor.

It will be realised that the definitions above seem to emphasise that choice of words and other possibilities constitute style in any form of literary work. These possibilities, among other things in language, is the naming technique complemented by appropriate words used in the novel. Hence in literary art, we talk of the styles of the different authors. Styles of the various authors differ because of the various discernible possibilities depending on the type of genre. One distinguishing feature in Mminele's style is his use of the naming technique.

It is worth noting that the naming technique in Mminele's novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**, has been fully exploited. This technique as pointed out in the second chapter emanates from an African culture. This technique is used with success in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. It is through his rich knowledge of Northern Sotho culture and command of the language that he is in a position of playing around with words and names - thus creating humour and not mere clownish jeering. His words and his names as literary form have various connotations or associations.

To be evocative the author makes use of the following devices:

- emphasis
- descriptive style
- concepts and words in a unique manner
- metaphor and simile
- words from ideophones

to unravel his plot, to portray his characters to deliver his theme.

Mminele uses a descriptive style coupled with the naming technique to ridicule and satirise certain vixens in society. The fact that he relies on the naming technique is basically descriptive and narrative in essence as shall be seen from names given to his characters and names given to places, for example:

### **Names of characters**

Lahlang	-	someone to be thrown away
Mogwapawatholo	-	biltong of a kudu
Lekomofere	-	someone who is from far away places
Mokhura	-	someone who is fat
Foromane	-	a foreman
Mafamo	-	implying nostrils that are wide open

### **Place names**

Bakantirang	-	they cannot do anything to me
Rethuše	-	help us
Makgwareng	-	a stony place
Kopanong	-	a meeting place

One other device used by Mminele in his descriptive style, is the use of contrasts and comparison. He uses a totem Tau as contrasting to totem Nkwe. The use of such a name as Mokhura (fatness) as opposed to Mogwapawatholo (leanness). The use of **Ngwana wa Mobu** (son of the soil) as opposed to Lekomofere (an alien). New methods of teaching represented by Phankga as opposed to old methods of teaching by Lahlang. The opening sentence “Bosele”: Implying the dawn of new era as opposed to the old era of darkness.

In a church situation the two groups of people are contrasted as follows: “boradimpana” (children) and “bohlogopudutšwana” (the older generation.)

With regard to comparison, it is interesting to note how Mokhura in his obesity is compared to a “senana” (a species of a small frog, but when angered it swells up to frighten the enemy away. It defends itself by exuding some milky poisonous substance). This is a subtle comparison with Mokhura's physical built, his disposition and his behaviour.

Emphasis is brought about by the use of compound nouns and diminutives. The word “bohlogopudutšwana” does not only indicate that the old people's hair has lost lustre but they themselves have become wrinkled and lacks self-care; such a spectacle would not appeal to people like Mokhura. The use of the diminutive here expresses contempt.

Mminele's style abounds with metaphor and hyperbole. A good example in this regard is the sentence: “wa hwetša mahlo a digotlane le a difofu a mo dumediša” (you find that the eyes of the kids and the blind are greeting him). What a fitting hyperbole! The word “dumediša” suggests a very warm welcome from the kids and even from the blind. There is also a metaphorical implication in this sentence. Mokgokong (1975:189) explains this metaphor as follows: since the kids can see that they symbolise the semi-enlightened community such as Makgwareng, who may possess a slight idea of what a good suit is; the blind symbolises the unlettered who would not distinguish between an elegant suit and a shabby one. Yet all of them unanimously acclaim the entry of Mokhura into church.

The following simile is memorable in Mminele (1972:35): “a taramolla maoto se nkego o tshela mekeru” (he stretches his legs as though he is leaping over furrows). This manner of walking of Mokhura as he enters church is an indication of Mokhura's pompousness. Another simile worth noting is captured in this sentence: “hlogo yona o ka re šagwana la ngwana le tšhatšhitšwego ka makhura a lefehlo” (the head being like a baby's buttock smeared with milk cream).

Mokgokong (1975:191) explains this simile as follows in **Ngwana wa Mobu**:

In the simile Mokhura's bald head is compared to a baby's buttock. A baby's buttock is smooth, tender and shiny, but when it is smeared with fat, it glistens. So Mokhura's bald head glistens. There is an element of ridicule in this simile because culturally a genuine person is referred to as *motho wa moriri*. (lit. a person with hair). So the writer pokes fun at this man whose head has half its hair.

Ideophonic words such as “khwenšenketša” derived from the ideophone “khwešenke” are more effective than ordinary word like *lokela*, meaning to put in. Another example is the word “phasola” derived from the ideophone “pha!” which denotes the sound of an open palm, brought to land forcefully on flesh - thus giving naughty children a smack.

Mminele has a particular way of choosing and using concepts and words. For inexpensive clothes he uses the phrase “ditshabatshaba tša majaja”; for an expensive suit he uses the expression “ya go bitša”; for a protruding belly, he uses the word “tšwelopele”.

From the aforementioned, it is abundantly clear that Mminele effectively uses naming as a technique in his style. One can conclude that the naming technique enhances the quality Mminele's style.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION


In this chapter, an attempt was made to investigate how the naming technique has an influence on the plot, characterization, theme and style in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. It is important to note that the foregoing elements of a novel are interdependent. They are distinguishable but not separable. The naming technique runs through all these elements like a golden thread.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE STRUCTURE OF NAMES

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an investigation will be conducted on the morphological structure of names in the selected novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**, with special reference to personal and place names. To analyse the morphological structure of these names is a process, as Koopman (1979:153) rightly comments:



The name forming process is a derivational one: all names are derived from some primary source in the language. These sources may be other nouns, other parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, ideophones, etc., or combinations of these into noun phrases, clauses.

In other words, names can be regarded as nouns because some display a prefix of a particular noun class and other name prefixes are based on the subject agreement morpheme of the first person plural of class I used in the past tense *re-*. Therefore the prefix constitutes part of the structure of the name.

Another point to note is that a characteristic feature of nouns in African languages is that of nouns governed by concordial agreement in a sentence - hence there are names with the prefix resembling a subject agreement morpheme of the names belonging to a particular noun class, for example, **Relebogile** (we are grateful) or **Rekhuditše** (we have rested).

A linguistic analysis of the names will be made with specific attention given to personal and place names used in **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

## 4.2 STRUCTURE OF NAMES

It would be appropriate to give a brief definition of the concept structure before dealing with the linguistic analysis of the names in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. Shipley (1979:313) defines the concept structure as “the sum total of the elements that make up the form of a work”.

Crystal (1991:331) regards structure as “... a sequential pattern of linguistic elements”.

It is evident from the two definitions that a structure is a form or pattern made of elements or units of some sort. A brief discussion of the structure of names used in **Ngwana wa Mobu** will be given below. This will be discussed under two sub-headings - personal names and place names.

### 4.2.1 Personal names

Personal names are proper names given to people for the purpose of identification. According to Eichler, et al. (1995:324) proper names are referred to as:



... not simply ordinary words, but are by definition lexical items with the distinction of having definite and unique reference qualities and functions.

These unique references bring about the meaning of the name. This is also confirmed by the morphological structure of names as shall be illustrated in the ensuing discussion. Personal names will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

#### *4.2.1.1 Verbal personal names*

This is one particular phenomenon concerned with the way certain names are derived from verb roots. In most cases, names of this nature exhibit class 1 prefix, i.e. **mo-**. These names are derived from verbal roots, a suffix is affixed to form a complete stem.

The name **Mootli** (the one who punishes) belongs to noun class 1 and is derived from the verb root **-otl-**. It is evident that the prefix **mo-** and the suffix **-i** have been affixed to the verb root **-otl-** to form the name **Mootli**.

Another name which has the same structure as the aforementioned one is **Mogafi** (he who is insane).

verbal root **-gaf-**

prefix **-mo-** noun class 1

suffix **-i-**

These two examples, have the nominal suffix **-i**.

There are a number of personal names which are derived from verbal roots, but exhibiting a noun class 5 prefix **le-**. This class is known as a non-personal class. It is interesting to note that the name **Lethabo** (happiness) displays a noun class 5 prefix which consists mostly of non-personal names. **Lethabo** can be identified as a name as it generates first person agreement morpheme - thus depending on its syntactical usage as follows:

**Le** - noun class 5 prefix

**-thab-** root

**-o** - suffix



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The name **Lethabo** is a deverbative which indicates the state implied by the root i.e. **-thab-**

Another name which belongs to impersonal noun class 6 is **Mafamo** (wide open), as it is evident from its prefix. This is structured as follows:

**Ma** - prefix noun class 6

**-fam-** root

**a** suffix

#### **4.2.1.2 Personal name derived from nouns**

The name **Mokhura** (fat one) is derived from the noun **makhura** (fat) which displays the noun class 6 prefix **ma-**. For the noun to qualify as a personal name the noun class 1 prefix **mo-** is affixed to the nominal stem **-khura**.

#### **4.2.1.3 Adoptive names**

When people of different cultures come into contact over a period of time, they accommodate certain concepts in their language which were unknown to them before. One can only express one's culture through one's language. The Northern Sotho speakers like many other African languages came into contact with English and Afrikaans communities, which resulted in them adopting many concepts from the aforementioned communities. Adoptives undergo certain changes to fit in with the linguistic structure of the new language. This implies that the adopted word will assume the syllable structure of a Northern Sotho word. It is worth noting that the syllable structure of a Northern Sotho word is CVCV (consonant, vowel, consonant, vowel). Thus, words from English and Afrikaans with foreign clusters of sounds are broken down to adapt to the typical structure of Northern Sotho words.

In **Ngwana wa Mobu**, the personal name **Lahlang** is sometimes referred to as **Lekomofere**. This word is adopted from the Afrikaans (hy/sy wat van ver af kom). Thus vowels were added in between the foreign clusters

to adapt to the Northern Sotho syllable structure. The consonant v- in the word “ver”, fits well with the phonological structure of Northern Sotho f-. It will be realised that the noun class 5 prefix **Le-** has satiric attributes. Hence the prefix **Le-** is normally used by a Northern Sotho speaking community towards another if it regards the other ethnic group unsuited to its dignity. This is evident in the affixation of noun class 5 prefix to ethnic names in such names as **Letšhakane** instead of Mutšhangana or Mutsonga (**Shangaan** or **Tsonga**).

#### ***4.2.1.4 Personal names derived from ideophones***

In Northern Sotho there are a number of names derived from ideophones. Generally, ideophones are regarded as words which designate the sound which is elicited in carrying out a specific action. This assertion is endorsed by Poulos and Louwrens (1994:345):

... ideophones can be used to express various connotations. It is almost as though a speaker has a vivid image in his mind of a particular state or action and he requires a dynamic expression to convey this image to his audience.

One would say ideophones are precise expressions of one's thoughts or ideas. Hence Poulos and Louwrens (1994:345) say that these other categories have the dynamic and descriptive impact of an ideophone.

When analysing the name **Phankga**, it will be noticed that it has an ideophonic touch. It expresses an abrupt action - the sudden arrival of the new, talented energetic teacher to the school Rethuše. The ideophone **phankga** suggests a heavy object splashing into water. This splashing sound designates Phankga's blunders in life. It also expresses the abrupt change in teaching methods such as using a number line in teaching addition and subtraction in mathematics. It is evident that ideophones are associated with some form of emotions when uttered. The basic ideophone stem is employed as a name without any affixation of noun prefix or nominalising vowel. It is regarded as a name, as it generates the first person concordial agreement when used in a sentence.

The name **Phankga** can be categorised under the noun class 9, but in plural **Phankga** can be categorised under noun class 10 **di-** which according to Poulos and Louwrens (1994: 31) contains:

... miscellaneous terms among others names of parts of the body, "nature" terms, personal names, tools and household items, and a few abstract nouns.

This name **Phankga** is one of the names belonging to the group of names which signify people who enjoy some or other status in the community.

#### **4.2.1.5 Compound nouns**

Compound nouns will be treated under the following sub-headings. But it would be appropriate to define compound nouns at this juncture. Crystal (1991:70) defines a compound noun as:

A linguistic unit which is composed of elements that function independently in other circumstances.

Poulos and Louwrens (1994:54) are expressing the same opinion with Crystal when pointing out that compound nouns are:

... nouns which are made up of a combination of words or stems which represent either the same or different parts of speech.

In other words, when the two elements of different word categories are combined, they form one unit i.e. a name. Hence Poulos and Louwrens on the same page refer to the process of agglutination, by which is meant that the original word forms are in some way or other “glued” together.

- **Nominalised verb stem + noun**

The name **Mminatau** is derived from the verb stem **-bina** (dance), with **mmina** from **mo+bina**. The affixation of a noun class 1 prefix resulted in complete assimilation. The sound change in the name conceals the basic prefix for noun class 1. The second element of the name is **tau**, which belongs to noun class 9 in singular and noun class 10 in plural. This name no longer displays the original noun class prefix **n-**.

- **Nominalised verb stem + locativised noun**

The first unit of the compound noun **motšwadinageng** (outsider), namely **motšwa** is derived from the verb stem **-tšwa** (come from). This verb stem has been nominalised by the affixation of the singular noun class prefix **mo-**. The second element is derived from the plural noun **dinaga** + the locative suffix **-ng** i.e. **dinageng** (places). Thus the meaning of the name is derived from the two elements of the compound noun.

- **Compound nouns based on possessives**

The name **Mogwapawatholo** (Kudu's biltong), which was bestowed on Lahlang, satirises his slender figure. This name is structurally constituted by two elements namely the noun **Mogwapa** (biltong) which belongs to non-personal noun class 3 exhibiting the prefix **mo-** and the possessive **wa tholo** (of kudu). The possessive has two elements, namely **wa** (of), the concordial element and **tholo** which is the possessive base. This possessive base belongs to the noun class 9.

Under this category of names there is also the name **Ngwana wa Mobu** (son or child of the soil), the title of the selected novel. The first element of this compound name is constituted by the name of noun class 1 namely **ngwana** (child). The basic class prefix **mo-** on this name is not overtly marked, but the name exhibits its variant form of prefix namely **ngw-**. The

second element of the name is formed by the concordial morpheme **wa** and the basic possessive **mobu** (soil) a noun displaying the prefix of noun class 3 **mo-**.

#### **4.2.1.6 Names derived from the imperative**

The name Lahlang is a command which is communicated in the imperative. The name is derived from the verb **-lahla** (throw away) and the second personal plural suffix **-ng**. This second person plural form is sometimes used by some Northern Sotho people, referring to one person. In this novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**, it refers however, to the community of Makgwareng. This community was influenced by Phankga, Mokhura, Mafamo and Mogafi to oust Lahlang from the position of principalship. Even if the imperative sometimes expresses a request, it is clear that Lahlang was regarded as inefficient. Anything which is of no value, is discarded.

#### **4.2.2 Place names**

Place names refer to names given to any type of human habitat such as a village, town, farmstead, church or school. Möller (1988:206) categorises place names into two groups, viz:

- die plekname wat die geografiese entiteit aantoon en wat sodoende die plaaslike lokaliteit of ruimte aandui waarin die verhaal afspeel.
- die plekname wat deur die literêre konteks deel word van die fiktiewe landskap van die verbeelding en sodoende die werklike wêreld transendeer.



This implies that there are physical geographical names and those which an author creates for the sake of literary works, sometimes based on the physical geographical place names.

According to the derivational process, names are often derived from nouns which exhibit the prefix of various noun class prefixes. As soon as these names are regarded as place names they generate agreement morphemes which are typical of locatives. Hence Louwrens (1994:9) comments that:

Such names should synchronically be regarded as belonging to the locative classes since place names lack overt locative class prefix, they must necessarily be classified in what is called N-Locative class, being the class in which locative nouns lacking an overt prefix are accommodated.

This implies that the same process employed to analyse the structure of nouns, will apply equally on place names. Place names will be discussed under various sub-headings:

#### **4.2.2.1 *Locative nouns***

The name **Makwareng** is derived from **Makwara** (stony soil/ground) a noun of class 6, as it exhibits that particular noun class prefix **ma-** and the utilisation of the locative suffix **-ng**. It designates a place of stones. The class prefix of noun class 6 indicates the plurality of noun class 5. It is evident that the author preferred this noun as it is associated with the problems which occurred in this village. It depicts the hostile atmosphere

which prevailed in Makgwareng community i.e. the whole community was of the opinion that Lahlang should be expelled.

#### 4.2.2.2 *Deverbative nouns*

The place name **Kopanong** (a meeting place) is a noun which is derived from the verb **kopana** (to come together). The verb suffix **-a** is replaced by the nominising suffix **-o**, and it becomes **kopano**. This name belongs to noun class 9. These are derived names which do not overtly display the class prefix. To locativise this name, the suffix **-ng** is affixed to it, and it results in the name **kopanong** (a meeting place).

#### 4.2.2.3 *Compound nouns*



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It is not only personal names which are based on compounds, but place names too, as they are derived from nouns which form personal names. Compound names are not only derived from words belonging to the same word category or different categories, but can also be derived from sentences which in the present orthography are written as separate words.

- **Names derived from an interrogative sentence**

It is evident that some Northern Sotho names are derived from fully fledged sentences. For example the name **Bakantirang** i.e. **ba ka ntira eng** (what can they do to me). The prefix **ba-** is derived from the concordial morpheme which generates agreement of nouns

belonging to noun class 2. In Northern Sotho it is possible to begin a sentence with a subject concord. The next element **ka** is a potential morpheme which precedes the second form of the subject concord of the first person singular **n-**. Another element of this name is the verb **dira** with the second form subject concord of the first person **n-** affixed to it and results in **ntira**. The last part of the name is the contracted form **-ng?** of the interrogative **eng?**

- **Names derived from first person subject concord + verb**

**Rethuše** (help us), which is a place name, is derived from the subject concord of the first person plural i.e. **re-**, which forms the first part of the name, which is the prefix used in the past tense verbs. The second element of the name is derived from the verb **thuša** (help) which is in the present tense. Even if this concordial morpheme generates the agreement of nouns in noun classes 1 and 2, it is clear that as it assumes the status of a place name, the name **Rethuše** (help us) utilises the concordial agreement of locative classes to be in agreement with the verb.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is evident that the structure of personal names and place names can be investigated through the derivational process. Most of Northern Sotho personal and place names reveal that they are derived from nouns and verbs, though other word categories do contribute

towards this process. It is also worth noting that the morphological analysis of names in **Ngwana wa Mobu** helps one to understand how the semantics of these names contribute towards the success of the naming technique in this novel. By understanding the structure, one is able to associate the name with the character, for example, Lethabo is depicted as a person who is always happy. Such attributes contributed to the development of plot, characterization, theme and style.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the naming technique was used in the development of plot, characterization, theme and style in **Ngwana wa Mobu**. The discussion clearly reveals that Mminele made good use of this technique in this novel. Mminele's literary work has deviated from other authors whose works are dominated by the narrative technique. This does not mean that an author can rely on one technique only, these techniques work hand in hand.

It is evident that Mminele's knowledge of Northern Sotho culture has enabled him to utilise this naming technique as it is a cultural phenomenon. It is interesting to note that the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of societies has led to this cultural device being neglected. Hence children are bestowed with meaningless names such as Lolo or Fonono.

In other words, Mminele's endeavours lay a sound foundation for creative writers in future. It would be valuable if forthcoming dramatists, novelists, poets and prose writers make use of this naming technique. The manner in which the naming technique is utilised in **Ngwana wa Mobu** enables the events and actions of characters to develop into a plot. Such events in **Ngwana wa Mobu** have a cause and effect on other subsequent events, causing a chain of reactions. Through the use of this technique, all events are united together to form a coherent whole.

In showing the qualities, actions, sayings and reactions of characters such as Phankga, Lahlang, Mokhura, Mafamo and Mogafi, Mminele makes use of naming as a technique. It is on the basis of this technique that characters in this novel behave as individual human beings. By making use of this technique, Mminele's characters interact naturally and as ordinary people with their respective virtues and ills.

Mminele's rich knowledge of Northern Sotho culture and command of the language enabled him to utilise the naming technique in a meticulous way - hence the creation of these satiric and humorous names. His particular way of choosing and using concepts and words in **Ngwana wa Mobu** has elevated the quality of his style - thus the naming technique is effectively used in his style. It is worth noting that the naming technique is a relevant device to employ in literary works as it enhances the quality of the style.

Through a close study of this author's style, one realises that Northern Sotho possesses certain purely semantic qualities which helps to give it a high degree of literary value.

Every author always has an experience that he wishes to share with his readers. Naming as a technique serves as a vehicle for communication, in other words Mminele expresses his experiences through it. Through the utilisation of this device Mminele registers concern regarding the social and political problems surrounding the African people. The author expresses these problems artistically by employing the naming technique in his novel, **Ngwana wa Mobu**.

The semantic aspect of these names reveal jealousy, hatred, nepotism and injustices practised by people in a community. Jealousy, hatred and nepotism are expressed in the name “Lahlang” because Phankga and Mokhura conspired that he should be expelled because as an alien, he doesn't deserve to be a principal in their community. By using this naming technique Mminele evokes the emotions of people towards these injustices. It is worth noting how he (Mminele) meticulously reveals the ills of the society by making use of this technique.

It is worth noting that the structure of names used in **Ngwana wa Mobu**, forms an integral part of the naming technique - hence the characters in this novel are very well depicted. The semantics of these names are embedded in their structure.

Placing Mminele's novel in historical perspective, one would regard him as one of the prolific Northern Sotho novelists. Mminele has to be appreciated and lauded for the meaningful contribution he has made to the development of quality in literary art.

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