

**IMAGERY IN SOUTHERN-SOTHO PROVERBS
AND RIDDLES**

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SUMMARY

Although Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles have appeared in many publications, seemingly imagery in these genres has not been analysed or described in depth. The purpose of this study is to discuss imagery as evoked by figurative language in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles.

Chapter one is a general overview of the study of proverbs and riddles already studied in Southern-Sotho and other Sotho languages. Studies of these two genres by other languages such as Zulu, English and Afrikaans are considered.

In chapter two, a broad definition of imagery is attempted. Literal, perceptual and conceptual imagery are explained by means of Southern-Sotho examples. This chapter includes the function of imagery. Examples of how imagery employs the senses are also given. The chapter is concluded by mentioning the types of figures of speech which evoke imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles.

The proverb is defined in chapter three and imagery in proverbs is identified by examples with their literal and figurative meaning. Proverbs are found to employ more figures of speech as compared to riddles.

Chapter four deals with imagery in riddles. The riddle is defined and types of imagery are illustrated by means of examples and their figurative meaning.

Chapter five contains a general conclusion on the findings of the study of imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles. This chapter includes a bibliography.

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CHAPTER 1

IMAGERY IN SOUTHERN-SOTHO PROVERBS AND RIDDLES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Proverbs and riddles constitute part of oral and traditional literature. They are a legacy from the past, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Southern-Sotho proverbs are used to reflect on aspects of human existence. They give courage and warning to both young and old, and serve as a reflection of one's life. They are used to advise and to guide.

Riddles, on the other hand, serve as children's entertainment. They stimulate their minds, and encourage their observation and imagination through apt metaphors. Both genres employ figurative language to evoke rich imagery.

1.2 AN OVERVIEW OF IMAGERY ON EXISTING RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS

Studies on Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles have been undertaken by several scholars and researchers. Some have concentrated only on the proverb and others on the riddle, whilst others researched both the proverb and the riddle. Examples of these studies are:

Sekese (1973) collected over eight hundred proverbs and analysed their obscure meanings. However, the figurative language and imagery employed in these proverbs, is not discussed.

Mokitimi (1991) provides an exposition of the origin, meaning, contextual usage and metaphorical significance of Southern-Sotho proverbs.

Moilwa, et.al. (1989) compiled a collection of proverbs and included their implied meaning in Sesotho, Afrikaans and English. They did not investigate the figurative language or imagery used.

Rakoma (1978) in his collection of Northern-Sotho proverbs, concentrated on the figurative meaning.

Grobler (1978:7) offered a considerable contribution with his work on metaphor in Northern-Sotho proverbs.

He mentions that:

Die metafoor is 'n vorm van beeldspraak wat grondliggend is aan die spreekwoord... Hoewel die metafoor op vergelyking berus, is dit in sigself nie 'n verkorte vergelyking nie.

(The metaphor is a form of imagery which is fundamental to the proverb... Although the metaphor rests upon comparison, it is itself not an abridged comparison.)

Bezuidenhout (1981:83) in his research on imagery mentions antithesis, antonomasia, hyperbole, metaphor, personification and simile as forms of imagery.

Bushney (1986:14-15) agrees that the language of a proverb is metaphorical, and she is of the opinion that:

Spreekwoorde is gewoonlik 'n figuurlike betekenis... Baie spreekwoorde word in beeld gebruik wat ten doel het om die betekenis van spreekwoorde in 'n sekere mate te versluier en die bewoording van so 'n spreekwoord is dus figuurlik.

(Proverbs are usually a figurative meaning...
Most proverbs use imagery
for the purpose of concealing the meaning of the proverb to a certain extent and the wording of such a proverb is thus figurative.)

Writers like Seboni (1979) collected many proverbs and idioms but imagery is not attended to. Another scholar Dierks (1972:18) claims:

Die bewoording van so 'n spreekwoord is figuurlik. As 'n mens die

betekenis van 'n spreekwoord waarin beeldspraak gebruik word wil vasstel, moet jy eers ondersoek wat deur die betrokke beeld aangedui word.

(The wording of such a proverb is figurative. If one wants to understand the meaning of the proverb in which the imagery is used, one must first explore what is implied in the specific image.)

Other researchers like Khuba (1985) have also analysed figurative language in the proverb and have concluded that the proverb employs different types of imagery.

Dorson (1972:134-142) mentions the quality of imagery, wit and symbolism in the African languages in his research on proverbial imagery.

Fortune (1976:32) states that imagery is contrasty rather than congruent, with irony resting on congruency of imagery and paradox resting on contrast.

From the foregoing information, it may be concluded that although some writers and scholars have studied imagery, it would seem that imagery with regard to Southern-Sotho proverbs in particular, received little attention. Yet, Norton and Velaphe (1924) compiled a collection of Southern-Sotho riddles and included English translations and meanings. Imagery is not analysed in this collection.

Segoete (1961) collected over two thousand and fifty Southern-Sotho riddles and included their metaphorical meanings.

Khumalo (1974:194) states:

In order to understand the metaphor employed in the riddles, one must understand how the Zulus disguise movement, shape, colour, size, and the words themselves which form the answers to certain riddles. One has to know something about Zulu culture and be able to spot puns where they occur.

Nakene (1943:125) identified the following dimension of riddles:

In the lower cultures, riddles propound real problems for solution; they describe persons or things in a metaphor;

and the answer must discover the meaning.

According to Kotsane (1976:16-17) riddles are figurative and display imagery, humour and wit. Makopo (1987:46) mentioned metaphor as an important disguise in riddles. He also included personification and animation as examples of metaphor.

Beuchat in Dundes (1965:101) states that many riddles exhibit highly poetical forms and have vivid imagery. The use of metaphor in disguising the riddle's answer has been considered. Schapera I (1932) in writing about Kgatla riddles and their meaning, has failed to refer to the relevant figurative language and imagery employed.

Some scholars have studied both the proverb and the riddle. Finnegan (1990) discusses the style and structure of African proverbs and riddles, with special reference to the figurative language used to evoke imagery.

Guma (1990) discusses the linguistic features of proverbs and riddles. They are seen to be figurative, employing various structural forms like contrast, a type of imagery. Examples, like the following, are given:

Pelo e matla, mmele o bonolo.
(The heart is strong, the body is weak.)

The implied meaning of the proverb is that one may want to do certain things but lacks the strength. This imagery is evoked by the contrast of *matla* (strength) and *bonolo* (softness).

Lenake (1990) and Mohapi (1989) compiled lists of proverbs and riddles to be studied in secondary schools. Their figurative meanings are included.

Nqcanqca (1990:59-89) in his collection of proverbs and riddles, has considered imagery. He states that riddles can only be understood by the people of the same locality and habits.

Despite the many attempts of writers and researchers to study the figurative language and imagery in the proverbs and riddles of certain languages, with regard to Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles, imagery has not been adequately researched. Consequently this study will focus on imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to analyse imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles. It is hoped to illustrate how figurative language evokes imagery. This will be attempted by providing examples of proverbs and riddles together with an analysis of the type of imagery employed.

1.4 METHOD OF ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Sources used in data collection are books concerning African literature, journals, theses and dissertations. Works on poetry will also be consulted. Examples of proverbs and riddles with their literal and figurative meaning will also be analysed. For example:

Leoto ke moloji (Proverb)
(A foot is a witch) (Literal meaning)

The proverb means that it is possible to find yourself at a place where you never dreamt or imagined you could find yourself in (figurative meaning).

In chapter one, views of writers with regard to proverbs and riddles as well as their comments on imagery if any, have been discussed. A broad definition of imagery and its function will be dealt with in chapter two. Chapter three will attempt an application of imagery in proverbs. Chapter four will include an analysis of riddles. Chapter five comprises of a summary of research findings and a bibliography.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 IMAGERY

2.1.1 DEFINITION OF IMAGERY

Many writers and researchers have presented different definitions of imagery, often linking it with figurative language. A few of these writers will be quoted in this study.

Preminger (1974:363) defines imagery as:

...images produced in the mind by language, whose words and statements may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions where the reader actually, to have those experiences, or to the sense -impressions themselves.

Preminger (1974:363) and Deutsch (1977:316) agree that imagery is produced by language in the mind of a person. Preminger (1974:364) states that there are different kinds of mental images that appeal to vision (sight), olfactory (smell), tactile (touch), auditory (hearing), gustatory (taste) and kinesthetic (awareness of muscle tension and movement). This view is also expressed, among others, by Pretorius (1989:31), Reaske (1966:36), Abrams (1988:81) and Moleleki (1993:183).

Cuddon (1977:316) is of opinion that imagery is:

*A general term that covers the use of language or represents objects, actions, feelings, ideas, states of mind and sensory and extra-sensory experience. An image does not necessarily mean a mental picture.
In the first place we may distinguish between literal,
perceptual and conceptual images.*

According to Brown in Fela (1989:29) imagery can be:

Words or phrases denoting a sense of perceptible object, used to designate not that object, but some other object of thought belonging to a different order or category of being.

Shaw (1905:195) defines imagery as:

The forming of mental images, figures or likeness of things, the use of language to represent actions, persons, objects, and ideas descriptively. Imagery can be both figurative or literal. An author can use figurative language such as metaphor and simile to create images as vivid as the physical presence of objects and ideas themselves.

Packard (1989:93) is of the opinion that:

Imagery is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. When we become clear about an idea we say: "I get the picture", as if this clarification came in the form of an image.

Cohen (1973:187) defines imagery as:

A direct sense of appeal, a figure of speech, or both, which lead a reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure. A consistent pattern of imagery sometimes constitutes symbolism.



According to the above definitions, it can be concluded that imagery may be literal or figurative. It involves both mental and physical images that are produced by metaphorical language. Imagery makes use of human senses, and is produced by figures of speech. Furthermore imagery refers to the pictures represented in a person's mind. It also involves describing an object or concept in terms of another by drawing similarities between the two. This process will be illustrated in the subsequent treatment of imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles.

2.1.2 LITERAL, PERCEPTUAL AND CONCEPTUAL IMAGERY

This study will now attempt to outline the difference between the literal, perceptual and conceptual images as mentioned by Cuddon (1977:316).

According to Cuddon (1977:316) a literal image is without figurative language. Furthermore it may not convey a usual image. Some Southern-Sotho proverbs retain their truth in a pure undisguised form, as in:

Mphempe e a lapisa, motho o kgonwa ke sa hae.
(Give me, give me causes hunger, a person is pleased by his own.)

The meaning of this proverb is literal because the proverb means that it is better to get something yourself than to ask for it all the time.

Ntshabe ke tle ke o tshabe.
(Fear me so that I in turn fear you).

The proverb literally means that respect should be reciprocal or mutual.

Guma (1990:39) claims that:

*In the riddle the truth is deliberately disguised only
an accurate description thereof being given.*

Seemingly, riddles unlike proverbs, are never literal in Southern-Sotho.

Cuddon (1977:316) regards perceptual and conceptual imagery as characterised by a figurative meaning. The following examples will be given to illustrate that Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles are characterised by a figurative meaning and employ both perceptual and conceptual imagery:

Riddle: *Se re se ya kwana e ke se tla kwano.*
(Whilst going that way, it seems to be coming this way.)

The image of *terene* (a train) is evoked by contrasting the two phrases - *se ya kwana* (going that way) and *se tla kwano* (coming this way). The image evoked here is perceptual because when one looks at a stationary electric train one cannot say in which direction it will go.

Proverb: *Tweba ha e dule le thootse.*
(A mouse does not live with a pip.)

(Little food does not pass the mouth.)

The implied meaning of this proverb is that half a loaf is better than nothing. The proverb appeals to the sense of taste.

Riddle: *Ka se jala mona sa mela thabeng.*
 (I plant it here, it grows on the mountain.)

The sound of a whip is implied by this riddle. The whip echoes whenever it is used and therefore the riddle appeals to the sense of hearing.

Proverb: *Leihlo la kgutsana ke lebone.*
 (The eye of an orphan is a lamp.)

An orphan does not lose sight of the needy circumstances. The orphan's eye allows the cattle to thrive. An orphan is always watchful because he/she has nobody to depend on. The meaning appeals to the sense of sight.

Proverb: *Bohlale bo ja monga bona.*
 (Wisdom devours its owner.)

The proverb refers to someone who thinks he/she is too clever to accept the advice of others. It appeals to the intellect (abstract) which is an extra-sensory experience (i.e. it is achieved by some means other than the senses).

Riddle: *Hlanya le tlola meutlweng.*
 (The madman dances on the thorns.)

The disguised answer of this riddle is *dikgobe ha di kaba-kaba*, (cooked corn or mealies when they boil). The riddle appeals to the sense of movement (kinaesthetic).

The Southern-Sotho examples given here confirm that imagery involves sensory and extra-sensory experiences.

2.1.4 FUNCTIONS OF IMAGERY

Cohen (1973:51) claims that:

The term imagery is vital to the study of poetic style and should be used to include both images and figures of speech.

Proverbs and riddles are part of oral literature with imagery being prominent concerning the style of these genres. This is due to the fact that proverbs and riddles have similar functions as in prose and poetry. A few of these functions will be illustrated subsequently.

Fela (1989:30) states:

The main function of imagery is pictorial. The poet employs language in a special way by using imagery. Imagery is often used for the sake of giving clarity to a certain object or event. By using the simile for instance, the poet draws a clear comparison between an object or event familiar to the reader and the object described. Imagery results in an analogy between objects and introducing a new idea in a recognizable manner.

Fela (1989:31) further states that the above mentioned functions apply to all subdivisions of imagery which will be discussed with reference to Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles in the following chapters.

Abrams (1988:81) states:

Imagery (that is images taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion or in the analogues (the vehicles) used to its similes and metaphors.

Furthermore Abrams (1988:81-82) stipulates that imagery is used more narrowly to signify descriptions of visible objects only, especially if the description is vivid and particularized. Imagery also signifies figurative language, especially the vehicles of metaphors and similes.

Van Staden (1980:159-183) has mentioned four functions of imagery, namely:

Die verduidelikende funksie. (The explanatory function.)

Die verrykingsfunksie. (The enrichment function.)

Die konsentreringsfunksie. (The concentration function.)

Die verfraaiingsfunksie. (The beautifying function.)

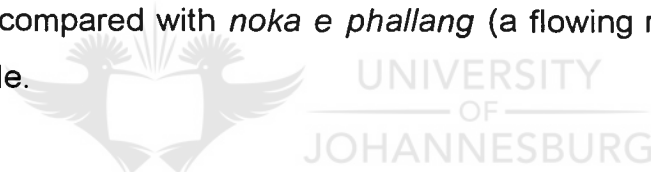
These four functions will be discussed in more detail:

a) The Explanatory Function

Van Staden (1980:160) is of the opinion that metaphorical and emotional mystery can only become tangible with the aid of imagery, and that imagery originates from the metaphorical and emotional life of people. The following Southern-Sotho proverb illustrates this function:

Nako e phalla jwale ka noka.
(Time flows like a river.)

The implied meaning of the proverb may not easily be understood. Therefore, time is compared with *noka e phallang* (a flowing river) to render the imagery tangible.



b) The Enrichment Function

Van Staden (1980:161) states that the enrichment function of imagery makes it easier for the artist to conclude what he sees and hears. For example:

Le tla duma le sele.
(It will thunder even if it is cloudless.)

It is not common to hear thunder when the sky is clear. The proverb appeals to both sight and hearing. The implied meaning is that the unexpected could happen.

c) The Concentration Function

Another function of imagery is that it promotes concentration. To avoid lengthy descriptions, imagery is used to shorten and deliver the thought

forcefully. Allusion is used very effectively especially in long descriptive riddles as in Guma (1990:64):

Bitla le a phela le mofu o a phela. Ha re ne re tsebisitswe hore mofu o shwele, re fumana a ntse a phela, le lebitla le ntse le phela la hae.

(The grave is alive and the deceased is alive. Whereas we had been informed that the deceased was dead, we found him alive and his grave also alive.)

This riddle is based on a well known event from the Bible. The imagery employed shortens and delivers the thought forcefully. The riddle is about Jonah who was sent to Nineveh to spread the Gospel. He was swallowed by a fish. He spent three days and three nights in its stomach. The fish vomited him on the seventh day whilst he was still alive. The fish was also alive in the water.

d) The Beautifying Function

Beautifying is a poetical function of imagery. However the excessive usage of imagery does not only reduce the impact of an image but also decreases the value of the literature itself. Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles seemingly employ imagery effectively. For example:

O bina sa nonyana mohlakeng.
(She sings like a bird in the reeds.)

The image in this proverb is very striking. The singing is compared to that of a bird because some birds living near rivers, are known for their sweet, soothing songs.

Functions of imagery are broadly explained by Heese and Lawton (1991:118-121). They mention imagery in drama; it is therefore important to include them in this study because some of these functions are applicable to Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles.

According to Heese and Lawton (1991:118-121) the general function of imagery in literary art is to achieve concentration and forcefulness; a symbol makes the abstract concrete, and is thus more easily understood. Imagery provides us with a picture of the situation and at the same time evokes the appropriate emotion. A single image may serve a multiplicity of purposes.

From the information collected here, it can be concluded that some of these functions of imagery can also be applied to Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles. The functions may be summarised as follows:

Imagery beautifies and serves a decorative purpose. Images stimulate the imagination and promote concentration. They can be used to create mood and atmosphere. Images have a poetic value and as in the case of drama, they can reveal character in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles, for example:

Leshala le tswala molora
(Coal begets ash.)



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The implied meaning of this proverb is that parents often give birth to a child who is unlike themselves. The imagery reveals character in this example.

2.1.5 TYPES OF IMAGERY

It has already been mentioned in 2.1.4 that imagery is vital to the study of proverbs and riddles. Heese and Lawton (1991:82) state that there are several different types of images; the most common being simile, personification, metaphor and symbol, a fact which is also mentioned by Pretorius (1988:37-47). Preminger (1989:365) includes metonymy and synecdoche, while Bezuidenhout (1981:83,91) has discussed antithesis, antonomasia and hyperbole in addition to those mentioned by other researchers.

Cohen (1973:51) mentions that:

Figures of speech are images that are often intentionally indirect; they generally depend on a process of association, the deliberate linking of two elements.

According to Cohen (1973:185) assonance, consonance and onomatopoeia are some of the devices available to an author to evoke comprehension and to create sound effects.

Other figures of speech such as oxymoron, animation irony, satire and sarcasm will receive attention because Southern-Sotho figurative language produces imagery in proverbs and riddles.

The above mentioned types of imagery will be identified, explained and applied in the next chapters.



3.1 PROVERBS (MAELE)

Proverbs constitute a base on which Southern-Sotho wisdom is centered. These proverbs contain the traditional customs, values and norms of this culture. They give guidance and counselling to both young and old.

3.2 THE PROVERB DEFINED

Dundes (1977:480) mentions that proverbs are the oldest form of folklore found among the peoples of the world but are most common among the peoples of Africa. Guma (1990:65) adds that proverbs are an embodiment of distilled and collective experience of the community and they are figurative.

According to Schipper (1991:1) a proverb has a concise artistic form, evaluative and conservative function in the society. It is the cream of a language. Dorson (1972:183) mentions that proverbs are an art with wit, sarcasm, humour and poetic values of language usage and have a quality imagery. Gibbons (1988:11) has it that a proverb is on style of metaphorical language and is figuratively expressed and reveals a familiar concrete experience.

Lenake (1990:40) states that proverbs are a treasure of the Southern-Sotho language which have been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Proverbs are based on the history of the Southern-Sotho people, the wars they waged and the poverty they experienced as a result of these wars. They contain similes and metaphors.

From the above definitions it may be concluded that proverbs have a quality of imagery, have specific functions in communities and that they are stylistically characterised by metaphorical language which is expressed figuratively. The figurative language in Southern-Sotho proverbs will be analysed in this chapter.

3.3 IMAGERY IN SOUTHERN-SOTHO PROVERBS

Finnegan (1990:389-390) declares:

Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw. In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs.

Southern-Sotho, like the other African languages has proverbs which contain a rich source of imagery as will be illustrated in this chapter.

3.4 PROVERBS AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

The figures of speech employed to evoke imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs will be attended to in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 SIMILE (*PAPISO*)

According to Pretorius (1989:37) a simile is

...an explicit comparison, as opposed to metaphor where the comparison is made between two things which may differ in all respects except for one specific characteristic which they have in common. Such comparison is normally marked by figurative meaning.

Shipley (1970:304) defines a simile as:

A comparison of two things of different categories because of a point of resemblance and because the association emphasizes, clarifies or in some way enhances the original.

This fact is also mentioned by Cohen (1973:51) who describes a simile as:

... a direct comparison between two elements and is usually introduced by like or as.

In Southern-Sotho, a simile employs adverbial formatives *jwale ka*, *sa*, *la* and *seka*. The following examples illustrate the use of simile in Southern-Sotho proverbs.

Lefatshe le dika-dika jwaleka leoto la kolo.
(The earth turns round like the wheel of a wagon.)

A person's life is compared to a wagon's turning wheel because it changes with time.

O matha la Ntshwekge.
(He runs like Ntshwekge.)

Guma (1990:79) explains that *Ntshwekge* was a good runner whose swiftness saved him from a band of *Nguni* warriors who wanted to kill him. A person who is a swift runner is always compared to *Ntshwekge* in Southern-Sotho.

O robala sa mmutla.

(He sleeps like a hare.)

This proverb is used when someone is on the look out while pretending to be asleep.

O thotse seka lefaatshe.
(He is as silent as the earth.)

A very quiet person is compared to the grave. Such a person is never trusted. His/her quietness evokes the imagery of a grave.

Ihlo la monna eka patolo.
(A man's eye is like a sharpening stone.)

The proverb evokes images of an extraordinarily big eye and therefore the eye is compared to a hard stone used for sharpening millstones (*lelwala le tshilo*).

As similes are mostly used in idioms, there are only a few Southern-Sotho proverbs which derive from them.



3.4.2 METAPHOR (TSHWANTSHISO)

Abrams (1985:65) mentions that:

In a metaphor, a word or expression which in literal usage denotes one kind of thing or action is applied to distinctly different kind of thing or action, with asserting a comparison, for example:

Monna ke nku, ha a ke a lla.
(A man is a sheep, he never cries.)

In this proverb *monna* (man) and *nku* (sheep) are equal in status. The man is not like a sheep but he is a sheep. The implied meaning is that a man never cries aloud when in pain as a sheep which goes silently to the slaughtering place.

Grobler (1978:7) when writing about metaphor states:

Die metafoor is 'n vorm van beeldspraak wat grondliggend is aan die spreekwoord. Hoewel die metafoor op vergelyking berus, is dit in sigself nie 'n verkorte vergelyking nie.

(The metaphor is a form of imagery that forms the basis of a proverb. Although the metaphor depends on comparison, it is not in itself a shortened comparison).

A metaphor can be said to be an implied statement of likeness between two different things which have one common feature. For example:

Leoto ke moloji, ha le na nko.
(The foot is a witch, it has no nose.)

The foot is compared to a witch implying that one never knows where one will land. *Leoto* (foot) and *Moloji* (witch) are given the same likeness and status. In Southern-Sotho the metaphor often employs the copula *ke* to render equality to the two compared objects.

Gibbons (1988:16) mentions the following functions of metaphor in proverbs:

Metaphor is descriptive and witty. For example:

Motse ke kgetsi ya masepa.
(A village is a bag of faeces.)

The proverb implies that people in every kraal have their own bad secrets which cannot be told or that every homestead has its difficulties.

Metaphor permits intricate relationships and interactions to be understood in concrete images. For example:

Motswalle wa leshodu ke leshodu.
(A friend of a thief is a thief.)

The implied meaning of this proverb is that people who have the same character are usually friends. They are birds of the same feather.

Metaphors relate old knowledge to the new. For example:

Dithoto ke lefa la ba bohlale.
(Fools are the inheritance of the wise.)

The proverb implies that fools are the stepping stones of the wise. Clever people mostly take advantage of people who are not clever.

Metaphors provide a comparison between what is familiar and what is remote. For example:

Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane.
(Riches are a mist and a haze.)

Riches are compared to a mist and haze to imply that wealth is short lived. This proverb refers to rich people who despise the poor.

Pretorius (1989:33) mentions that the purport or the general drift of thought regarding the subject of a metaphor is also known as the *tenor* and the image which embodies the tenor is called a *vehicle*. The following examples illustrate these concepts:

Mosadi ke morena
(A woman is a chief.)

Mosadi (woman), the subject of the metaphor, is the **tenor** and *ke morena* (is a chief) is the image that embodies the tenor and is called the **vehicle**.

The tenor may be implied. For example:

Ke nta ya selomela kobong.
(He is a louse that bites in the blanket.)

The meaning implied is that he is a treacherous person. The tenor of the proverb is implied. A good number of Southern-Sotho proverbs omit the tenor by employing the copula *ke* followed by a qualificative.

3.4.3 PERSONIFICATION (*MOTHO FATSO*)

Abrams (1985:67) refers to personification as follows:

Another figure related to metaphor is personification, or in the Greek term, prospopeia, in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or human attributes or feelings.

The same idea is held by Cohen (1973:52) who mentions that the coupling of inanimate or abstract forces of concepts with human behaviour evokes

images that generally would not be expected. The following proverbs illustrate the content of the given definitions:

Lefatshe le lebisitse meno hodimo.
(The earth has turned its teeth upwards.)

The earth is personified because only people and animals have teeth, not the earth. By personifying the earth, the image and meaning implied is that times are bad.

Mabele ke ngwetsi ya malapa ohle.
(Sorghum is the daughter-in-law of all homes.)

Mabele (Sorghum) is given a human character or title to evoke the image that similar occurrences happen in all homes. The best example is death.

Southern-Sotho proverbs employ personification abundantly.

3.4.4 SYMBOL

The Longman Dictionary (1989:297) defines a symbol as:

A trope in which a word or phrase or image represents something literal and concrete and yet maintains a complex set of abstract ideas and values that are usually interpreted according to surrounding context but which may mean a number of things depending upon who is interpreting the symbol. The symbol works in the opposite way of a metaphor: While the metaphor gives off meaning from the context, the symbol absorbs meaning from the context.

Gray (1994:203) adds:

*A symbol represents something by analogy or association. Thus **white** may represent innocence, a **lion** may represent courage and **rose** may represent beauty.*

Gray (1994:203) also states that a symbol may be seen as a species of metaphor in which the exact subject of metaphor is not made explicit and may even be mysterious.

Some Southern-Sotho proverbs serve as symbols. This will be demonstrated by the following examples:

Ngwana ya tjheleng o tshaba mollo.
(A burnt child dreads the fire.)

Fire in this proverb, symbolises danger. The implied meaning is that a bad experience is not often repeated as the victim of an unpleasant experience will always avoid a repetition if possible.

Ngwana moshemane, pholo a letlaka kabelwa manong.
(Boy child, ox of the vultures, one abandoned to vultures.)

Traditionally, a vulture is a symbol of death. A baby boy is regarded as a man fated to be killed in war and therefore to be eaten by vultures. The implied meaning is that a boy must fend for himself.

Lerumo ka dikobong.
(An assegai under the blankets.)

In Sesotho *Lerumo* (assegai) is a symbol of unrest and hatred. One who carries an assegai is feared, and not trusted. The proverb implies to lure a person with the intention of killing him.

Tlou ha e sitwe ke morwalo.
(An elephant's load is never too big.)

Figuratively, the proverb implies that every person has enough strength to carry his burden. An elephant is a symbol of strength.

In Southern-Sotho certain animals and birds symbolize many aspects of everyday life. For example *kgomo* (cow) is a symbol of status and wealth. Because of this importance, many proverbs in Southern-Sotho are about *kgomo* (a cow), for example:

Kgomo e kopanya ditjhaba
(A cow unites people.)

The implied meaning of this proverb is that families become related due to *lobola* (bride-price). The image of unity is evoked by the symbol of *kgomo* (cow).

Kgomo ke banka ya Mosotho.
(A cow is a Mosotho's bank.)

The use of cattle in the proverb implies wealth. Many cattle are a sign of wealth, because by means of cattle, debts are paid, or a woman is married. Anything is possible as long as one has cattle.

Heese and Lawton (1991:85) remark as follows:

The difference between a metaphor and a symbol is that while a metaphor is an implied comparison between two fairly specific things, and is based on one or more correspondences, a symbol is a representation rather than a comparison, a way of making the abstract concrete, and is based not on direct correspondence but rather on more general associations. Usually it appeals particularly to the emotions.

This difference between metaphors and symbols, as specified above, is illustrated in the examples of Southern-Sotho proverbs that have been provided.

3.4.5 ANTITHESIS (CONTRAST) (KGANYETSO)

Guma (1990:91) is of the opinion that:

... a number of proverbs are made up of two parallel statements in juxtaposed position. Such statements are contrasting in significance, in that the first may indicate the opposite of the second, and vice versa. They may involve identical parts of speech - a noun or compound noun in the first statement being contrasted with another noun or compound noun in the second one; a predicate with a predicate, an object with an object, depending on the parts of speech that are involved in each section of the contrast pair that constitute the proverb.

The following examples illustrate this opinion:

Bo tsholwa (bohobe) bo tjhesa bo tsohe bo fodile.

3.4.7 METONYMY (*SEEMELA*)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990:747) defines metonymy as:

... *the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant. For example:*

Pitsa ho fahwa e belang.
(The pot that boils receives attention.)

The image implied by this proverb is that help is given to the one who comes first. The pot (*pitsa*) itself does not boil rather it is the water therein that boils.

Pelo e jele masooko.
(The heart has eaten kalmus.)

The proverb implies being in a bad mood. The heart is substituted for the mouth (*molomo*) which is responsible for eating.

According to Abrams (1985:66) metonymy is when:

...*the literal term for one thing is applied to another with which it has become closely associated.*

This definition is illustrated by the examples given above.

3.4.8 ANTONOMASIA (*ANTHONOMASHIA*)

The Longman dictionary of poetic terms (1989:20) defines antonomasia as the:

replacing of a proper name with its most obvious quality of aspect or substituting a proper name with one whose name has risen to the level of a symbol.

The following Southern-Sotho proverbs serve as an illustration:

Ke nta ya selomela kobong.
(It is a louse that bites in the blanket.)

A treacherous person is referred to as *nta* (louse). The image evoked is that of a person who does things without being seen, like a louse.

Poho e tsejwa ka mengwapo.
(A bull is known by its scars.)

In this proverb *poho* (bull) is the substitute for a man, implying that a brave person is known by his scars. The image of a person who is fond of fighting is evoked.

Antonomasia, synecdoche and metonymy are related metaphors because they substitute the name of something. Antonomasia substitutes a proper name with one whose name has risen to the level of a symbol. Metonymy substitutes the name of an attribute for that of a thing referred to. With synecdoche, a part is put for the whole or a whole for the part.

Examples of these metaphors are not common in Southern-Sotho proverbs.

3.4.9 HYPERBOLE (*PHETELETSO*)



According to the *Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms* (1989:136) hyperbole is:

... a rhetorical form of comparison using exaggeration or obvious overstatement for comic or dramatic effect.

The following examples illustrate this type of imagery:

Pelo e ile mafisa.
(The heart has been lent to someone.)

The exaggeration used here, evokes imagery of despondency, because it is not possible to lend one's heart to someone.

La esa, la esa le bohwenng ba ntja.
(The sky is clear even at the dog's in-laws.)

This proverb is commonly used when the sky is cloudless. Hyperbole is used to evoke imagery because dogs do not have in-laws.

However, hyperbole unlike the other types of imagery already mentioned, is not often used in Southern-Sotho proverbs.

3.4.10 ONOMATOPOEIA (*LEETSISA*)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990:829) defines onomatopoeia as:

... *the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named.*

In Southern-Sotho proverbs, this type of imagery seems to be rare, consequently only one example is given to illustrate the definition.

Ha ke na sa ngee-ngee ka morao.

(I have no one who says *ngee-ngee* [cries] behind.)

Ngee-ngee is a sound made by a baby when crying. Having no *ngee-ngee* implies that a woman has no child.

3.4.11 OXYMORON (*TATOLANO*)

Cuddon (1979:471) defines oxymoron as:

... *a figure of speech which combines incongruous and apparently contradicting words on meaning for a special effect. It is a common device closely related to antithesis and paradox.*

This definition is illustrated by the following proverbs:

Mojapele o tshwana le majamorao.

(He who eats first is like he who eats last.)

Mojapele (He who eats first) contradicts *majamorao* (he who eats last). The imagery evoked is that one should give to others because tomorrow one may need from them.

Pula ke mahlopha a senya.

(Rain does good and harm.)

The contradictory words are *mahlopha* (selector) and *senya* (destroys). The figurative meaning is that rain does good and harm, because people, plants and animals need it. However, too much rain kills plants and destroys dwellings.

3.4.12 SOUND USAGE

In Southern-Sotho proverbs, alliteration is produced by repetition of corresponding syllables or consonant sounds. Proverbs, being part of the traditional literature, employ this figure of speech to evoke imagery. For example:

Letlaila le tlailela morena.

(A careless speaker, speaks carelessly for his chief.)

The repetition of the alveolar ejective lateral sound [tʰ] enhances the imagery required. Figuratively, the proverb implies that one should not be afraid to make a mistake and subsequently be corrected.

Fa o fa fi.

(One gives to the one who also gives.)

The labiodental syllable [fa] is repeated to imply that one turn deserves another.

Leleme ha le na malokeletso.

(The tongue has no fastenings.)

The meaning of this proverb is that the tongue cannot be controlled, everyone has a right to say what he/she wishes. The alveolar lateral syllable [le] is repeated to produce this imagery.

Kgakgi o kgakga se se sa mo kgakgeng le borokong.

(The desirer, desires that which does not desire him even in its sleep.)

The repetition of the velar aspirated sound [kxh] produces the desired imagery by saying that a person worries about somebody who does not consider him/her.

Ditabana di tswala ditaba.

(Small talks give birth to big talks.)

The proverb implies that big things arise from trivial ones. The syllable [di] is repeated to give the desired imagery.

3.4.13 IRONY (PHOQO) SARCASM (KOBISO) SATIRE (QABOLO)

The World Book Dictionary (1992:1115) mentions that:

Irony, Sarcasm and Satire are humorous forms of expression. Irony consists in deliberately saying the opposite of what one means, relying on tone of voice or on context to indicate one's real intent. In sarcasm the aim is to hurt someone's feelings; and so whether stated ironically or not, it is always cruel and biting.

In satire the aim is to explore and attack vice and folly using irony or sarcasm. The same idea is mentioned by Finnegan (1990:411):

Irony or sarcasm as a way of getting at someone is, of course, widespread in many forms, but the proverb is a particularly good way of conveying this.

The Southern-Sotho proverb employs irony, sarcasm and satire to produce imagery. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Naledi e pela kgwedi.

(A star is next to the moon.)

This could be said of a person who is liked and favoured by somebody of importance.

Phepheletsane hloba se mokotong.

(An inciter, a pimple on the wild dog.)

The implied meaning of this proverb is that a person can be a turncoat, untruthful and dishonest.

Leraba le tshwasa ya le tjehileng.
 (A trap catches the one who sets it for others.)

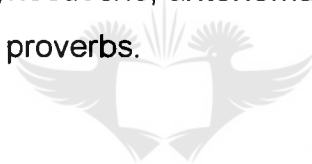
This refers to a person who lands in a trap he has set for others.

Tshwene ha e ipone lekopo.
 (A monkey does not see its own protruding forehead.)

A person who is quick at pointing out other people's faults and is blind to his own, is sarcastically referred to as *Tshwene ha e ipone lekopo*.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Seemingly Southern-Sotho proverbs employ most figures of speech to evoke imagery. Furthermore proverbs form an important part of the conversation and literature of Southern Sotho people. The most commonly used figures of speech are metaphor, personification and contrast. Others are moderately employed, while synecdoche, antonomasia and metonymy seem to be a rarity in Southern-Sotho proverbs.



CHAPTER 4

4.1 RIDDLES: (*DILOTHO*)

Riddles like proverbs, have been extensively collected and researched. They are specifically a domain of children and unlike proverbs, they are mainly used for entertainment.

4.2 DEFINITION OF A RIDDLE

Bryant (1990:5) defines a riddle as:

A question or statement intentionally worded in a dark or puzzling manner, and propounded in order that it may be guessed or answered, especially as a form of pastime; an enigma, a dark saying.

Bryant (1990:5) distinguishes a riddle from other dark sayings such as parables, proverbs and fables by its use of metaphor. It compares two unrelated things in a metaphorical manner. The descriptions are as accurate as possible. Bryant further distinguishes between a written and an oral riddle by stating that the latter is passed down by word of mouth and its solution is usually a familiar object. He claims that riddles are found in all societies. Preminger (1974:711) expresses the same view by saying:

A riddle is essentially a metaphor which draws attention to a likeness between unrelated objects.

According to Guma (1990:39) riddles are:

A test of wit and are a game which contains a grain of truth in that they are based on something that actually exists and whose form and shape is immediately recognized as soon as the appropriate answer is given.

Guma (1990:39) states that in Southern-Sotho, recognition is invariably accompanied by the remark: *e fela* (how true).

4.3 IMAGERY IN RIDDLES

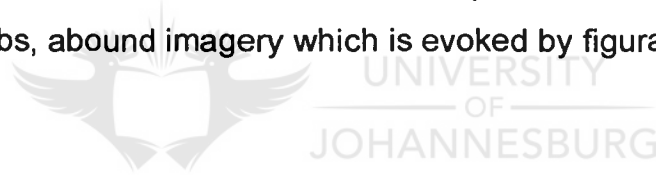
Riddles in Southern-Sotho involve metaphorical or poetic comments, as well as a play of images which help in their understanding. The answer of a riddle points to the objects implied or distinguished. The opening question may be literal or symbolic in terms of its solution. For example:

Riddle: *Mela e mmedi ya dipere tse tshweu hodima leralla le lefubedu.*
(Two rows of white horses on top of a red hill.)

Answer: *Meno hodima marenene.*
(Teeth on top of gums).

The subject described here is horses. The concept of a red hill is used to obscure or disguise the answer, (teeth in the gums).

In the following paragraphs the symbolic meaning mentioned by Bryant and Preminger in their definitions of a riddle, will be identified. These metaphors will reveal that Southern-Sotho riddles, like proverbs, abound imagery which is evoked by figurative language.



4.3.1 SYMBOLISM

The riddle becomes obscure as a result of the symbolism employed to disguise the answer. In order to understand the symbolism in a Southern-Sotho riddle, one must be familiar with Sesotho culture, language and customs. This is because riddles, like proverbs, have been handed down orally from generation to generation. The following examples will illustrate the use of symbolism in riddles:

Riddle: *Phate di a lekana.*
(Bedding hides are equal.)

Answer: *Lehodimo le lefatshe.*
(Heaven and earth.)

Heaven and earth are disguised as bedding hides to mislead the listener or reader.

Riddle: *Ka se jala mona sa ya mela thabeng.*
(I sow it here, it grows on the mountain.)

Answer: *Modumo wa sephadi.*
(The sound made by a whip.)

The subject described is a seed which disguises the idea of a whip.

Riddle: *Nthethe o a bina, moholo o dutse.*
(*Nthethe* sings, the elder sits.)

Answer: *Makala a sefate ha a etsa modumo kutu e eme.*
(Whispering branches and the tree trunk).

The branches are disguised as *Nthethe* (a poetical name for a tree) and the trunk of a tree is disguised as the elder, *moholo*.

Riddle: *Majwana mabedi mabetsa hole.*
(Two little stones that throw far.)

Answer: *Mahlo* (eyes) are disguised as two little stones (*majwana*). Eyes can see something in the distance.

Riddle: *Thutswana e matha ka polokoe.*
(A small stick runs away with a round thing.)

Answer: *Hlooho le molala.*
(The head and the neck).

The subject disguised is the neck which is described as *thutswana* (little stick) and the head as *polokoe* (round thing).

The point that the above examples illustrate, is that only the speakers of the language will be able to discover the obscured or disguised answer by bringing the necessary images to mind when confronted with the riddle.

4.3.2 PERSONIFICATION (*MOTHOFATSO*)

Southern-Sotho riddles utilize personification in order to give inanimate objects life and personality. Personification is a type of imagery often used in this language. The answer to the riddle identifies the object personified. For example:

Riddle: *Ka re ke ya le mona, a potela le nna.*
(I try to go this way, he goes with me.)

Answer: *Seriti sa motho.*
(The shadow of a person.)
Seriti (the shadow) is disguised as a person.

Riddle: *Mme o sekoti, ntate o kgopo, bana beso ba bararo.*
(My mother is hollow, my father is crooked my brothers are three.)

Answer: *Pitsa ya maoto a mararo.*
(A three legged pot).

The image described is that of a pot which is referred to as *mme* (mother) the handle being *ntate* (father) and the three legs being *bana ba heso ba bararo* (my three brothers).



Riddle: *Banna ba basweu ka lehaheng le lefubedu.*
(The red men in the red cave.)

Answer: *Meno ka molomong.*
(Teeth in the mouth.)

The image of white teeth inside a pink mouth immediately comes to mind when hearing or reading this riddle.

Southern-Sotho riddles employ personification more extensively than other figures of speech. In many riddles there is continual reference to *monna* (man) as subject: Dundes (1965:197) confirms this discovery and adds that “my mother” and animals are also often referred to in many riddles.

4.3.3 ANIMATION (*PHEDISO*)

Answer: *Terene* (the train) is disguised by contrasting *se ya kwana* (going that way) and *se tla kwano* (coming this way).

Riddle: *Ke enwa a kena / ke enwa a etswa //*
(Here he enters, here he goes out.)

Answer: *Tsela* (road). The desired imagery is evoked by contrasting *ke enwa a kena*, (here he enters) and *ka enwa a etswa*, (here he goes out).

Riddle: *Ka re ke le mona / ka be ke le kwana //*
(While I am here, I am there).

Answer: *Letsetse* (a flea) which cannot be easily detected. Phrases *ke le mona* and *ke le kwana* (being here and also being there) have been used to evoke the desired imagery of *letsetse* (a flea).

4.3.5 REPETITION OF CORRESPONDING SYLLABES

Southern-Sotho riddles employ repetition of syllables to evoke imagery. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Riddle: *Ke na le pere tse ngata tse tshweu tse fulang lehaheng.*
(I have many white horses that graze in the cave.)

Answer: *Meno* (teeth). The image is effected by repeating the syllable [tse].

Riddle: *Banna ba bangata ba hlooho di ntsho.*
(Many men with black heads.)

Answer: *Mollo* (matches) is disguised as *banna* (men).
The image is evoked by repeating the syllable [ba].

Riddle: *La tlola la tetekela lekanyane.*
(It sets off and shakes its tail, the wild dog.)

Answer: *Mpshe* (an ostrich). The syllable [la] is repeated to produce imagery.

One can therefore conclude that repetition of syllables is used abundantly to produce imagery in Southern-Sotho riddles.

4.3.6 SATIRE (QABOLO)

Cohen (1973:195) defines a satire as:

... The criticism of a person, human nature, events, movements or institutions by the use of exaggeration, ridicule, sarcasm, irony and humour in order to reduce the subject of absurdity. It can range in degree from gentle needling to fiery indignation.

The same definition is given by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1990:1072) which adds that ridicule, irony and sarcasm expose folly or vice to lampoon an individual.

Southern-Sotho riddles employ satire as defined above to evoke imagery and provide amusement for the riddlers. The following examples illustrate this idea:

Riddle: *Maqheku a qabana ka lehaheng.*
(The aged quarrel in a cave) (humour)

Answer: *Poone e hadikilweng - ha e qhoma.*
(Roasted mealies when they explode.)

The described subject is *Maqheku* (aged people) who are referred to in order to disguise the idea of mealies.

Riddle: *Ha o le morwa tjee metsi o a nka kae?*
(Being a mere Bushman, where do you get water from?) (ridicule)

Answer: *Lehapu; bofubedu ba lona le metsi a lona*
(A watermelon; its redness and juice.)

The riddle ridicules the Bushman to disguise the answer.

Riddle: *Mmamosana poeyana, o tla feta jwang banneng?*
(You wearer of short skirts, how will you pass by the men?) (sarcasm)

Answer: *Podi - mohatla wa yona o dulang o shebile hodimo.*
(A goat - its tail is always pointing upwards.)

This is a sarcastic riddle referring to a woman who enjoys attention from men.

Riddle: *Kgomo ya bohadi ba mmao.*
(The cow of your mother's lobola.) (Irony)

Answer: *Nta* (a louse) which is used ironically to disguise the answer by describing a cow.

4.4 CONCLUSION

It would seem Southern-Sotho riddles, unlike proverbs, employ fewer figures of speech to evoke imagery. The imagery is more prominent in proverbs because riddles are never literal. By the use of symbolic language, riddles enrich the human intellect and encourage the hidden solutions. The most commonly used images are personification, animation and contrast.



5.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The study of imagery in Southern-Sotho proverbs and riddles has revealed that they form an interesting part of literature. Both genres are closely related - proverbs being more traditional and universal while riddles are constantly reinvented. Guma (1993:60) has written about recent riddles with a European influence. The same idea is held by Chimombo (1987:297) who says:

...the local folk artist in Central Africa was also constructing, refashioning or recreating riddles inspired by the white man, his culture and his other activities.

The proverb constitutes the voice of an ancient who speaks, directly to descendants, counseling and teaching about past experiences in life.

Proverbs are vital and life-giving. They employ most types of imagery as many abound in figurative language, yet some can merely be bare statements and thus they are literal. For example

Kopano ke matla.
(Unity is strength.)

Moiketsi ha a llelwe, ho llelwa moetsuwa.
(There is no pity for self inflicted injury.)

Proverbs and riddles appeal to the imagination and evoke mental pictures. In proverbs it is not the wisdom of the Basotho peoples, their observation and their reflections which are important but rather their figurative language which is rich in imagery. Special grammatical forms are used in Sesotho proverbs and riddles to introduce a metaphorical expression. These are a tenor, vehicle and qualificatives, for example:

Morena ke kgomo e tshitja.
(A king is a round cow.)

The implied meaning of this proverb is that a chief's mind is unpredictable. The tenor is *morena* (chief). The vehicle is *ke kgomo* (is a cow) and the adjectival qualificative is *e tshitja* (round).

This study has also revealed that the expressive power of proverbs is aided by the interplay of form and wittiness in images.

Seemingly, riddles are never literal due to their use of symbolic language. There is also an interaction between visual and acoustic images through which insight and comment can be expressed. The imagery of riddles includes every sphere of natural and human life. Riddles also vary according to the customs, values and beliefs of a particular society. From the various examples set in the preceding pages, it can be seen that imagery in riddles is revealed by the material world surrounding the people. Imagery becomes more vivid when riddles describe fauna and flora.

Many riddles exhibit highly poetical forms, whereas others by their mere realism would surprise or shock any person lacking a sense of humour.

Guma (1993:52) illustrates the following example:

Riddle: *Mme ntshware ke nye.*
(Mother hold me so that I may relieve myself.)

Answer: *Nko - ho mina.*
(A nose - to blow it.)

With their humorous twists, riddles can be seen as games which involve puzzling and guessing. The proverb however, in order to be used for wise counsel, retains its basic truth in a pure, undisguised form.



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