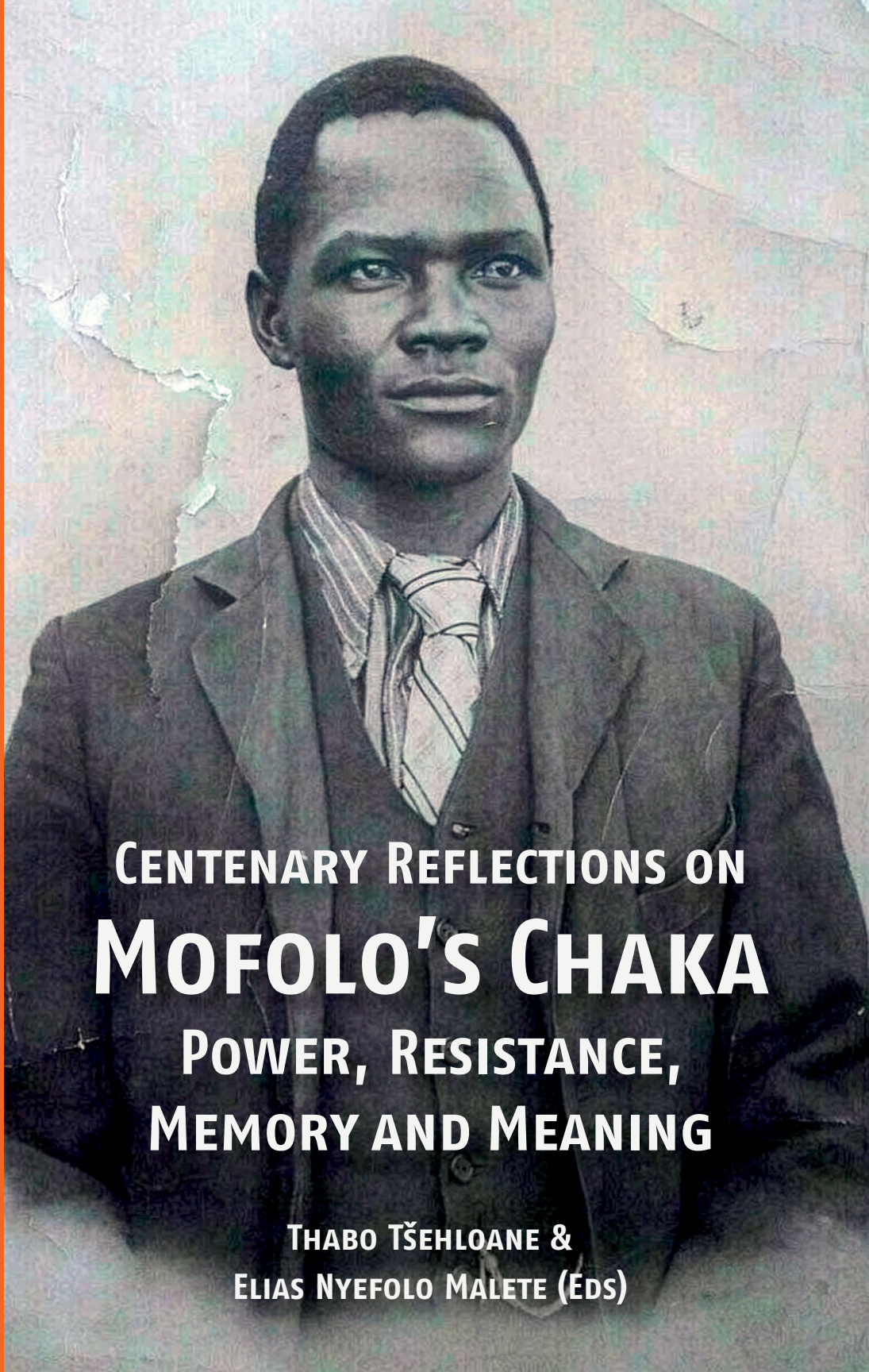


Centenary Reflections on Mofolo's Chaka

Power, Resistance, Memory and Meaning

Thabo Tšehloane &
Elias Nyefolo Malete (Eds)



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UJ Press

Centenary Reflections on Mofolo's Chaka*: Power, Resistance, Memory and Meaning*

Published by UJ Press
University of Johannesburg
Library
Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
PO Box 524
Auckland Park
2006
https://ujpress.uj.ac.za/

Compilation © Thabo Tšehloane, Elias Nyefolo Malete 2026
Chapters © Author(s) 2026
Published Edition © Thabo Tšehloane, Elias Nyefolo Malete 2026

First published 2026

https://doi.org/10.64449/9781997499282
978-1-997499-27-5 (Paperback)
978-1-997499-28-2 (PDF)
978-1-997499-29-9 (EPUB)
978-1-997499-30-5 (XML)

This publication had been submitted to a rigorous double-blind peer-review process prior to publication and all recommendations by the reviewers were considered and implemented before publication.

Proofreading: Mike Leisegang
Cover design: Hester Roets, UJ Graphic Design Studio
Typeset in 9/13pt Merriweather Light



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Biographies

Prof Mogomme Alpheus Masoga holds a doctorate from the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa. He is currently a professor and Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State. He has an excellent research publication record within the broad niche area of oral history, Africanism, and indigenous knowledge system studies. He is the book editor of the series publication titled *Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences*, published by AOSIS. Published books include *Studies on Indigenous Knowledge* (2020) and *Narratives of Culture, Identity and Community: From Mother to Son* (2021).

Dr Soyiso Khetoa is a sociolinguist and the Head of the Department of African Languages in the School of Literature, Language, and Media at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is recognised for his significant contributions to the field of African language sociolinguistics. With an extensive academic portfolio, Dr Khetoa has published numerous journal articles and book chapters. His scholarly interests include multilingualism, translanguaging, language teaching and learning, humanising teaching pedagogy, the re-intellectualisation of African languages, socio-onomastics, narrative arts, and language ideologies. Dr Khetoa has presented his research at leading conferences both locally and internationally, offering insights that shape contemporary sociolinguistic discourse. Beyond his research and teaching, he serves as a peer reviewer for several esteemed academic journals, thereby contributing to the advancement of scholarship in his field.

Prof Nogwaja S. Zulu is a professor of African Languages at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has published several novels and short stories in African languages, and his latest short story collection about the effects of COVID-19 is *Kwaba mnyama kukhanya: ukhuvethe lwansondo* (2021). He has co-authored the article, *Expressions of Ubuntu in the Sesotho novel, Tutudu ha e patwe* and is the co-editor of the book, *African Literature: Beyond the Western Gaze* (2024). His latest article is *Insights into language management in the health sector: Reflecting on the COVID-19*

pandemic in South Africa, to appear in *South African Journal of African Languages*, 2025, 45(1).

Dr Elias Nyefolo Malete is a Senior Lecturer and Academic Head of the African Languages Department within the Humanities Faculty of the University of the Free State. His scholarly interests include Sesotho literary criticism, historical linguistics, oral literature, Systemic Functional Linguistics, and generative syntax in Sesotho. His recognised works consist of book chapters, articles in accredited journals, and a Sesotho editing book. In his role as a Sesotho language specialist, he has twenty years of postgraduate supervision experience and has actively worked as an external assessor of postgraduate research studies at various prestigious South African universities. He participates in regional academic associations, including the Digital Humanities Association of Southern Africa (DHASA) and Resources for African Indigenous Languages (RAIL).

Mr Moeketsi Letuka's expertise is in Sesotho literature. He has experience in teaching all genres and teaching Sesotho classics. Moeketsi Letuka also has an interest in the application of literary theories in the analysis of Sesotho literature. He has lectured in various universities, viz, Stellenbosch University, University of Transkei, University of the Free State, and is currently at Walter Sisulu University. He supervised postgraduate students. He is a PhD candidate at the University of the Free State.

Dr Mathai Calextina Monyakane completed her COSC credential at St. Rose High School in 2006. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies from the National University of Lesotho in 2013, followed by a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from the University of the Free State in 2014. She continued her studies at the same institution, obtaining an Honours degree in Sesotho in 2015, a Master of Arts in African Languages in 2019, and a Doctoral degree in 2025. Professionally, Mathai has contributed significantly to Sesotho language education. She taught Sesotho for five years at Oziel Selele Comprehensive School in Bothaville, Free State. Her academic career progressed as she became a Sesotho lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State. She currently holds a lecturing position in Sesotho at North-West University.

Dr Moselane Andrew Nhlapo is a Lecturer in the Department of Communication Sciences at the Central University of Technology in the Free State province. He serves as a contract Lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein campus. He is a member of African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA), where he serves as an associate editor for the Sesotho Language Group of the *South African Journal of African Languages (SAJAL)*. His specialist focus is mostly on Sesotho linguistics, historical linguistics, and Sesotho literature.

Dr Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi attained her Doctoral degree in Languages, Linguistics, and Literature from the University of South Africa. She is a professional with experience stretching from high school teaching, college tutorship, University Lecturing, and academic supervision. She is a researcher. She is a professional with 26 years of extensive experience in teaching Southern Sotho. Dr Khanyetsi is also a creative writer of different genres in Sesotho: short stories, poetry, and drama. She has significantly contributed to the training of versatile Sesotho language teachers for a decade at the Lesotho College of Education. Dr Khanyetsi's research trajectory is on Masculinity, Femininity, Language, Literature, Culture, Onomastics, Toponymy, and Oral traditions. She joined the University of the Free State (UFS) in 2021 as a lecturer. She is a motivated, ardent, vibrant, and focused academic of the 21st century. Her academic acumen saw her scooping the 2020 Research Award from the University of the Free State, Faculty of Humanities at Qwaqwa Campus within a short period at UFS.

Prof Rethabile Possa is Head of African Languages and Literatures, Senior lecturer, a member of the Language Policy Committee, and a Student Registration Advisor in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town. Prof Possa is a published author with several academic publications and a Sesotho Drama book, children's stories, and poetry. She is currently a Sesotho editor for the AVBOB poetry competition. She is the Chairperson of Sesotho National Bodies in South Africa. She is the principal examiner for the International Baccalaureate Organisation. Her research focuses on Folklore, Onomastics, Poetry, and research studies in the intellectualisation of African languages, particularly the Sesotho language with the advantage of knowing two Sesotho orthographies. She has an in-depth

background in Sesotho communications teaching, translation, editing, and writing. She is a member of ALASA, SAFOS and NSSA.

Dr Thabo Tšehloane is a member of the English Department at the University of Johannesburg. His research spans South African black fiction, the European Renaissance, the Victorian novel, Romantic Poetry, African Literature, and African American and Caribbean writing. Tšehloane's scholarship examines the interplay between aesthetics and politics in the South African black novel, tracing its development from Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* to contemporary writers such as Niq Mhlongo, Sello Duiker and Morabo Morojele. His work highlights the novel as a dynamic site of ideological negotiation, formal experimentation and historical reflection, offering important insights into South African black intellectual traditions. Tšehloane is currently working on articles on the South African black campus novel and on humour in contemporary autobiographical narratives by Trevor Noah and Tumi Morake. By bridging literary form and ideology, his research contributes significantly to the understanding of how literature both reflects and shapes South African black intellectual thought and history.

Acknowledgements

We extend our profound gratitude to **UJ Press** for their steadfast partnership in bringing this centenary volume to fruition. Their enduring commitment to sustaining and amplifying African intellectual heritage has rendered this project not only possible but deeply significant — a testament to what principled scholarly publishing can achieve.

Our sincere appreciation goes to **Dr Mampoi Mabena**, whose incisive and generous engagement as reviewer of the initial abstracts proved invaluable during the earliest and most formative stages of this undertaking. Her critical acuity sharpened the intellectual direction of the volume and fortified the foundations upon which it now rests. *Re le bohile ho menahane, Mokoena.*

We acknowledge with equal gratitude **the peer reviewers appointed by UJ Press**, whose disciplinary expertise, careful reading, and constructive engagement with the completed chapters have measurably enriched and refined this collection. Their scholarly generosity and critical rigour have left an indelible imprint on the final manuscript, which we now offer with confidence to the broader community of literary scholars, students and the reading public.

We wish to record our particular and heartfelt gratitude to **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, whose generous financial support was instrumental in carrying this project across the threshold to completion. At the final and often most demanding stages of a book project — when the work is closest to the world and the pressures most acute — their support provided both the material means and the scholarly confidence to see this volume through to publication. We are equally grateful to the **University of the Free State** for their complementary institutional and financial investment in this endeavour.

Above all, we honour **Thomas Mokopu Mofolo**, whose visionary literary imagination continues to illuminate African thought, to challenge interpretive orthodoxies, and to inspire successive generations of writers, readers and scholars — more than a century after *Chaka* first appeared in print. This volume is, in every sense, a tribute to the endurance of his art and the inexhaustible depths of his vision.

Preface

Chaka's Assegai: What is the role of the African Literary Scholar?

Mukoma Wa Ngugi

> "The year 2025 marks one hundred years since the first publication of *Chaka*, a milestone that invites reflection not only on the endurance of a single text but also on the emergence of African-language prose fiction as a field of intellectual, aesthetic and political experimentation" - from the Introduction

My friends and I, when we enrolled in Prof Daniel Kunene's African Literature seminars at University of Wisconsin–Madison in the early 2000s, we quickly realised that this was not the standard African literature buffet we were used to – Chinua Achebe, my father Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Soyinka and sometimes women writers, Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta. It was different because for us budding scholars, he introduced us to his *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* with a side-by-side translation from Sesotho to English and his translation of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*.

You have to imagine an African anglophile literature student and writer facing the fact that there was more depth and breadth to African literature in our diet. The shock to my intellectual and writerly understanding as being mistaken; that all along, I had embraced a lie or to be kinder, a partial truth of what African literature is. What Kunene dismantled, with characteristic scholarly generosity, was not the canon itself but the invisible wall surrounding it. He revealed what I had not been taught to see: that the African literary tradition was, and had always been, far deeper, broader and more linguistically complex than the anglophone curriculum had permitted us to imagine. It took the

scholar in me years before I could appreciate the enormity of the task that Kunene, as translator, and Thomas Mofolo, the writer, had set before us.

I was haunted by the language in translation – physical, bold, and beautiful - language with "attitude" - with no apologies to give as opposed to the more demur self-effacing hesitant talk-like– a– chameleon poetry of Keats and Wordsworth that had been my staple as an MA creative student at Boston University in 2001. That haunting now ignited into questioning is being answered and fleshed by the questions raised by *Centenary Reflections on Mofolo's Chaka: Power, Resistance, Memory and Meaning*.

How do we grow a literary ecosystem for writing in African languages? Why is it that African language writing remains on the peripheries of the African literary tradition that has presented writing in English with the original marker being Achebe and the African Writers Series? Why do we let our African literary tradition begin with a European colonial clock?

And why did the decolonising writers at Makerere not see earlier South African writing in African languages as part of their literary tradition? And more to the point, what we can learn in terms of aesthetics and critical appreciation of *Chaka*?

For the decolonising African writers, I think it had to do with the fact that South African writers were published by missionary presses such as Lovedale and Morija. This proximity to missionary enterprise led successive generations of decolonising writers to regard such texts with suspicion; an attitude that was perhaps understandable given the ideological anxieties of the anti-colonial struggle and resistance, but which has proven, on careful reading, to be a significant misreading. The essays gathered in this volume dispel that misreading with precision and force. Thomas Mofolo, like A.C. Jordan in *The Wrath of the Ancestors* and S.E.K. Mqhayi in *The Lawsuit of the Twins*, was not a passive instrument of the civilising mission.

A quick example: Mofolo's *Traveller to the East* became a best-seller amongst Basotho. Yes, it follows the journey of Paul Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, from savagery to Christian enlightenment but it does something different. A careless critic would dismiss it as missionary writing. But a careful critic will find delight in the realisation that the joke was on the missionaries.

The logic in this is as follows: as an African, I know that I was not a savage or a cannibal in need of civilisation, so it becomes a story that I can laugh at with a shake of my head (so who are these missionaries?) But behind the joke, the novels were a mirror shining revealing the contradictions of the missionaries.

And the careless metaphysical English critic will also not analyse what it means via translations theories that early South African writing was written in African languages and then translated into English. In the easy dismissal, scholarly rich questions around compensation, losses and gains, and translation between an imperial language and resisting language for example, get glossed over, if not ignored all together. It is a disservice to the African literary tradition that this collection shames.

In a lot of ways, the language question is at the centre of it all. In the debate following the 1962 Makerere conference "African Writers of English Wali" that pit Obi Wali and a little later, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (for writing in African languages) against Chinua Achebe and Es'kia Mphahlele (English as tool of decolonisation) the one question that never mediated between the two camps was translation as the equal meeting ground between two languages.

Later, Ngugi would embrace translation as the language of all languages, but in 1962, translation was not a viable option for them. What *Centenary Reflections on Mofolo's Chaka* does is to show that translation was the norm that became disrupted by the "English only metaphysical empire."

(And an aside note here: that we have to say African literature in African languages already screams for attention because in a normalised linguistic field, one should say African literature, and then African literature in European languages. The acrobatics and contortions all tell us loudly that there is something broken in how we have come to instinctively accept as African literature.)

These critical essays show that literary criticism is a fundamental pillar in any literary eco-system, and more so when it comes to writing in African languages. Certainly, you must have writers, publishers, readers, literary scholars and literary agents (all in anaemic state considering that we have over 2,000 distinct languages on the African continent.) But this is precisely where

original theoretical work is. It is a wealth of African-centred literary criticism informed by African literature if we can tap into its roots.

What is the task of the African literary critic working with African language literature? To take it seriously enough to push us out of the English metaphysical empire; to push African universities to grow and make careers out of the study of the African literature, and to position homegrown African literary theories at the centre of African literary criticism.

Thomas Mokopu Mofolo, the genius writer and Daniel Kunene — my late professor, poet and exiled anti-apartheid activist — have found, in these pages, a happy home.

Mukoma Wa Ngugi
Cornell University ROR
Ithaca, United States

Short Bio of Mukoma

Mukoma Wa Ngugi is a writer and Professor in the Department of Literatures in English at Cornell University and the co-founder of the Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature.

Missionary Modernity and African Textual Agency: Rereading Thomas Mofolo'S *Chaka* at the Centenary

Dr Thabo Tšehloane
Department of English,
University of Johannesburg
Johannesberg, South Africa

Dr Elias Nyefolo Malete
Department of African Languages,
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Mr Moeketsi Letuka
Department of African Languages,
Walter Sisulu University
Umthatha, South Africa

Introduction

Early 20th century African literature emerges from a profoundly ambivalent historical and ideological terrain shaped by colonial conquest, missionary education, and the gradual articulation of African nationalism. Missionary institutions functioned paradoxically within this landscape: as instruments of epistemic regulation and cultural discipline, yet simultaneously as sites that enabled literacy, print culture, and new modes of literary expression (Etherington 2005; Maake 1992). While missionary education introduced Christian ethical frameworks and narrative forms, it also sought to delimit African historical imagination and to subordinate indigenous epistemologies to evangelical norms (Mudimbe 1988; Ngũgĩ 1986).

Mission centres such as Lovedale, Morija and Mariannhill provided African intellectuals with access to schooling, publishing

infrastructure and emergent prose genres. At the same time, they imposed moral, editorial and ideological constraints that governed what could be written, how it could be articulated and which audiences could be addressed. These early African writers thus operated within a contradictory field—enabled by missionary modernity while constrained by its civilising imperatives and epistemic hierarchies. Their intellectual and literary labour must therefore be understood neither as a straightforward product of missionary benevolence nor as an unmediated expression of indigenous consciousness, but as the outcome of negotiation, appropriation and resistance within asymmetrical structures of power (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991).

Across early African fiction in South Africa the missionary modernity operates dialectically as both enabler and disciplinarian. Literacy, narrative form, and access to print were facilitated through missionary intervention, yet these same structures imposed limits on genre, content, and ideological orientation (Attwell 2005; Maake 1992). African writers navigated this contradiction in diverse ways, shaped by institutional context and historical moment. Missionary modernity constitutes one of the most decisive, and most ambivalent, forces shaping early African literature. Mission stations functioned as sites of education, translation, and textual production, but they were also instruments of moral discipline and epistemic regulation. Literacy was framed as a means of spiritual salvation and social uplift, yet it was inseparable from a broader project of cultural transformation that sought to reorder African epistemologies in accordance with Christian doctrine and colonial rationality.

African writers educated within these missionary institutions occupied a paradoxical position. On the one hand, they were empowered through access to literacy, literary models and publishing infrastructure. On the other, they were constrained by the ideological frameworks that rendered their writing legible and publishable. The missionary archive reveals deep anxiety about African history, particularly precolonial political formations characterised by militarism, polygyny, indigenous spirituality and collective violence. These histories were often interpreted as evidence of moral deficiency, reinforcing the missionary conviction that Christian civilisation was both necessary and inevitable.

Figures such as Thomas Mofolo, Sol Plaatje, John Dube, S.E.K. Mqhayi and A.C. Jordan appropriated missionary vocabularies and technologies to articulate nationalist critique, historical revision, and prophetic reimaginings of the African past, even as they contended with censorship and editorial mediation (Couzens 1988; Hofmeyr 1993). Their collective work maps the emergence of an African literary modernity forged through tension rather than resolution. These early writers inhabited these contradictions. They were neither free agents nor passive subjects, but historically situated intellectuals negotiating the limits of what could be said. Their texts bear the imprint of this negotiation formally and thematically: moral certainty coexists with narrative hesitation; Christian allegory is interrupted by mythic excess; historical explanation gives way to prophetic ambiguity. These features are not aesthetic failures. They are the formal trace of ideological pressure.

This volume proceeds from the premise that African literary modernity is best understood not as belated imitation of European forms, nor as a linear progression towards nationalist clarity, but as a field structured by ambivalence. Modernity here is not a destination but a condition—experienced unevenly, mediated institutionally, and articulated through texts that struggle with the limits of available discourses. It is within this contradictory field that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925) assumes its enduring critical significance. It is within this contested terrain that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is positioned as a paradigmatic instance of African textual agency exercised under missionary modernity. The novel exemplifies a mode of African-language writing that is at once hybrid and resistant, formally innovative and ideologically unsettled. In doing so, it complicates linear narratives of literary modernisation and colonial cultural transmission, foregrounding African literary modernity as a site of tension rather than resolution.

The year 2025 marked one hundred years since the first publication of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* in Sesotho, a centenary that invites more than ritualised commemoration or canonical reaffirmation. Literary centenaries function as moments of critical recalibration: they compel scholars to reassess inherited interpretive frameworks, to interrogate the ideological work performed by acts of canonisation, and to confront the historical conditions that continue to shape reading practices. In the case

of *Chaka*, the centenary arrives in a field characterised by both critical abundance and interpretive fatigue. The text has been read as nationalist allegory, Christian morality tale, proto-modernist psychological novel, epic historiography, and political cautionary narrative. Yet despite—or because of—this density of interpretation, *Chaka* remains a profoundly unsettled text.

This volume argues that *Chaka*'s enduring critical vitality lies precisely in its resistance to ideological resolution. Rather than seeking to stabilise the text's meaning by adjudicating between competing interpretations, the volume approaches *Chaka* as a product of missionary modernity whose contradictions are structurally constitutive rather than incidental. The text is neither simply an African nationalist recuperation of precolonial history nor a missionary indictment of African precolonial universe. It is, instead, a narrative forged within a matrix of ideological pressures that could not be reconciled within a single, coherent worldview. To read *Chaka* productively at its centenary, therefore, requires a critical approach attentive to contradiction, silence and excess. This volume treats the text's ideological tensions not as interpretive problems to be solved but as symptoms of the historical forces that shaped its production. What *Chaka* cannot say—particularly about colonial domination, African sovereignty, and political legitimacy—emerges indirectly through narrative displacement and ethical ambivalence. In this sense, the text speaks most powerfully in its hesitations.

Editorial Orientation and Chapter Architecture

This volume is shaped by deliberate commitment to African language literary scholarship, theoretical plurality and historically situated critique. Rather than advancing a single interpretive thesis, it foregrounds contradictions as an analytical resource, recognising that *Chaka*'s richness lies precisely in its resistance to ideological and aesthetic resolution.

The chapters are organised thematically rather than chronologically. This decision reflects both the formal logic of *Chaka* itself as a literary text and the editors' conviction that the novel is best approached through its major conceptual fault lines rather than through a linear interpretative narrative. Power, violence, language, gender, spirituality, cultural poetics and

ideology are not treated as discrete topics but as intersecting pressures that generate meaning through tension and overlap. The volume thus invites readers into a critical conversation in which perspectives intersect, unsettle and reanimate one another, reopening questions rather than settling them.

The opening contributions establish the political and ethical stakes of the novel. **Masoga** opens the volume by reading *Chaka* as a proto-critique of modern African nationalism, arguing that Mofolo anticipates contemporary anxieties surrounding charismatic leadership, state violence and mythology of national unity. Rather than celebrating sovereign power, the novel is shown to expose its fragility and moral cost. **Khetoa** extends this political interrogation by reading *Chaka* as a cautionary narrative about governance, ambition, and ethical responsibility. Explicitly linking the text to contemporary debates on corruption and leadership in South Africa, this chapter positions *Chaka* as a prescient meditation on the dangers of moral compromise in the exercise of power.

Subsequent chapters situate *Chaka* within broader literary and comparative traditions, challenging persistent assumptions about the formal limitations of early African-language prose. **Zulu'**s reading of the novel through the lens of tragedy positions Chaka as a tragic hero whose greatness and downfall are structurally intertwined. This chapter demonstrates that Mofolo's *Chaka* participates in a sophisticated tragic logic, complicating reductive interpretations that frame the novel as merely didactic or morally prescriptive.

A substantial portion of the volume is devoted to linguistic and stylistic analysis, reflecting a sustained commitment to close reading and methodological innovation. **Malete** employs Halliday's ideational metafunction to examine how grammatical choices encode relations of power, agency, and worldview within the Sesotho text. **Nhlapo** complements this analysis through a detailed study of syntax and narrative rhythm, showing how linguistic structure articulates mood, cultural memory, and ideological tensions. Together, these chapters demonstrate the analytical richness of African-language texts when approached through linguistically attentive frameworks challenging the marginalisation of vernacular literature within theoretical debates.

The volume then turns to cultural poetics and oral performance. Foregrounding the novel's dialogic engagement with oral traditions. **Letuka** explores praise poetry as a mode of constructing hegemonic masculinity and political authority, revealing how poetic form participates in the legitimation of power. **Khanyetsi** shifts attention to women's and maidens' songs, foregrounding their role in shaping communal ethics, affective life, and gendered social norms. Read together, these chapters challenge androcentric interpretations of *Chaka* and illuminate the multiplicity of voices and performative traditions that inform the novel's imaginative world.

Further methodological innovation is introduced through **Monyakane** and **Malete**'s application of Appraisal Theory, which bridges linguistic analysis and narrative theory to illuminate the novel's emotional and evaluative architecture. This approach reveals how affect, judgement, and ethical positioning are structured at the level of discourse, offering fresh insight into how readers are invited to align, resist or remain ambivalent towards Chaka's actions.

The concluding chapters return explicitly to ideological and historical questions. **Possa** situates *Chaka* within a genealogy of African literary freedom, tracing its significance as an early articulation of cultural and intellectual autonomy under colonial constraint. The volume closes with **Tsehloane**'s Machereyean reading of *Chaka*, which foregrounds narrative silences, contradictions and ideological fractures as sites of meaning. Drawing on Pierre Macherey's theory of literary production, this chapter articulates rebellious obedience and subversive subservience as modes of African textual agency forged under missionary modernity, offering a theoretical framework that resonates across the volume.

Taken together, the contributions assembled here do not exhaust *Chaka*'s literary significance; they collectively map *Chaka*'s inexhaustible richness as a site of inquiry. The centenary of *Chaka* thus becomes not an occasion for retrospective closure, but an invitation to renewed critical engagement with a text that continues to unsettle, provoke and illuminate the complexities of early African literary modernity.

"To Make the Paper Speak": Missionary Power and Early African Writing

Missionary societies in southern Africa conceived of themselves as agents of moral and cultural transformation, committed to the regeneration of African societies through Christianity, literacy, and Western education (Attwell 2005; Etherington 2005). For African converts and intellectuals, mission stations offered access to social mobility, print culture, and intellectual formation. Yet these opportunities were embedded within a civilisational discourse that positioned African cultures as deficient and in need of reform, rendering conformity to missionary norms both a condition of advancement and a site of ideological contestation.

African subjects educated within this system were compelled to negotiate identities shaped by a colonial order that oscillated between denigration and moral uplift. As Leon de Kock observes, they were caught "between the socially ascendant view of themselves as unclean, idle, negligent, indecent and licentious and the ideal proposed for them of Christian salvation in newly forged and rigorously Protestant forms of culture" (1996:55). This condition did not produce uniform assimilation or outright resistance, but a spectrum of strategic accommodations and creative reappropriations.

Crucially, missionary discourse never achieved total ideological adherence and obedience. It remained internally unstable, as it was persistently "resisted and negotiated" (de Kock 1996:55). Within these fissures, African writers articulated alternative historical visions, ethical frameworks, and narrative forms. Early African writing thus emerges as a dialogic space in which the language of Christianity, progress, and civilisation is redeployed to contest colonial authority and reassert African historical presence. A principal concern of this volume is to trace how African authors like Thomas Mofolo were obsessed with the urge to animate the printed medium with their own indigenous voices, idioms, cosmology and cultural mores, to make the "paper speak" in voices not fully anticipated by missionary modernity.

Thomas Mofolo's intellectual formation must be situated within this context. His education at Morija exposed him to European literary forms, Christian theology, and the emerging

genre of the novel. At the same time, it placed him within an institutional environment that exercised considerable influence over what could be written, how it could be framed, and which narratives were deemed morally acceptable. The decision to write about Shaka, the founder and king of the Zulu nation—a figure synonymous with military conquest, political centralisation, and violent transformation—was therefore a provocative one.

The conditions of possibility for *Chaka* involved a complex negotiation between African historical material and Christian moral didacticism. Missionary presses did not simply censor African writing; they shaped it through expectations of ethical instruction and spiritual edification. Texts were encouraged to illustrate the dangers of pride, cruelty, and moral excess, while affirming Christian virtues of humility, restraint, and obedience. *Chaka* bears the imprint of these expectations in its narrative framing and ethical commentary. Yet missionary modernity did not operate solely as a suppressive force. It also generated new forms of articulation. African writers appropriated Christian discourse, European genres, and the technology of print to engage with their own histories and social realities. In this sense, missionary modernity was not a monolithic imposition but a field of struggle within which African textual agency could be exercised, albeit under constraint.

One of the most striking features of *Chaka* is its decision to locate its narrative entirely within the precolonial past. The absence of any explicit reference to European colonialism has often been read as a form of historical displacement or political evasion. However, such readings risk underestimating the significance of the text's production context. Direct critique of colonial authority would have been untenable within missionary publishing structures. Instead, *Chaka* displaces its engagement with questions of power, legitimacy and violence onto an earlier historical moment. This displacement should not be mistaken for escapism. By narrating the rise and fall of a precolonial African ruler, the text creates a space in which the ethics of political authority can be explored obliquely. The historical Shaka's consolidation of power, his reorganisation of military structures and his ruthless suppression of opposition raise questions that

resonate beyond their historical setting. The precolonial past becomes a coded arena for negotiating the dilemmas of modernity.

At the same time, the text's treatment of African history is marked by deep ambivalence. Mofolo's Chaka is neither romanticised as an unblemished hero nor dismissed as a barbaric tyrant. Instead, he is presented as a figure of extraordinary capacity whose achievements are inseparable from moral catastrophe. This ambivalence reflects the competing demands placed upon the text: to acknowledge African political ingenuity and achievements while affirming Christian ethics and moral judgement.

The result is a narrative that oscillates between admiration and condemnation. Chaka's strategic brilliance and charismatic authority are rendered with narrative intensity, inviting readerly fascination even as the text repeatedly emphasises the suffering caused by his military campaigns. This oscillation cannot be reduced to authorial inconsistency. It is the product of a text attempting to speak across incompatible ideological registers. Attempts to stabilise *Chaka*'s ideological position (by identifying it as either fundamentally nationalist or fundamentally missionary) risk flattening the text's complexity. The narrative is structured by contradictions that resist synthesis. Violence is simultaneously aestheticised and moralised; power is portrayed as both transformative and destructive; leadership is depicted as visionary yet fatally compromised.

A Machereyean perspective allows us to understand these contradictions as structurally productive. Rather than asking what the text "really means," such an approach asks what conditions made certain meanings possible and others unthinkable. The ideological pressures shaping *Chaka* do not simply appear as thematic content; they are inscribed in the text's narrative form, ethical hesitations and moments of excess.

One of the most revealing contradictions concerns the representation of violence. On the surface, the narrative condemns cruelty and excess, aligning itself with Christian moral discourse. Yet the detailed attention given to military organisation, tactical innovation and charismatic authority exceeds the requirements of moral instruction. These moments of narrative excess suggest

an admiration that cannot be fully contained within the text's ethical framework. Such excesses expose the limits of missionary ideology in disciplining African historical imagination. They reveal a residual attachment to forms of power and authority that Christian discourse sought to disavow. In this sense, *Chaka* speaks most clearly where it falters, where its moral narrative strains under the weight of historical fascination.

Reading Contradictions, Silences and Textual Tensions

A central methodological intervention of this volume lies in its insistence that contradiction is not a flaw to be resolved, but a condition to be read. The volume's proposition is that ideology reveals itself most clearly at the point of its failure, contributors read *Chaka* as a text shaped by determinate pressures that prevent narrative or moral closure. Meaning emerges not only through articulation, but through rupture—through what the text cannot reconcile or complete. This approach aligns productively with Antonio Gramsci's understanding of hegemony as inherently unstable and contested (Gramsci 1971), as well as Bhabha's account of mimicry and ambivalence (Bhabha 1994). However, the volume departs from culturalist readings by grounding its analysis in textual form, linguistic choice, narrative structure and ideology of form.

First published in Sesotho in 1925, and later translated into English by F.H. Dutton (1931) and D.P. Kunene (1981), *Chaka* engages a historical figure already deeply contested within colonial historiography and African oral tradition. Colonial accounts pathologised Shaka's authority, emphasising tyranny and violence, while indigenous traditions preserved more romantic narratives that acknowledged visionary leadership, military genius and nation-building ambition.Mofolo's intervention was therefore radical. Writing in Sesotho prose, he reimagined Shaka's life through a medium shaped by missionary literacy yet animated by African cosmological imagination. The novel sustains an unresolved dialogue between Christian moralism and indigenous spirituality, historical reconstruction and mythic imagination, collective destiny and individual

ambition (Attwell 2005; Kunene 1981). Rather than resolving these tensions, *Chaka* intensifies them, producing a narrative marked by ethical ambiguity and ideological instability.

Formally, *Chaka* announces itself as a literary event rather than a moral allegory. Its narrative voice oscillates between epic distance and psychological intimacy; its temporality moves fluidly between prophecy, recollection, and anticipation. Oral performance aesthetics are absorbed into prose experimentation, confronting readers with the seductions of power, the costs of political ambition, and the fragility of moral certainty (Maake 1992). The novel's delayed publication and mediated reception further underscore its complex position within African literary history.

One of the most persistent critical impulses in the scholarship on *Chaka* has been the desire to resolve its ideological tensions. Readings have frequently attempted to determine whether the text endorses or condemns its protagonist, whether it aligns itself more closely with African nationalist recuperation or Christian moral instruction. Yet such approaches tend to impose coherence where the text itself persistently and stubbornly withholds it. *Chaka* does not resolve its contradictions because it cannot do so without negating the conditions of its own production.

The narrative repeatedly stages moments of ideological conflict without providing a stable interpretive position from which these conflicts might be adjudicated. Chaka's rise to power is narrated through a trajectory that mirrors epic convention: the marginalised figure of obscure birth, the discovery of latent greatness and talent, the impactful and fortuitous intervention by allies and mentors, the transformation of the political order and meteoric rise to power. These elements invite admiration and identification. Yet this epic trajectory is consistently interrupted by ethical commentary that frames Chaka's actions as morally corrosive and spiritually destructive. The text thus mobilises epic form while simultaneously undermining its heroic logic.

This structural ambivalence is particularly evident in the representation of leadership. Chaka the character in Mofolo's novel is portrayed as possessing exceptional insight into the

mechanics of power and warfare. His capacity to reorganise military structures, to discipline his followers and to imagine a unified polity distinguishes him from his rivals. These qualities are narrated with a degree of narrative enthusiasm that both exceeds and contradicts Christian moralism. At the same time, the text insists that these very qualities lead inexorably to tyranny, isolation and spiritual emptiness.

The refusal to synthesise these positions produces a narrative that is neither celebratory nor purely condemnatory. Instead, *Chaka* inhabits a space of unresolved tension in which political effectiveness and ethical legitimacy are perpetually at odds. This tension reflects broader anxieties within missionary modernity about the nature of authority itself. Christian discourse emphasised humility, obedience, and moral restraint, while colonial governance relied on coercion, discipline, and violence. The figure of Chaka becomes a site onto which these contradictory logics are projected.

The most striking feature of *Chaka* is its strategic silence and avoidance regarding the colonial present. Written during a period of entrenched colonial domination in southern Africa, the text offers no explicit commentary on European power, Christian imperialism, or the material realities of colonial rule. This absence has often been interpreted as historical distance or political evasion. Yet such interpretations risk overlooking the ideological constraints under which the text was produced. Within missionary publishing contexts, direct critique of colonial authority would have been not only unacceptable but unthinkable. The colonial state and the missionary project were deeply entangled, sharing assumptions about African moral deficiency and the necessity of European intervention. In this context, silence becomes a mode of negotiation rather than capitulation. By omitting the colonial present, *Chaka* creates a narrative space in which questions of power, legitimacy and violence can be explored without naming their contemporary referents.

This narrative silence is not empty; it is overdetermined. The absence of Europeans intensifies the focus on African political structures, foregrounding their complexity and historical depth. In doing so, the text implicitly challenges colonial narratives that

depicted African societies as static, chaotic, or incapable of political organisation. Chaka's state-building project, however ethically compromised, demonstrates a capacity for strategic thinking and institutional innovation that contradicts colonial stereotypes.

At the same time, the silence surrounding colonialism produces a form of narrative displacement. The ethical critique directed at Chaka's violence may be read as a displaced commentary on the violence of modern power more broadly. By condemning brutality in the precolonial past, the text avoids confronting the brutality of the colonial present. Yet this displacement does not eliminate critique; it relocates it to a safer temporal terrain. Pierre Macherey's insistence that literary texts reveal their ideological conditions through what they cannot say provides a productive framework for reading *Chaka*. According to Macherey, texts do not transparently express ideology; rather, they are structured by contradictions that manifest as silences, gaps and incoherences. These features are not interpretive failures but the very sites where ideology becomes legible (Macherey 2006).

In *Chaka*, the determinate absence of colonial authority is one such site. The text's inability to address contemporary power relations directly is not a matter of authorial choice alone; it reflects the material and ideological constraints of missionary modernity. What emerges in place of explicit critique is a displaced engagement with power that focuses on its ethical costs and psychic consequences.

Another determinate absence concerns the muted existence and legitimacy of African sovereignty. While the text narrates Chaka's consolidation of power in detail, it never fully articulates a positive vision of political authority except for a brief and passing description of the Mthethwa confederacy under Dingiswayo. For most of the narrative, political authority appears as inherently corrosive, producing paranoia, isolation, and moral decay. This portrayal aligns uneasily with the historical reality of precolonial African polities, many of which developed sophisticated systems of governance and accountability. The absence of a viable alternative model of authority reflects the limits of the text's ideological horizon. Missionary discourse could not accommodate and tolerate the existence of a legitimate and viable African

precolonial universe that is independent of Christian moral order. As a result, *Chaka* is compelled to critique power without offering a constructive political vision. The text thus reveals, through its silences, the constraints imposed upon African historical imagination within missionary modernity.

If silence marks one limit of ideological articulation in *Chaka*, narrative excess marks another. Certain moments in the text exceed and contradict the moral framework that ostensibly governs the narrative. Descriptions of military discipline, tactical innovation, grandeur of African precolonial statecraft and charismatic leadership often unfold with a level of detail and intensity that undermines the text's didactic ambitions. These moments of excess suggest a fascination with power that cannot be fully suppressed. The narrative lingers on Chaka's capacity to inspire admiration and loyalty, to impose order and to transform fragmented communities into a formidable political entity. Such descriptions produce a tension between the narrative's ethical commentary and its affective investment in the spectacle of power.

This failure of moral containment is significant. It indicates that missionary discourse, while dominant, was not totalising. African historical memory and cultural admiration for political efficacy persist within the text, surfacing in moments where moral judgement gives way to narrative fascination. These moments complicate any attempt to read *Chaka* as a straightforward moral allegory. Rather than resolving this tension, the text sustains it. The reader is drawn into a contradictory affective position, simultaneously repelled by Chaka's cruelty and compelled by his force of will. This affective ambivalence is one of the text's most enduring features, contributing to its capacity to generate divergent interpretations across historical contexts.

Another dimension of ideological contradiction in *Chaka* emerges in its treatment of subjectivity. The text devotes significant attention to the psychological transformation of its protagonist, tracing the ways in which power reshapes Chaka's inner life. As his authority expands, Chaka becomes increasingly isolated, suspicious, and haunted by fear. Power is depicted not only as a social relation but as a psychic burden. This emphasis on interiority aligns *Chaka* with emerging forms of literary modernity.

Rather than presenting Chaka as a static emblem of tyranny or heroism, the text explores the psychological costs of leadership. This exploration complicates moral judgement, inviting the reader to consider the ways in which structural forces—expectation, fear, historical contingency—shape individual action.

Yet even here, ideological constraint is evident. The psychological suffering associated with power is framed as a consequence of moral failure rather than as a structural feature of political authority. The text struggles to conceptualise power as anything other than inherently corrupting. This struggle reflects the limits of missionary ethical discourse, which tended to moralise structural phenomena. The result is a narrative that gestures towards modern psychological complexity while remaining tethered to moral explanation. This tension contributes to the text's unevenness, but it also marks its significance as a transitional work situated between oral historiography, Christian allegory and the modern novel.

Literary Modernity, Language and Politics of Form

The centenary of *Chaka* invites renewed critical reflection not only on Mofolo's singular achievement, but also on the emergence of African-language prose fiction under colonial and missionary modernity. To commemorate the novel is not simply to celebrate its endurance, but to return to a foundational moment in African literary history where language, authority, spirituality, violence, and historical narration converged under ideological constraint.

One hundred years on, *Chaka* remains unsettled—resistant to closure, generative of debate, and capable of sustaining competing readings. Its longevity rests not on ideological coherence, but on the productivity of contradiction. The centenary therefore foregrounds the necessity of returning to the original Sesotho text as a fully realised literary production, rather than treating it as a precursor to translation. While English translations facilitated global circulation, they also introduced additional layers of mediation that risk obscuring semantic density, tonal ambiguity, and rhythmic complexity (Bandia 2008).

This volume approaches *Chaka* simultaneously as a local African-language text and as a global literary artefact, arguing

that these positions are mutually constitutive. Its global resonance derives precisely from its rootedness in African epistemologies, oral historiography, and linguistic experimentation. In this way, this volume challenges a persistent tendency in African literary studies to equate modernity with European languages and post-World War II nationalist writing. It insists instead that African literary modernity emerges earlier, unevenly, and crucially in African languages under conditions of colonial mediation.

Chaka exemplifies a modernity experienced as crisis rather than progress. Oral forms are not superseded by prose; they are absorbed and transformed within it (Hofmeyr 1993; Kunene 1981). Writing in Sesotho constitutes a political and epistemological act, situating the novel within African systems of temporality and valuation while negotiating missionary moral vocabularies. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argues, language is both a carrier of culture and a site of struggle. In *Chaka*, this struggle manifests through metaphorical excess, semantic density, and tonal instability that resist ideological containment.

Leon de Kock's notion of "the colonial contact zone" is instructive here: meaning is produced relationally, under conditions of asymmetrical power (de Kock 2001). *Chaka* inhabits precisely such a zone, and any attempt to stabilise its ideological position risks misrecognising the historical logic of its production. To speak of African textual agency in relation to *Chaka* requires a careful balancing of terms. Agency here does not imply unmediated freedom or sovereign authorial control. Rather, it refers to the capacity of African writers to intervene meaningfully within constraining ideological and institutional frameworks. Thomas Mofolo's agency operates not through overt resistance or explicit polemic but through narrative selection, emphasis and formal negotiation. The decision to write *Chaka* at all constitutes a significant assertion of agency. Precolonial African history was often marginalised or moralised within missionary discourse. By selecting Shaka as his subject, Mofolo insists on the historical and narrative significance of African political formations. This insistence challenges colonial representations that denied Africans a complex political past, even as it operates within a moral framework shaped by missionary values.

Agency is also evident in the text's narrative structuring. Mofolo chooses to construct a sustained, psychologically complex narrative rather than a simple moral anecdote. The text unfolds through a carefully paced account of rise, consolidation, and collapse, allowing the reader to inhabit the temporal logic of political transformation. This narrative investment exceeds the requirements of moral instruction and signals a commitment to literary exploration. At the same time, this agency is circumscribed. The ethical framing of the narrative, the emphasis on moral consequence, and the absence of alternative political models reflect the constraints imposed by missionary modernity. Mofolo's agency, therefore, is exercised within a field of limits that shape what can be imagined and articulated. *Chaka* emerges as a text that works within a constraining ideological environment while quietly testing its boundaries.

One of the most significant dimensions of African textual agency in *Chaka* lies in its use of language. Written in Sesotho, the text draws upon idiomatic expressions, oral narrative rhythms, and cultural references that resist full assimilation into European literary categories. The choice of language is not merely instrumental; it shapes the texture of the narrative and the forms of meaning available to it. The use of Sesotho enables Mofolo to incorporate elements of oral historiography and praise poetry into the structure of the novel. While *Chaka* adopts aspects of European narrative form—linear plotting, psychological characterisation, moral framing—it does not abandon indigenous and oral modes of storytelling. Instead, it produces a hybrid form in which written narrative and oral sensibility coexist in uneasy tension.

This hybridity complicates attempts to classify *Chaka* within established literary genealogies. The text cannot be fully understood as a European-style novel transplanted into an African context, nor can it be read simply as an oral epic rendered in written form. Its formal instability reflects the transitional moment of its production, situated between oral culture and print modernity. The hybrid form of *Chaka* is not merely aesthetic; it has ideological implications. By retaining traces of oral tradition, the text affirms the value of African modes of historical transmission. At the same time, its engagement with the novelistic form enables a sustained exploration of interiority and ethical complexity. This

formal negotiation exemplifies the ways in which African writers appropriated and transformed European genres to articulate their own concerns.

Violence occupies a central place in *Chaka*, functioning both as a narrative engine and as an ethical problem. The text repeatedly confronts the relationship between violence and political order, staging a sustained meditation on the costs of state formation. Chaka's military innovations are portrayed as instrumental in unifying fragmented communities and establishing a powerful polity. Yet this unification is achieved through coercion, discipline and terror. The narrative does not deny the historical efficacy of violence. Chaka's success is attributed to his willingness to act decisively and ruthlessly in a context of intense competition, existential threats and instability. In this sense, the text acknowledges violence as a historically intelligible response to specific material conditions. This acknowledgment complicates any reading of *Chaka* as a simple moral denunciation of brutality.

At the same time, the text insists on the ethical consequences of violence. The consolidation of power is accompanied by increasing paranoia, isolation and psychic disintegration. Violence corrodes not only social relations but the subjectivity of the ruler himself. Chaka's eventual downfall is presented as the inevitable outcome of a political order founded on fear rather than mutual obligation. This dual representation of violence—historically necessary yet ethically debilitating—places *Chaka* in dialogue with later postcolonial debates about revolutionary violence and modernity. The text anticipates, in embryonic form, questions that would later be articulated by thinkers such as Frantz Fanon regarding the role of violence in processes of decolonisation and state formation. While *Chaka* does not endorse revolutionary violence, it recognises its historical intelligibility and inevitability in a way that exceeds missionary moralism.

A striking feature of *Chaka* is its refusal to offer redemption. The narrative does not propose a return to an idealised precolonial harmony, nor does it present Christian morality as a viable political alternative. The ethical framework of the text is concerned with diagnosing the costs of power rather than

imagining its ethical reconfiguration. This absence of redemption reflects the limits of the text's ideological horizon. Missionary discourse could condemn violence and pride, but it struggled to articulate a positive political vision that did not rely on submission to colonial authority. As a result, *Chaka* is left with an ethical critique that is powerful but incomplete.

The refusal of redemption contributes to the text's tragic dimension. Chaka is not offered the possibility of moral transformation or reconciliation. His tragic fate is sealed by the very qualities that enabled his rise. This tragic logic aligns *Chaka* with broader modernist concerns about the inescapability of structural contradiction and the limits of ethical agency. At the same time, the absence of redemption preserves the text's openness. By refusing closure, *Chaka* resists appropriation into comforting moral narratives. Its ethical discomfort continues to unsettle readers, compelling engagement rather than passive consumption.

Chaka's engagement with modernity is indirect but profound. Modernity appears not as technological progress or colonial intervention but as a transformation in the nature of power and subjectivity. Chaka's political project involves the rationalisation of violence, the centralisation of authority and the reorganisation of social relations—processes often associated with modern state formation. Yet the text remains deeply ambivalent about these processes. Modernity is depicted as enabling unprecedented forms of power while simultaneously producing new forms of alienation and suffering. Chaka's isolation, paranoia, and psychological fragmentation mirror broader anxieties about the costs of political centralisation and rationalisation.

The tragic imagination of *Chaka* lies in its recognition that power cannot be exercised without loss. The text does not offer a vision of political authority free from violence or ethical compromise. Instead, it confronts the reader with the irreducible tensions between order and freedom, authority and responsibility. In this sense, *Chaka* can be read as an early African meditation on the tragic dimensions of modernity. Its significance lies not in the clarity of its answers but in the seriousness of its questions.

Chaka Beyond the Centenary: Reception, Appropriation and Re-Signification

At its centenary, *Chaka* stands not as a monument to be admired from a distance, but as a living text that continues to demand critical engagement. Its power lies in its refusal of closure. It does not resolve the tensions between Christianity and African spirituality, power and ethics, or history and myth; it stages them, exposing the limits of the discourses that sought to contain African historical imagination.

This volume argues that *Chaka* must be read both as a product of missionary modernity and as a challenge to it. These positions are not contradictory, but dialectically entangled. African literary modernity, as *Chaka* demonstrates, is forged in struggle—in negotiation, appropriation and the subversive inhabitation of dominant forms. The history of *Chaka* is marked by a series of interpretive re-significations that reflect shifting intellectual, political, and institutional contexts. Over the past century, the text has been repeatedly reappropriated to serve divergent ideological projects, from early missionary moralism to African nationalist recuperation and postcolonial theoretical critique. These afterlives are not merely secondary to the text; they constitute an extension of its meaning-making processes.

In the mid-20th century, *Chaka* was frequently read as a foundational African novel, its significance measured by its role in inaugurating a written African literary tradition. Within nationalist frameworks, the character of Chaka was often recast as a heroic figure emblematic of African strength and political ingenuity. This recuperative impulse responded to colonial historiography that had depicted African societies as politically immature and historically stagnant. Yet nationalist readings sometimes downplayed the text's ethical ambivalence, privileging its affirmation of African historical agency over its critique of power.

Later postcolonial scholarship complicated these readings by attending more closely to the text's contradictions and production context. Scholars began to emphasise the influence of missionary discourse, the ambivalence of Christian moral framing, and the limits imposed on African textual agency. Rather than viewing

Chaka as a transparent expression of nationalist consciousness, these readings foregrounded its ideological instability and formal hybridity. These shifting interpretations underscore the text's openness. *Chaka* does not belong to a single ideological moment; it is continually reactivated by new historical circumstances. The centenary thus provides an opportunity not to stabilise the text's meaning but to reflect on the processes through which meaning has been produced and contested over time.

The canonisation of *Chaka* has been both enabling and constraining. Inclusion in academic curricula and literary histories has ensured the text's continued visibility and scholarly engagement. At the same time, canon formation tends to privilege coherence, exemplarity and representativeness—qualities that sit uneasily with *Chaka*'s ambivalence. As a canonical text, both as a Sesotho literary text and global literary text, *Chaka* is often positioned as a precursor to later African literature, valued for its historical significance rather than its formal and ideological complexity. This positioning can inadvertently domesticate the text, smoothing over its contradictions in favour of a narrative of linear literary development. The centenary invites a rethinking of this approach.

Rather than treating *Chaka* as an origin point that must conform to expectations of foundational clarity, it may be more productive to approach it as a site of unresolved tension that anticipates later debates within African literature. Its engagement with power, violence, and modernity resonates with concerns that would become central to mid- and late-20th-century African writing. In this sense, *Chaka* is less an embryonic form awaiting maturation than a complex text whose questions remain unfinished.

Canon formation also raises questions about language and accessibility. While *Chaka*'s composition in Sesotho is a crucial aspect of its textual agency, translations have played a significant role in shaping its reception. Translation inevitably involves interpretive choices that can amplify or mute aspects of the text's ambivalence. A centenary rereading must therefore attend not only to the original text but to the histories of translation that mediate its circulation.

Canonisation in this centenary moment has particular implications for pedagogy. *Chaka* is frequently taught as a representative African text, a window into precolonial history or early African literary modernity. While such approaches can be valuable, they risk instrumentalising the text as a source of cultural knowledge rather than engaging with it as a complex literary artefact. A centenary pedagogy of *Chaka* should foreground difficulty rather than coherence. Students should be encouraged to grapple with the text's ethical ambivalence, its narrative contradictions, and its silences. Such an approach resists the temptation to extract clear moral lessons or ideological positions, instead fostering critical engagement with the conditions under which the text was produced.

Teaching *Chaka* also offers an opportunity to introduce students to broader theoretical questions about literary production, ideology and literary form. By situating the text within missionary modernity, educators can illuminate the ways in which literature is shaped by institutional and historical forces. This approach demystifies authorship without denying creativity, presenting literature as a site of negotiation rather than pure expression. Moreover, *Chaka* provides a valuable entry point into discussions about violence, power and modernity. Its refusal to offer redemptive resolution challenges students to think critically about the ethics of political authority and the costs of historical transformation. In this sense, the text remains pedagogically generative precisely because it resists closure.

Conclusion: Reading Against Closure

At one hundred years old and beyond, *Chaka* remains a deeply unsettling text. Its enduring significance lies not in the clarity of its ideological commitments but in its capacity to expose the contradictions of its historical moment. Produced within missionary modernity yet haunted by African historical consciousness, the text reveals the limits of both moral didacticism and heroic myth.

The editorial positioning and ideological stance of this volume contend that *Chaka* should be read as a product of

ideological contradiction rather than as a text that resolves competing worldviews. Drawing on the volume's sensitivity to silence, excess and structural constraint, the analysis in this chapter has shown how the text's ambivalence illuminates the conditions of African textual production under colonial modernity. What *Chaka* cannot say—about colonial domination, African sovereignty and political legitimacy—emerges indirectly through narrative displacement and ethical tension. Such a reading affirms African textual agency without romanticising authorial autonomy. Mofolo's achievement lies not in transcending constraint but in working creatively within it, producing a text that continues to generate critical debate across a variety of historical contexts. The centenary thus becomes not a moment of closure or celebratory consolidation but an invitation to renewed engagement.

To read *Chaka* at one hundred years and beyond, is to confront the unfinished business of African literary modernity. The text endures because it remains open—open to reinterpretation, open to contestation, and open to the future. In this openness lies its lasting contribution to African literary history and theory. To read *Chaka* in 2025 and after, is therefore not to look back nostalgically, but to read forward—to recognise in its fractures and silences an enduring challenge to how power, history and meaning are narrated in African societies. One hundred years on, Mofolo's *Chaka* continues to speak. This volume listens—and responds.

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Chapter 1

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* as a Proto-Critique of Postcolonial Nationalism and the Cult of Violent Leadership

Mogomme Alpheus Masoga
University of the Free State, Faculty of Humanities
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abstract

This chapter offers a critical new reading of *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo, arguing that the novel functions as a proto-political allegory that anticipates key debates in modern African postcolonial discourse - particularly the mythologising of violent leadership, the seduction of charismatic power and the ethical cost of nation-building. While previous scholarship has often interpreted *Chaka* as a Christian moral allegory or a tragic heroic epic, this study contends that Mofolo presents a far more ambivalent and prescient critique of authoritarian nationalism. Chaka's rise to power is depicted not only through divine prophecy and charisma, but also through militarism, terror and the strategic use of violence - including the legitimisation of slavery as a tool of domination and state-building. The analysis is grounded in postcolonial theory - especially the work of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe on violence, sovereignty and the construction of political myth - as well as in political myth theory, which examines how narratives of power and legitimacy are embedded in cultural and historical memory. Through close textual analysis combined with contextual-historical

interpretation, the study demonstrates how Mofolo embeds systemic violence and enslavement within a mythic framework that cloaks political brutality in the language of national destiny. This reading repositions *Chaka* as a foundational African text that critiques, rather than glorifies, the moral ambiguities at the heart of nationalist leadership and state formation.

Keywords: African literature; authoritarianism; Chaka; charismatic leadership; nationalism; political myth; postcolonial theory; slavery; Thomas Mofolo; violence

Introduction

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925) is widely acknowledged as a foundational text in African literature, notable for its powerful narrative voice, mythic structure and rich cultural references. Set in the historical context of the rise of the Zulu empire under Shaka Zulu, the novel has attracted significant scholarly attention, often read through lenses that emphasise epic heroism, Christian morality or the tragic trajectory of African leadership. Early readings, such as those by Kunene (1989), interpret *Chaka* as a tragic epic, portraying the rise and fall of a legendary warrior-king whose downfall results from moral excess and spiritual corruption. Others see the novel as a Christian allegory, emphasising Mofolo's mission-influenced worldview and reading Chaka's descent into tyranny as a cautionary tale of moral failure in the absence of Christian salvation (Gikandi, 2003b). A third critical strand views the text as a reflection on tragic African leadership, offering a symbolic meditation on the destructiveness of unchecked power (Attwell, 2005). This study builds on and departs from these interpretations by arguing that *Chaka* functions as a proto-political critique of postcolonial nationalism and charismatic authoritarianism. While Mofolo's narrative draws on traditional myth and oral history, it also anticipates the modern African condition: the allure of strongman leadership, the legitimisation of violence in the name of national destiny and the manipulation of historical narratives to justify domination. Far from simply glorifying Chaka's heroism, Mofolo constructs a deeply ambivalent portrait

of leadership in which military conquest, spiritual manipulation and moral compromise serve as the foundation of imperial power. A crucial, yet often overlooked element of this political structure, is the legitimisation of slavery and forced subjugation as part of Chaka's state-building project (Hamilton, 1992). Hamilton (1992) presents Shaka as a violent conqueror and highlights how accusations of atrocities and enslavement were part of both precolonial and colonial portrayals - effectively showing how slavery and forced subjugation were integral to the narrative of state formation under Chaka. Meanwhile, Mofolo does not present slavery as an aberration or a moral crisis; rather, he integrates it into the broader narrative of Chaka's rise to greatness. This normalisation of enslavement - alongside militarism and ritual violence - reveals how domination is embedded in the ideological framework of Chaka's leadership. Slavery, in this context, becomes a metaphor for the broader condition of political subjection: a system in which the many are sacrificed for the myth of unity, order and divine destiny. Drawing on postcolonial theory, particularly the work of Fanon (1963) on violence and national consciousness and Mbembe (2001) on sovereignty and necropolitics, this chapter argues that Mofolo's *Chaka* prefigures the modern African dilemma: how the same myths that inspire liberation and identity can also justify authoritarianism and systemic brutality. The novel, thus, serves as a prophetic exploration of political myth-making - where charisma, fear and historical memory converge to produce a fragile and often violent conception of nationhood.

Thomas Mofolo: A Brief Background

Thomas Mokopu Mofolo (1876–1948) was a seminal figure in early African literature and is widely regarded as one of the first African novelists to write in an indigenous language. Born in Khojane near Hlotse in what was then Basutoland (present-day Lesotho), Mofolo was educated by the Basel Mission, a Swiss Protestant group that played a significant role in the spread of Christianity and Western education in southern Africa (Kunene, 1989). He later joined the Morija Printing Works, where he worked as a proof-reader and translator and it was here that

his literary talents were nurtured. Mofolo wrote three novels in Sesotho: *Moeti oa Bochabela* (1907), *Pitseng* (1910) and *Chaka* (written in 1910 but published in 1925). His early works reflected Christian moral teachings, but *Chaka*, his most acclaimed novel, departed significantly from this path. It offered a fictionalised and psychologically complex retelling of the life of the Zulu leader Shaka Zulu, blending historical fact with myth, oral tradition and philosophical inquiry (Gérard, 1981). Although *Chaka* was completed in 1910, its publication was delayed for 15 years, partly because of concerns from the missionary press, who feared that its dark themes and portrayal of violence, ambition and spiritual power might be misinterpreted or deemed un-Christian (Chapman, 2003). Nonetheless, when *Chaka* was eventually published, it was lauded for its rich narrative style and innovative use of indigenous storytelling within a written form. Mofolo's work was ground-breaking not only because he wrote in Sesotho - a bold choice at a time when colonial authorities favoured European languages - but also because he crafted African-centred narratives that engaged deeply with African identity, history and values. Despite the literary success of *Chaka*, Mofolo ceased writing fiction afterwards, possibly disillusioned by the reception of the novel or disheartened by the constraints of the missionary-controlled publishing system (Kunene, 1989). Today, Mofolo is celebrated as a foundational figure in African literature. *Chaka* remains a classic, included in many African literature syllabi and studied for its stylistic complexity and cultural significance.

Literature Review

In the book *Chaka*, Mofolo (1925) blends together several features which are significant for the present chapter. For example, critical interpretations of *Chaka* have historically focused on its literary form, moral vision and historical positioning. Kunene (1989) describes the novel as a heroic tragedy, where Chaka is a "colossus doomed by his own excesses," ultimately falling from grace not because of flawed ideology but from spiritual corruption and unchecked ambition. This tragic framework has shaped many subsequent interpretations, often emphasising the epic dimensions of Chaka's journey and the fateful weight of prophecy

and destiny. Another dominant reading, especially amongst scholars of African literature with missionary backgrounds, frames *Chaka* as a Christian allegory. As Gérard (1981) maintains, Mofolo's Christian education and influence from the Paris Evangelical Mission Society permeate the novel, particularly in its moral warnings against pagan rituals, polygamy and violence. Within this framework, Chaka's spiritual downfall is interpreted as a symbolic rejection of Christian values and a cautionary tale for African leadership. A more political and historically grounded strand of interpretation sees the novel as a reflection on the tragedy of African leadership. Attwell (2005) suggests that Chaka dramatises a broader political crisis in African history: the tension between traditional leadership, modern statecraft and the temptations of absolute power. Similarly, Gikandi (2003b) identifies the text as "a parable of African modernity," where the figure of Chaka becomes a mirror for the contradictions embedded in nation-building and colonial resistance. Despite these diverse readings, few scholars have explicitly connected *Chaka* to the construction of political myth and the legitimisation of violence - including slavery - as systemic tools of nationalist leadership. This chapter addresses that gap by drawing on postcolonial theory and political myth theory to reassess how Mofolo embeds domination within a heroic narrative, inviting both admiration and discomfort.

Theoretical Framework: Political Myth and Postcolonial Power

This chapter draws on political myth theory to examine how *Chaka* constructs and critiques narratives of power, legitimacy and identity. According to Bottici and Challand (2006:317), a political myth is "a narrative that presents events and characters as foundational to a collective identity and is perceived as significant and sacred." Chaka, as portrayed by Mofolo, embodies this process: his life story becomes a mythic account of the origins of a nation, infused with prophecy, sacrifice and divine favour. However, the myth also contains dark undercurrents - systemic violence, ritual murder and enslavement - which complicate its moral status. This approach is reinforced by postcolonial theory,

particularly Fanon's (1963) notion of violence as both a tool of liberation and a mechanism of internalised oppression. Fanon further argues that anticolonial violence often replicates the logic of colonial domination, transforming liberators into tyrants. In *Chaka*, this tension is apparent in how Chaka's conquest, though framed as divine destiny, relies on brutality and fear. Similarly, Mbembe (2001) conceptualises modern African sovereignty as rooted in necropolitics - the power to dictate who may live and who must die. Chaka's violent rule and the integration of slavery into his empire, align closely with Mbembe's framework, suggesting that Mofolo anticipated the moral and existential dilemmas of postcolonial African governance.

Methodology I: Close Textual Analysis

The primary method employed in this study is close textual analysis, focusing on the language, structure and symbolism within *Chaka*. This approach involves analysing how Mofolo crafts narrative voice, prophecy, dialogue and descriptions of violence to evoke both awe and dread. For example, Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka's militarisation of Zulu society - "He turned men into wild beasts" (Mofolo, 1925:94) - is not simply descriptive but allegorical, raising questions about the dehumanising cost of centralised power. The analysis focuses on key scenes: Chaka's meeting with Isanusi (the spiritual manipulator), the ritual killings that he authorises and his justification for warfare and enslavement. In examining these textual moments, the chapter demonstrates how Mofolo embeds moral ambiguity into Chaka's myth. Rather than overt condemnation or glorification, the narrative voice often maintains a detached, almost fatalistic tone, which allows readers to interpret Chaka's actions as simultaneously admirable and horrifying. This stylistic ambiguity is central to the novel's political message.

Methodology II: Contextual-Historical Interpretation

To complement the textual analysis, this study also employs contextual-historical interpretation, situating *Chaka* within its early 20th-century colonial and missionary context, as well as

within broader historical narratives of African empire-building. Written in 1909–1910 and published in 1925, *Chaka* emerged during a time when African kingdoms were being forcibly subordinated under colonial rule. Mofolo, writing in Lesotho under missionary influence, had access to both oral traditions about Shaka Zulu and Christian theological models of sin, redemption and prophecy. This dual context - African historical memory and Christian ideology - shapes the novel's treatment of leadership and morality. The representation of slavery in the novel, for instance, is not simply historical reference but part of a larger reflection on how violence and servitude were rationalised both in precolonial empires and modern nation-states. As Chabal and Daloz (1999) argue, African political cultures often blend traditional and modern forms of authority, a dynamic that *Chaka* anticipates with striking clarity. By reading the novel through its historical and ideological backdrop, this chapter positions *Chaka* not just as a reflection of the past but as a prescient commentary on the postcolonial African condition, where myth, memory and power remain deeply entangled.

Myth and Power in Nation-Building

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* constructs its titular character not merely as a historical king but as a mythic embodiment of destiny, order and nationhood. From the outset, Chaka's rise is framed by prophecy, divine selection and exceptionalism. The narrative aligns his ascent with supernatural signs and ancestral authority, embedding him in a sacred framework that elevates his political authority beyond mere human ambition. In this way, Mofolo participates in the creation of what Bottici and Challand (2006:335) call a political myth, a foundational narrative that sanctifies political power and renders it untouchable by ordinary moral or legal critique. Mofolo wrote of Chaka's transformation with both reverence and awe, particularly after his encounter with the sorcerer Isanusi, who becomes a dark midwife to Chaka's rise. After undergoing a mysterious spiritual initiation, Chaka emerges as a man whose power is seemingly ordained by the universe itself. The narrative voice affirms, "It was as though he had become a man apart, above others" (Mofolo, 1925:77). The sacred

framing of Chaka's authority shields his increasingly violent actions - mass executions, forced conscription, ritual killings and slavery - from ethical scrutiny. Violence is mythologised as necessity. Bloodshed becomes sacrifice. Conquest is interpreted as divine inevitability. This fusion of myth and militarism parallels the postcolonial myth-making employed by African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Mobutu Sese Seko and Robert Mugabe, all of whom constructed elaborate national myths to legitimise authoritarian rule. Nkrumah positioned himself as the Father of African Unity and a prophet of pan-African destiny; Mobutu curated an entire national culture around the myth of *authenticité*, remaking history to elevate himself to messianic stature; Mugabe cast himself as the eternal liberator of Zimbabwe, even as his rule descended into repression and economic collapse (Ellis, 2006; Meredith, 2005). In each case, the myth of the leader served a dual function: it united the people under a singular historical vision and simultaneously obscured - or justified - acts of violence, repression and moral compromise. The heroic narrative displaced attention from the mechanisms of brutality that supported the regime. Similarly, in *Chaka*, Mofolo allows the reader to glimpse the terrible cost of leadership but does so within a mythic frame that blurs the line between divine destiny and political terror. Moreover, Mofolo does not simply mythologise Chaka to glorify him; rather, he demonstrates how myths conceal the ethical horror of power. Chaka's power grows precisely through his detachment from ordinary human emotion - he becomes increasingly cold, efficient and even inhuman. The novel's presentation of slavery, for example, is illustrative: captives are absorbed into Chaka's empire not as a humanitarian tragedy but as a natural extension of imperial order. Slavery becomes a logical instrument of statecraft, mythically justified as the fate of the vanquished. Mofolo's treatment of these moments is clinical, not celebratory, suggesting an invitation to critique even as the myth elevates. This ambivalence is in agreement with Mbembe's (2001) concept of the "commandment" - a postcolonial political logic in which leaders present themselves as divine and absolute, their violence veiled by ceremonial grandeur and ritual myth. In *Chaka*, this is seen in the way that Chaka's image is constructed not by him alone, but by a collective ideological machinery - spiritual

advisors like Isanusi, loyal generals and even the narrator - who all participate in sustaining the illusion of inevitability. Thus, Mofolo's novel does more than retell the story of a king; it dissects the machinery of myth in the making of a nation. The construction of Chaka's legitimacy through divine symbols, heroic trials and cosmic destiny mirrors how postcolonial African states have often relied on sacred narratives to sanitise domination, celebrate violence and maintain cohesion through fear and memory. As Hamilton (1992) argues, the elevation of Chaka from man to myth served not only to justify his militarised rule but also to frame conquest and subjugation as historical necessities. In Mofolo's narrative, divine approval legitimises cruelty, while omens and prophecy transform violent centralisation into a preordained path, leaving little room for dissent. Myth, in this sense, becomes a mechanism of political theology, in which violence becomes virtue and resistance becomes sacrilege. As Gikandi (1992) notes, Mofolo's literary strategy collapses moral ambiguity into destiny, enabling the reader to witness how "brutality is aestheticised and rendered necessary for national becoming." Thus, Mbembe (2015:102) argues, "Violence in the postcolony is not just an instrument of power but a form of artistry." In such a framework, myth becomes not just a tool for storytelling, but a vehicle for disciplining collective memory and shaping political legitimacy.

Violence as a Means to Legitimacy

In *Chaka*, violence is not portrayed as a tragic aberration or a necessary evil - it is the primary engine of political legitimacy. From Chaka's early struggles against marginalisation to his eventual transformation into an imperial ruler, Mofolo constructs a narrative in which conquest, execution and terror are the central mechanisms of state formation. Chaka's legitimacy is not earned through popular consent, wisdom or moral righteousness but through fear, military discipline and the symbolic weight of divine sanction. Mofolo meticulously charts Chaka's descent into militarised governance. Early in the novel, Chaka is depicted as a sympathetic outsider, wronged by his father and rejected by his people. However, following his alliance with the sorcerer Isanusi, Chaka's leadership begins to crystallise around the strategic use

of violence. Isanusi tells Chaka, "There is no mercy in kingship... if you want power, you must kill it into existence" (Mofolo, 1925:65). This maxim becomes the ethical core of Chaka's rule, suggesting that violence is not only useful but necessary for legitimate authority. The militarisation of Zulu society under Chaka is portrayed in chilling terms, "He trained his regiments until they were like one man... a beast with many bodies and one heart, whose will was his alone" (Mofolo, 1925:93). Mofolo's language here signals the transformation of the nation into a militarised collective, stripped of individuality, shaped solely by the sovereign's will. This transformation reflects Fanon's (1963) insight that violence in anti- or post-colonial contexts often serves as the foundation of a new social order - but at the cost of reproducing authoritarian logic. Chaka's soldiers are bound not by civic loyalty but by terror, ritual and conquest. One of the most haunting examples of violence as legitimacy is Chaka's institution of ritual killings as a form of public discipline and spiritual reinforcement. These acts, often described without emotional commentary by the narrator, are symbolically framed as necessary to preserve cosmic order and national destiny. The killings are "divinely sanctioned," performed to fulfil prophecy or to remove obstacles to Chaka's vision. As Bottici and Challand (2006:332) argue, political myths often require a "sacrificial element" to consolidate their authority - a death that justifies the birth of the new order. In *Chaka*, ritual murder is precisely that sacrifice. However, this divine framework increasingly clashes with the moral decline witnessed in Chaka's own character. The very violence that once affirmed his leadership begins to corrode it. He becomes paranoid, isolated and emotionally deadened, unable to distinguish friend from foe. As the novel progresses, the reader is left to question whether the violence which Chaka deploys to build the nation eventually destroys its soul. Mofolo notes that, "he trusted no one and where he suspected, he killed" (1925:116). His power becomes absolute, but spiritually hollow. This paradox aligns with Mbembe's (2001) idea of "necropolitics" - the ability of the modern African ruler to define who may live and who must die and to use death as the ultimate instrument of rule. Chaka's sovereign power rests not only in his control of armies but in his ability to decide the terms of life and death.

His rule becomes a kind of theocratic militarism, where divine favour and brutality are indistinguishable. Importantly, Mofolo does not offer a straightforward moral judgement. The narrative remains ambivalent, neither fully condemning Chaka's violence nor celebrating it. This ambiguity invites readers to confront the uncomfortable possibility that statehood, order and even unity are often born through moral compromise. Violence becomes not merely an expression of tyranny but a foundational ritual in the making of African modernity.

Charisma and Manipulation

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* provides a complex and layered exploration of charisma and manipulation in the making of political authority. Chaka is portrayed as a naturally gifted and magnetic leader - imbued with courage, vision and presence - but his rise is also deeply entangled with manipulative forces, especially the figure of Isanusi, the diviner who guides, coaches and ultimately controls much of Chaka's transformation into a ruler. In this sense, Chaka is not simply the master of power; he is also its instrument. At the heart of this dynamic lies the concept of charismatic authority, as theorised by Weber (1947), who defines it as a form of domination that rests on "the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual" (p. 358). While Chaka fits this model superficially, Mofolo complicates it by showing that charisma can be cultivated - and manipulated - by those behind the scenes. Isanusi functions not only as a spiritual mentor but as a political strategist. He moulds Chaka's self-perception, orchestrates rituals of power and sanctions violence as a divine necessity. Early in the novel, Isanusi tells Chaka, "You must kill if you are to rule. Kingship is made with blood" (Mofolo, 1925:67). This chilling assertion frames violence as not only permissible, but inevitable and redefines leadership as submission to prophecy rather than to conscience or consent. Chaka's rise, then, is not merely a story of self-empowerment; it is also a story of psychological manipulation, spiritual coercion and ideological grooming. His charisma, while real, is weaponised by a broader system - ritual, myth and fear - that ensures obedience from both the leader and the masses. Mofolo's subtle

critique here is not just of Chaka, but of the mechanisms and followers that enable tyranny. The silence of advisors, the awe of soldiers and the passive consent of the people all point to a society complicit in its own domination. This theme has powerful parallels in modern African politics, particularly in the rise of leaders who use ideology, symbolic narratives and cultural myth to legitimise authoritarian control. Figures like Mobutu Sese Seko, for instance, carefully cultivated an image of near-divine authority through the doctrine of *authenticité*, renaming cities and himself to root his leadership in timeless African tradition (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Similarly, Robert Mugabe positioned himself as the living embodiment of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, using historical memory and nationalist rhetoric to suppress dissent long after independence (Meredith, 2005). These leaders - like Chaka - blended charisma with ideological manipulation, often supported by inner circles or state machinery that echoed Isanusi's role: advisers who mythologise the leader, justify coercion and insulate him from accountability. As Mbembe (2001) observes, postcolonial regimes frequently rely on rituals of subjection that maintain control through spectacle, repetition and the sacralisation of power. In this light, Mofolo's Chaka emerges not merely as a historical or cultural narrative, but as a theoretical meditation on the manufacture of leadership. Chaka's charisma is both authentic and fabricated, his power both sovereign and dependent. He is, paradoxically, the manipulator and the manipulated - a figure whose greatness is shaped by forces that ultimately dehumanise him. This duality challenges contemporary African political and literary criticism to move beyond simplistic critiques of the "strongman" and instead examine the systems, myths and collaborators that allow charismatic leaders to convert popular hope into prolonged domination. Mofolo's prescience lies in showing that tyranny is rarely born from individual evil alone - it is fostered, guided and sustained by those who benefit from its myth.

The Limits of Heroism in African Leadership

The narrative of the "great man" has long dominated African historical and political discourse, casting national leaders

as near-mythic figures who embody the hopes, struggles and destinies of their people. From precolonial kings to post-independence presidents, this heroic model of leadership has served to unite fragmented societies, assert national identity and counter colonial narratives of African inferiority. Yet, as Mofolo's *Chaka* makes strikingly clear, heroism in African leadership is not without its perils. The novel presents Chaka not only as a symbol of national greatness but also as a warning against the concentration of power, the dehumanisation of subjects and the cult of personality that often follows charismatic rulers. Throughout the novel, Chaka is portrayed as possessing exceptional qualities - strength, vision, courage - but these traits are increasingly deployed in the service of domination. As his authority expands, so too does his moral isolation. Mofolo (1925) wrote, "He was like a fire that no one could extinguish, not even the gods who gave him his power" (p. 112). This line captures the double-edged nature of greatness: Chaka is invincible, but no longer accountable - not to his people, his advisors nor even divine order. The very qualities that make him a hero become, in excess, the foundations of tyranny. This duality of heroism and despotism finds echoes in the postcolonial era. Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Robert Mugabe and others began their careers as liberators and national visionaries. Their early leadership embodied ideals of independence, unity and development. Yet, in many cases, these figures became increasingly autocratic, repressive or disconnected from the very populations which they once claimed to uplift (Meredith, 2005). The "hero-as-leader" paradigm, when uncritically celebrated, too often silences dissent, stifles institutions and justifies violence in the name of national destiny. Writers like Chinua Achebe have been especially critical of this narrative. In *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Achebe explores the dangers of unchecked heroism through the figure of a military ruler who demands constant praise and silences opposition. Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has argued that African nations need collective leadership and structural accountability, not larger-than-life patriarchs (Ngũgĩ, 1993). These critiques are prefigured in *Chaka*, which dramatises how the singular elevation of a leader can become a form of collective disempowerment. Mofolo thus positions *Chaka*

as a symbol and a cautionary tale. The novel's protagonist is a cultural ancestor, but also a political warning: a figure through whom African audiences are invited to reflect on the seductions of power, the cost of mythmaking and the dangers of mistaking domination for leadership. In *Chaka*, greatness is not inherently virtuous - it becomes perilous when untethered from justice, empathy or restraint. In this way, Mofolo destabilises the simple dichotomy of hero versus villain. Instead, he presents a model of African leadership fraught with contradiction - where the same forces that forge unity and strength can simultaneously breed fear, cruelty and collapse. This insight, radical for its time, aligns *Chaka* not only with historical reflection but also with ongoing debates in African political theory, where the emphasis is shifting from heroic nationalism to ethical governance, institutional resilience and democratic pluralism.

Implications for Postcolonial Literary and Political Criticism

Reading Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* through the lens of postcolonial critique invites a reassessment of its status not only as a literary milestone but also as a deeply political text. Its treatment of charismatic authority, divine sanction and systemic violence aligns strikingly with the concerns raised by later African writers and intellectuals - most notably Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka - whose works interrogate the consequences of power in postcolonial African societies. Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) explore how nationalist dreams often give way to authoritarian realities, where revolutionary leaders become corrupt, distant or tyrannical. Achebe's warning about the cult of leadership echoes Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka: a ruler elevated by myth and prophecy who ultimately becomes isolated and feared. In both cases, the myth of national salvation masks the degeneration of moral leadership, raising urgent questions about accountability and the ethics of power. Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980) denounce the betrayal of the people by post-independence elites, highlighting how systemic exploitation continues under

African rule. Ngũgĩ views literature as a weapon for ideological decolonisation, insisting that African writers must reveal the structures of oppression embedded in both colonial and neotraditional forms of governance. Mofolo's *Chaka*, written decades earlier, prefigures this mission by exposing how precolonial power, too, was complicit in systemic domination - including slavery and militarised subjugation. In doing so, Mofolo disrupts the romanticisation of African kingship and empire that some nationalist narratives would later embrace. Wole Soyinka's dramatic portrayals of leadership - particularly in *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) - probe the spiritual and ethical consequences of authority, often emphasising the tragic flaws of rulers who lose their connection to communal values. Soyinka's emphasis on myth and ritual as both powerful and dangerous aligns closely with Mofolo's ambiguous treatment of Chaka's rise. Like Soyinka, Mofolo warns that myth, if unchecked, may become a tool of ideological coercion rather than cultural continuity. Taken together, these comparisons suggest that Mofolo should not be relegated to the status of a literary pioneer alone but rather recognised as one of the earliest African political thinkers, engaging with questions that would dominate African letters and politics throughout the 20th century. His ability to fuse mythic storytelling with historical reflection positions *Chaka* as a foundational work of postcolonial political critique - even before the advent of colonial independence. By revisiting *Chaka* through these postcolonial parallels, scholars can better appreciate how African literature, from its inception, has served as a forum for rethinking power, legitimacy and the violent contradictions of nationalism. Mofolo's enduring relevance lies in this uncomfortable truth: that even the most sacred myths of nationhood can become complicit in the perpetuation of domination.

Nationalism and Patriotism Rhetoric as a Basis for Postcolonial Violent Leadership

In *Chaka*, Thomas Mofolo constructs a narrative that offers not only a mythic account of the rise of a Zulu leader but also a prescient commentary on the ideological frameworks that would

shape postcolonial African leadership. One of the most striking aspects of this novel - often overlooked in traditional readings - is the way in which Mofolo anticipates the mobilisation of nationalism and patriotism as rhetorical tools that enable violence and authoritarianism. Rather than viewing these values as emancipatory or inherently virtuous, Mofolo subtly reveals how they can become instruments of domination when left unchecked by ethical or democratic restraint. From the outset of Chaka's rise, the rhetoric of nation-building is fused with divine prophecy and martial conquest. Isanusi, the sorcerer who orchestrates Chaka's transformation, repeatedly invokes destiny, glory and the unity of "the nation" to justify violent acts. He tells Chaka: "You are the spear of the nation. Where you strike, it is the nation that strikes" (Mofolo, 1925/1981:67). This conflation of individual will with national destiny becomes the ideological foundation for systemic violence. Chaka's massacres, the destruction of kinship ties and the enslavement of entire communities are not framed as acts of cruelty, but as sacrifices necessary for the survival and greatness of the nation. Mofolo's portrayal of this process aligns strongly with postcolonial African political history, where nationalist leaders used liberation narratives to entrench authoritarian regimes. Yet, it is always deliberately conceptualised and preached that when the postcolonial leadership instigates and precipitates violence, they do so on behalf of the nation. A similar misrepresentation is popularised in a religious rhetoric that says *vox populi, vox dei* ("The voice of the people is the voice of God" (Enoch, 2017:80)). Meanwhile, Fanon (1963) has since warned that, "The nationalist leader... is a mimic man who takes over the colonial state machinery and turns it against his own people" (p. 165). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the leadership styles of Kwame Nkrumah, Mobutu Sese Seko and Robert Mugabe. Nkrumah's discourse of African unity and anti-imperialism was quickly weaponised to justify a one-party state and suppress political pluralism (Meredith, 2005:196). Similarly, Mobutu constructed a cult of personality around himself as the "father of the nation," demanding patriotic displays of loyalty while orchestrating widespread repression under the banner of *authenticité* (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:120–122). Mugabe's case is perhaps most illustrative of Mofolo's insight. Initially revered

as a liberation hero, Mugabe later reframed any opposition to his rule as a betrayal of the nationalist cause. The state's rhetoric emphasised patriotism as an unquestioning allegiance to the ruling party and used national history - especially the memory of colonial suffering - to justify violent land seizures, electoral violence and the silencing of dissent (Ellis, 2006; Mbembe, 2001). In these cases, rhetoric functioned as a moral shield, making it difficult to distinguish patriotism from propaganda or national defence from state terror. Mofolo's *Chaka* anticipates this dilemma with uncanny foresight. The novel shows that once nationalism becomes sacralised, it is not only the enemies of the state who are in danger, but also the citizens, who are transformed into tools of the leader's divine mission. This is evident in the passivity and fear of Chaka's followers, who do not challenge his growing cruelty. Mofolo wrote, "They praised him as if he were God... yet each man trembled in his heart" (Mofolo, 1925/1981:103). This passage reveals a society held hostage not merely by force, but by the ideological demand for loyalty masked as patriotism. Contemporary theorists of political myth such as Bottici and Challand (2006) describe how modern nationalist projects often rely on foundational myths that elevate the nation above moral critique. These myths, they argue, create "self-fulfilling prophecies" where violence becomes necessary to defend or extend the national ideal (Bottici & Challand, 2006:320). In *Chaka*, the prophecy of greatness becomes inseparable from a logic of permanent warfare, offering a proto-theoretical model of nationalist authoritarianism that would become painfully familiar in postcolonial Africa. Ultimately, *Chaka* critiques not only the leader but also the ideological systems that normalise violence in the name of patriotic duty. Mofolo exposes how nationalist and patriotic rhetoric can precede - and indeed prepare the ground for - violent leadership, providing moral justification for domination and eliminating space for dissent. His work urges readers to question the sanctity of "the nation" when it is invoked to silence, subjugate and sacrifice.

Chains of Destiny: Slavery and the Logic of Subjugation in *Chaka*

Though often overshadowed by its focus on divine prophecy, militarism and tragic heroism, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* contains a subtle yet persistent theme of slavery and subjugation that reveals the deeper political mechanics of the protagonist's rise to power. In Mofolo's rendering, slavery is not merely a historical artefact or incidental occurrence, but a deliberate system of domination woven into the broader myth of Chaka's divine mission. Far from offering an outright moral judgement, the novel presents slavery as a normalised - and at times invisible - consequence of conquest, reinforcing how systemic violence becomes justified through political myth. From the moment that Chaka seizes control of the Zulu kingdom, Mofolo portrays enslavement as a pragmatic instrument of statecraft. Captives from defeated groups are absorbed into the Zulu military machine or pressed into servitude with minimal resistance or reflection. In one passage, the narrator notes as a matter of fact that "those who were not slain became his servants and were swallowed by his kingdom" (Mofolo, 1925:88). The metaphor of swallowing evokes both domination and disappearance, suggesting how conquest erases individual autonomy and absorbs the subject entirely into the ruler's will. The use of euphemistic or detached language throughout these episodes masks the horror of subjugation and mirrors how political myths often render structural violence invisible (Bottici & Challand, 2006:334). This narrative logic parallels Mbembe's (2001) concept of "necropolitical power," in which sovereignty is exercised through the control over death and the reduction of people to mere bodies or labour units in service of the regime. Chaka does not enslave for economic gain alone; his domination serves symbolic and ideological purposes. To enslave is to break the will of rivals, to extend divine authority and to embody the myth of imperial destiny. The absence of moral commentary from the narrator on these practices suggests that slavery is presented not as a perversion of Chaka's greatness, but as its foundation. As Fanon (1963) argues, "the colonised man is an envious man," one who dreams of reversing structures of power – yet, in *Chaka*, it is the formerly marginalised protagonist who recreates systems of

oppression in his own name. Indeed, Chaka's treatment of human beings becomes increasingly utilitarian. Whether in war, sacrificial ritual, or political punishment, human life is rendered disposable. Mofolo describes Chaka's army as "a vast organism, obedient to his command, consuming all that stood in its path" (Mofolo, 1925:97). While this description highlights military discipline, it also implies the absorption of conquered peoples into a machine of labour, submission and silence. This is a form of slavery not bound by chains but by ideology - a slavery legitimised by prophecy and the myth of unification. What makes Mofolo's presentation so powerful is its ambivalence. He does not romanticise slavery, but neither does he present it as a moral crisis. Instead, it is rendered structural, embedded in the everyday functioning of Chaka's empire. This narrative strategy forces the reader into a position of critical reflection: is the greatness of Chaka possible without mass dehumanisation? Is nation-building inevitably entangled with coercion and servitude? When read through the lens of postcolonial nationalism, Chaka's use of slavery echoes with later African political projects that subjugated internal populations under the guise of unity and modernity. Leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko and Robert Mugabe portrayed their rule as redemptive, while employing mechanisms of fear, forced labour, ethnic repression and land dispossession (Meredith, 2005). Mofolo, writing decades earlier, anticipated this moral paradox. He depicts slavery not as an external evil but as something that emerges from within the logic of nationalist myth itself - an internal contradiction that haunts the very concept of sovereignty. Thus, in *Chaka*, slavery operates as both a literal condition of domination and a symbolic system of control, exposing how myths of heroism and unity often conceal brutal structures of inequality. The empire that Chaka builds rests not only on battlefield victories but on a hierarchy of lives - some exalted, others reduced to silence and servitude. In light of the depiction in *Chaka* and the notion of slavery, one would postulate that for scholars writing on the side-lines of both patriotism and nationalism in southern Africa to argue against the notion of involving slaves in the construction of the Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe National Monuments was a deliberate mechanisation to conceal a generally-accepted historical fact that slavery and the slave trade played a central

role in the construction of several huge projects which exhibited unique technology of that time (see Beach, 1994; Mudenge, 1988; Lovejoy, 2000). As several scholars have highlighted, forced labour and slavery played critical roles in both precolonial African states and their interactions with external trade networks (see also Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). In the case of the Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe National Monuments as examples, amongst other physical heritage structures dotted around southern Africa, it could further be problematised that physical usurpation of cheap labour was normalised because slavery, by its very nature, was not merely an economic system but a profound act of violence, involving physical coercion, psychological trauma and the destruction of social bonds (Patterson, 1982; Cooper, 1979). Taking cognisance of the above setting, Mofolo's novel *Chaka* is not simply a heroic epic, but a prophetic reflection on how violence, normalised through myth, becomes indistinguishable from the very idea of leadership.

Conclusion

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* stands not only as one of the earliest and most enduring works of African literature, but also as a remarkably prescient critique of the dangers embedded within charismatic nationalism, political myth and institutionalised violence. While previous readings have often framed the novel as a tragic epic or a Christian moral allegory, this analysis has demonstrated that *Chaka* also functions as a sober reflection on the ideological foundations of statehood in precolonial and postcolonial Africa. Through the construction of Chaka as a divinely chosen ruler whose authority is legitimised by conquest and sustained by systemic violence - including slavery and ritual subjugation - Mofolo shows how mythic narratives can sacralise brutality. In doing so, the novel anticipates the trajectory of many 20th-century African nation-states, where founding myths obscured repression and where unity was often achieved at the cost of freedom and ethical clarity. The figure of Chaka, then, is not merely a symbol of African greatness or downfall, but a complex cipher for the moral paradoxes of power. He is simultaneously the builder and destroyer, the liberator and the

tyrant - made possible by a political culture that normalises violence in the name of destiny. Mofolo's text, in its stylistic detachment and narrative ambiguity, forces readers to confront the unsettling possibility that the very tools used to forge nations - myth, war, ritual and slavery - can also become the instruments of spiritual and political collapse.

Ultimately, *Chaka* must be read not only as a product of its colonial-era context, but as a foundational African text that critiques rather than merely depicts. It offers a profound warning: that unless interrogated, the myths that bind people together may also justify their subjugation. In this light, Mofolo's novel remains startlingly relevant, asking readers - then and now - to examine the costs of power, the uses of violence and the perilous seduction of nationalist mythmaking.

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Chapter 2

Leadership, Power, Social Transformation: Examining the Contemporary Relevance of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* in South African Political and Social Discourses

Soyiso Khetoa
Department of African Languages, University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa:
soyiso.khetoa@wits.ac.za

Abstract

This chapter reinvestigates the relevance of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* within South Africa's political and social discourses. *Chaka* is a multilayered narrative that combines historical, political, and ethical dimensions of leadership and power. The novel's exploration of leadership, power, and transformation aligns with ongoing debates in post-apartheid South Africa. This work provides an exegesis of *Chaka*'s rise and fall as leader and situates it within ongoing debates around ethical governance, corruption, and social justice. This chapter employs a multipronged theoretical approach which is an amalgamation of political theory and post-colonial criticism to interrogate how Mofolo's narrative exposes leadership failures, highlights tensions between ambition and responsibility, and reflects on societal consequences of power dynamics. This chapter's analysis of *Chaka* reveals that the novel's focus on identity, legacy, and moral responsibility offers critical perspectives on current debates on nation-building and social

transformation. The findings of this chapter position *Chaka* as a precautionary narrative that highlights the perils of unchecked ambition as seen with the demise of *Chaka*, and the imperative of ethical leadership which is a concern that remains deeply relevant to contemporary South African politics.

Keywords: Chaka, leadership and power, nation-building, post-apartheid South Africa, social transformation

Introduction

South Africa is a nation that is circumnavigating its way through the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. The weight of issues pertaining to historical injustices has deeply shaped the country's social and economic landscape. Because of this past, South Africa has had to embrace significant social transformations. When democracy was established in 1994, the nation inherited a society marked by racial divisions, widespread poverty, discrimination, and an uneven distribution of wealth. In the face of these challenges, the country's leaders have had to tackle unprecedented contemporary issues. The exercise of state power is frequently scrutinised across various platforms, including literature. In a society that is constantly evolving, literature plays a crucial role as it can reflect or even inspire change (Hrastic *et al.*, 2023). Shalini and Samundeswari (2017) explain that literature mirrors a society's strengths and weaknesses, and its role in correcting societal flaws helps to raise awareness about challenges and encourages the search for practical solutions. Literature consistently examines and critiques power structures. There are literary works written nearly a century ago that still apply powerfully today, helping us to understand current socio-political dynamics and shifts. A prime example is Thomas Mofolo's groundbreaking novel, *Chaka*, first published in 1925, which remains incredibly relevant to our understanding of contemporary issues.

In Mofolo's *Chaka*, he adeptly brings to life one of Africa's most formidable figures by showcasing his prowess in battle, politics, and the societal changes which he spearheaded while expanding and solidifying the Zulu nation. This chapter suggests

that this groundbreaking work delves into the complexities of leadership, and that it explores the fine line between visionary leadership and authoritarianism. It also portrays issues pertaining to moral and ethical dilemmas that come with power and the repercussions of wielding it unchecked in shaping societies. Selepe (1999) points out that the rise of *Chaka* is not just culturally significant; it also carries deep implications for religion, politics, and society. Lazarus (1986: 41) notes that *Chaka* "has managed to mean very different things to different readers." Some interpret the work as being profoundly Christian in its inspiration and intent, while others argue that it only superficially acknowledges Christianity. Moreover, some critics view *Chaka* as expressing an emerging Pan-Africanism alongside a more focused ethnic identity. In this chapter, the researcher contends that even though the novel is rooted in a precolonial context, it offers valuable insights that remain relevant to the current political and social landscape of South Africa.

This chapter dives into the lasting impact of Mofolo's *Chaka* on South African political and social discourses. It explores how the novel's themes of leadership, power, and societal change align with today's debates about governance, authority, and national identity. Moreover, the chapter looks at how *Chaka* acts as a literary lens through which we can better understand contemporary issues like political accountability, populism, and the moral responsibilities of leadership. This conversation highlights the importance of literature as a means to examine and critique ideas of leadership by linking Shaka Zulu's historical narrative to our current sociopolitical issues. Ultimately, this chapter aims to illustrate that Mofolo's *Chaka* is more than just a historical account, as it serves as a narrative with enduring significance that shapes and enriches discussions about power, leadership, and transformation in South Africa today.

Background

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is a seminal Sesotho literary work that skilfully engages numerous societal issues including representation, complexities of leadership, and the use of power

in the context of a changing society. This novel holds a unique position in the literary history of Sesotho (Selepe, 1999). When the novel was published, southern Africa was experiencing a great deal of political instability. Its reception was met with controversy amongst the publishing elite who believed that the novel was anti-Christian in character. Selepe (1999) alludes that after its delayed publication, it was admired by some and denounced by others simultaneously. *Chaka* is distinct from the literary work that Mofolo had published much earlier thematically and in ideology. Perhaps it is this thematic and ideological variance that entices condemnation from members of the publishing community because of its misalignment with Eurocentric ontology and Western philosophical ideals which sought to instrumentalise literature for the expansion of biblical ethics. Selepe (1999) postulates that *Chaka* differs with *Moeti wa Bochabela* (1907) and *Pitseng* (1910) in that it takes the form of a historical fiction wherein Mofolo explores the Zulu monarch within the context of history, mythology and African cosmology. Despite being written in a period of colonial domination, this novel ventures into unexplored narratives about southern African figures and the position of supernatural forces in the life of an African. This aspect is frowned upon by missionaries who view these themes as being antagonistic towards the Christian ethos.

The focus of this chapter is to revisit *Chaka* as a source that foretells contemporary leadership about the nuances and complexities of leadership in a transforming society, with a view to cautioning people in power about the ills of using power unchecked. Vassilatos (2016) postulates that the novel examines Chaka's journey of self-discovery and his demise. His demise came as a result of a plot by his two brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana through the help of Chaka's advisor, Mbopa. This event brought an end to Chaka's nearly twelve-year rule, during which he improved the military might of the Zulu nation and changed the social structure. However, the birth of Chaka marks an important development in the life of African societies. Selepe (1999) explicates that there are significant political, social and cultural repercussions to Chaka's birth. The circumstances around Chaka's conception are symbolic of an impregnable affection that existed between his parents. He spent his childhood under undesirable

conditions wherein his skills and/or desire for leadership became moulded under the leadership of Chief Dingiswayo. He would later become King of the Zulu nation. Impressions vary about his leadership. In Ayivor's (1997) view, Chaka was a strategic visionary rather than just a mere a brutal warlord. Ayivor (1997) regards Chaka's invention of novel military strategies such as the "bull horn" formation and the short stabbing spear as demonstrating advanced strategic thought as opposed to characterising Chaka's leadership merely as being brutal. Chaka's initiatives for state-building, such as the centralisation of power and the creation of a well-trained permanent army mirrors patterns that have been observed in other historical empires.

This chapter seeks to draw parallels between Chaka's leadership and contemporary South African leaders, particularly in the areas of governance, nation-building, social transformation, military strategy, and leadership challenges. South Africa is a country that is transitioning from approximately three hundred and forty years of colonial dominance wherein unimaginable disparities were imposed between various ethnic groups. In 1994, leaders such as Nelson Mandela focused the work of their administration to issues pertaining to reconciliation and nation-building. Mandela's inauguration as President of the nation was an unconceivable reality in contemporary African history. As President, he had a mammoth task ahead of him, which included reconciling a nation that had been divided over thirty decades. Masiza (1999: 22) postulates that "Although condemned to life in prison in 1964 for plotting to overthrow the government by violence, Mandela had come to assume the stature of a first-rate statesman by the time of his release in 1990. He used that stature to pressure then-President F. W. de Klerk to make concessions to the African National Congress. When necessary, he also used his liberation bona fides to get his supporters to accept unpalatable compromises reached with de Klerk". This citation highlights Mandela's transformation from the time of his seclusion from society, to returning as a key negotiator in South Africa's transformation and advocating for compromises, which were aimed at developing a peaceful and united nation. Masiza extends by saying that since Mandela's release from prison, his primary focus has been to foster an environment

favourable to nation-building, rather than just advancing the interests of the ANC, his party. Both Chaka and Mandela were influential people indigenous to Africa who emerged from undesirable situations, who later became outstanding leaders. The only difference that exists between the two figures relates to strategy to the consolidation of a nation. Mandela relied on less military strategies while Chaka employed military conquest in the expansion and unification of a nation under his rule.

In contemporary South Africa, *Chaka* continues to hold relevance in political and social discourses, particularly in discussions on leadership and transformation. The country's democratic transition in 1994 marked a shift from apartheid-era authoritarian rule to constitutional democracy, yet the challenges of governance, economic disparity, and social justice persist. The themes in *Chaka* align with current debates about the exercise of power, the responsibilities of leadership, and the tension between individual ambition and collective progress. The novel's portrayal of Chaka's rise and eventual downfall serves as a lens to analyse the strengths and pitfalls of leadership in South Africa's political landscape. Questions of centralised power, the use of violence for political ends, and the role of leadership in shaping national identity remain pertinent. Moreover, *Chaka* provides insights into the cultural and historical foundations that continue to shape South Africa's governance structures and societal expectations. Through an examination of Mofolo's *Chaka* within contemporary South African political and social contexts, this chapter seeks to explore how the novel's themes can illuminate current leadership dynamics, the exercise of power, and ongoing efforts towards social transformation in the country.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter is supported by multipronged theoretical perspectives that incorporate political theory and postcolonial criticism to explore how Mofolo's narrative critiques leadership failures, explores the tensions between ambition and responsibility, and reflects on the societal impacts of power dynamics. The two theoretical frameworks are well positioned to draw on political concepts and colonialism. Of course, their focus

differs in that political theory examines themes pertaining to power, while postcolonial criticism is interested in how colonial histories affected formerly colonised societies. From a political perspective, the arrival of missionaries on the African continent influenced the literary culture amongst Africans, wherein oral traditions were invalidated for the benefit of written forms of literature. This, on its own, signals a period where a foreign culture invalidates a culture that is indigenous to the African people. Through this process of invalidation, Africans were to assimilate new ways of perceiving reality. Through this contact, Africans were "encouraged" to disband their "uncivilised" human behaviour for the adoption of more civil morality that found expression in Western ways of living. Khetoa (2019) alludes that the presence of colonisers throughout the African continent established a tradition that views African culture with disdain.

Literature is a fundamental component of the society that creates it (Khetoa & Mokala, 2024). Keerthika (2018) postulates that literature mirrors human activities within a specific community. Human activities which find expression in literary works encompass social values and standards which are influenced by transitions that are experienced in communities as a result of change in politics, leadership and so on. In light of politics, Heywood (2004) argues that regardless of anything else that politics may entail, it is undoubtedly a social endeavour. At its core, literature mirrors human activity wherein people engage with each other to influence, govern or coordinate society. Heywood (2004: 2), in his view of politics, goes on to say that "It is conducted through the medium of language, whether written in books, pamphlets and manifestos, daubed on placards and walls, or spoken in meetings, shouted at rallies or chanted on demonstrations and marches". This view validates the researcher's logic about seeking to examine issues pertaining to power in *Chaka*, by using political theory. Political theory involves an assessment of ideas and principles that have shaped political thought (Heywood, 2004). With this definition, this chapter will evaluate how Mofolo's representation of power is constructed in the face of colonial rule, which in some ways, misrepresented Africa.

Chaka differs in character and its reception with the work that he had produced earlier. Kunene (1967) posits that *Chaka*

is less of a religious sermon and less focused on spreading the Gospel, compared to his earlier literary works, *Moeti wa Bochabela* and *Pitseng*. In these works, particularly in *Moeti wa Bochabela*, Mofolo gives a somewhat distorted image of Africa wherein indigenous people needed deliverance. Kunene (1967: 3) postulates that in *Moeti wa Bochabela* "Mofolo has, as his setting, Lesotho before the coming of the White man into South Africa". He describes Africa as being, in those days, a land "clothed in great darkness, a fearful darkness, in which all the things of darkness were done". His convictions in this novel are heavily influenced by missionary teachings such that he actively advocates for the assimilation of the new religious system. This novel signals the effects of colonial contact on Mofolo. However, in *Chaka*, Mofolo takes a different journey where his focus is on pre-colonial African leaders. At this point, Mofolo seems to be undergoing some level of consciousness about the effects of colonisation which had distorted the African way of life. In present day South Africa there are ongoing discussions about the ideologies that should inform the future of the country as an awakening about the legacies of colonisation and apartheid. This chapter relies on postcolonial criticism to evaluate how colonial histories affected formerly colonised such as South Africa. Ikiroma-Owiye (2019: 238) explicates that "As a critical theory, post colonialism presents, explains and illustrates the ideology and practice of neo-colonialism (after colonialism) to submerge imperialism with examples drawn from history, political, sciences, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and human geography." Considering this depiction, this chapter will use this framework to explore how neo-colonial principles influence leadership and social engineering in South Africa by relying on the narrative of *Chaka* as a reflection of realities that are often observed in formerly colonised nations such as South Africa. According to Güven (2022), the topics addressed in post-colonial literature include indigenous peoples' interactions with colonisers; the coloniser's exploration of untamed territories with a "native" companion; the treatment of indigenous communities by colonisers; the efforts of the colonised to gain acceptance through mimicking the colonisers; exile; the fight for personal and cultural identity; and the post-independence energy that leads to disillusionment.

The author's contention in this chapter is that important lessons can be learned from Mofolo's narrative about leadership and the use of power in a transforming society. Social transformation in the context of Africa has been met with a multitude of challenges and reactions which need formidable leadership in order to overcome challenges. Finchilescu and Tredoux (2010) argue that from the onset of apartheid in 1948, South Africa has experienced a sequence of significant societal transformations. These transformations affected different categories of people differently, and as a result, many communities relied on their leaders to ascertain their safety and their future. However, since the fall of apartheid, the country has been battling with the notion of building a unified nation. In recent months, AfriForum expressed no confidence in the leadership of the country by moving beyond the borders to seek advocacy for the protection of seemingly threatened livelihood of an ethnic group. This signals ongoing tensions between people in a country that is in the mood of transition. The two theoretical frameworks that are used in this chapter are well positioned to signify the role that power and leadership play in situations where there seems to be diverse perspectives about what South Africa should be and should look like.

Historical and Literary Context of *Chaka*

Chaka is one of Mofolo's most influential literary projects. This novel was published in 1925, during which time, people of African descent were grappling with the effects of colonialism and the imposition of Eurocentric ideologies. European world powers such as Great Britain, Portugal, Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Belgium had begun to colonise many African states since the 15th century (Oliver & Oliver, 2017). In the context of southern Africa, each country is a separate political entity wherein the constitution specifies the boundaries of power, and that political involvement on state matters is only allowed to certain groups based on racial, ethnic or cultural distinctions (Kuper, 1964). These distinctions classified people into categories of the coloniser and the colonised. In colonial processes, the coloniser imposes his language and culture on the land that has been

conquered (Suveren, 2017). Suveren's (2017) view on colonisation is important on two counts: (1) imposition, and (2) conquest. This is a violent process wherein people indigenous to the land are systematically coerced into submission through combat and their languages are marginalised. Thomas Mofolo, one of the pioneering literary writers of Sesotho literature, wrote his first Western-styled novel in Sesotho in early 1900s called *Moeti oa Bochabela*. Mofolo received missionary education, and this education heavily influenced his worldview, as witnessed in *Moeti oa Bochabela*. In this novel, we experience the protagonist whose name is Fekisi. Fekisi is in a process of conversion from Sesotho traditional life towards Christian salvation. This aspect in the novel illustrates lived experiences in Lesotho at the time of the production of this literary piece. Missionary education emphasised the promotion of moral standards that echoes Christian value systems and spiritual conversion of people of African descent. This was a predominant feature of colonial-era education in Lesotho and neighbouring countries such as the Republic of South Africa. In the novel, Mofolo's advocacy for Christianity is noticeable through Fekisi's rejection of ancestral worship and the indulgence of traditionally prepared alcohol. This is consistent with missionaries' disapproval and frowning upon uncivilised African traditions. This novel mirrors a period wherein African traditions were characterised as the display of barbarism and immorality. However, in his third and final novel, Mofolo presents a worldview that seems to oppose his earlier convictions. In his 1925 novel, *Chaka*, there is an observable contrast between *Moeti oa Bochabela* and *Chaka*. Vassilatos (2016) postulates that the novel was written during a period of political unrest in southern Africa. It is perhaps this political disharmony that provides an alternative outlook to life that contradicts with his missionary teachings. The latest novel is unique in terms of ideology, spirit and perspective. Mofolo presents Chaka, commonly known as Shaka Zulu, as an African king who possesses real agency power. He treats elements of African life that are regarded with disdain with absolute respect and seriousness. Here, Mofolo delves into a multitude of themes as they affect the life of an African devoid of colonial interference. *Chaka* is a source through which the author evaluates the misuse of power in sight of personal ambition.

Because of its classic nature, *Chaka* has been translated into several European languages. The novel was primarily authored in Sesotho, a language that remained marginalised prior to the democratic dispensation in South Africa. Despite being written a hundred years ago, it remains an important source for scholarly engagements. Bobunde (1993) argues that this novel was popularised through its translation into several major European languages. The novel is especially popular amongst scholars because it is familiar to various audiences because of its exploration of a multitude of socially relevant topics such as leadership complexities, the use of power, personal ambition, nation-building, military strategies, etc.

Synopsis of *Chaka* and its Portrayal of Leadership and Power

Chaka is a historical novel authored by Thomas Mofolo in 1925. This novel tells the story of Chaka who was the mythological king of the Zulu Kingdom. The novel is historically real but is situated between literary creativity and symbolic fiction, as it uses historical events and merges them with legend. It tells the story of Chaka, from an illegitimate and battered child to a young warrior, to a powerful and feared military commander. This admired military general ultimately undermined his achievements by extensively engaging with unregulated ambition and autocracy. The novel begins in the childhood and infancy of Chaka. Chaka was rejected by his father Senzangakhona and was greatly humiliated in society. As a rightful heir to his father's throne, the ill-treatment that he experienced led to his ever-growing claim for recognition. In his upbringing, Chaka was sent into the wilderness where he met a mysterious sorcerer called Isanusi. The encounter with Isanusi promised him greatness. After this experience, Chaka ascended to power through aggression, resourcefulness, and the merging of numerous and divergent clans.

Chaka's leadership is initially portrayed as (a) courageous, (b) cunning, and (c) visionary. He revolutionised military warfare and educated his subjects about military tactics. His ostensibly lowly beginnings gave him respect because he is seen as a capable and powerful leader who provided a hedge against anarchy

and mediocrity. But as his power increased, Chaka developed a haughty ego and, after being plagued by a dread of betrayal, turned aggressive. He killed close friends and family members out of a deadly fear of betrayal. His use of violence and witchcraft established a system of terror in which threats to loyalty were met with death and loyalty was enforced via dread. The assassination of Chaka by his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangana, which was politically motivated but also might be interpreted as a response to a dictator, marks the novel's conclusion.

Mofolo's representation of leadership in *Chaka* is complex and nuanced. On one hand, Chaka represents an immense source of African greatness with remarkable vision, courage, and intelligence. On the other, he distils a great story about the dangers of unchecked power. Mofolo investigates the unique way in which insecure, retaliatory leadership can devolve into tyranny. Chaka became a monster of oppressive annihilation as he literally embodied the experiences and concepts of oppression and excess, upon his transformation from wronged child to destructive leader. In the end, the narrow line between visionary and despotic leadership is revealed. Power in *Chaka* is equivocal in that it is both blessing and curse. Power is both an opportunity to build nations and to invent societies, but power dehumanises and distances. The narrative for Mofolo clearly states that leadership must be embodied by humility and moral constraint, both of which Chaka exemplars wholly lacking in the end. In this tragedy, Mofolo critiques the glorification of power for the sake of power and offers generous commentary on the moral obligations of leadership.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is a multifaceted domain that utilises several analytical methods to generate insights from complex information (Lochmiller, 2021). This chapter relies on multipronged analysis techniques in the form of thematic analysis coupled with discourse analysis. The use of thematic analysis will assist with the exploration of *Chaka* within the frame of leadership and power in contemporary context, and the discourse analysis is used as a frame through which *Chaka* is used as a reference to political

and social discourses. Dawadi (2020: 62) states that "thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that researchers use to systematically organise and analyse complex data sets. It is a search for themes that can capture the narratives available in the account of data sets". Lochmiller (2021) explicates that this analytical method entails the recognition of reoccurring patterns that are articulated by researchers as comprehensive thematic assertions. The researcher evaluates *Chaka*'s narrative with a clear focus on themes that provide models about how leadership and nation-building can be looked at in a developing nation. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, will be used to evaluate how language has been used in the context of identity formation in a developing nation, and to determine how the use of power is reflected in how language is used in *Chaka*. Literature mirrors society. Therefore, it is important to rely on discourse analysis to evaluate how language is used in *Chaka* as a literary text that reflects a discourse around the King of the Zulu Kingdom. A discourse is a certain way of speaking, writing, or communicating that adheres to specific rules, customs, and shared meanings within a defined context or community (Renkema, 2009; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Jaworski and Coupland (2002) postulate that a discourse has to do with (a) anything beyond the sentence, (b) language use, and (c) the broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language. The denotations provided here signal that a discourse is influenced by the existence of extra-linguistic factors in the course of communication. Therefore, Mofolo's writing was not exempted from the presence of extra-linguistic factors. It is, therefore, adequate to use a qualitative analytic tool such as discourse analysis to probe into how language is used to reflect how language is used in *Chaka* in the process of self-determination, power and identity formation. Discourse analysis involves the examination of language use within a social context.

Research Paradigm

This chapter is supported by the interpretive research paradigm because this research paradigm is interested in understanding how meaning is constructed through the use of language,

extra-linguistic factors such as context, and culture. The researcher herein in interested in interpreting how language is used in the novel to construct social realities in relation to the construction of identity, manifestation of leadership, and how language reflects power. Qualitative research is frequently associated with interpretivism (Goldkuhl, 2012). Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:41) argue that "interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related to a context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena." Consequently, the narrative of *Chaka* presents a good opportunity to evaluate how this classic fictional work portrays issues of leadership, power and social transformation, and how that discourse may have provided models for leadership, power and the development of society in contemporary politics of South Africa.

Chaka's Historical and Mythical Elements

The novel presents Chaka as both a figure of historic and mythical importance. The novel provides an account of the expansion of the Zulu nation through military tactics in the 19th century under the leadership of a King whose upbringing left less to be desired. The conditions under which Chaka grew up played a significant role for his personal aspirations, which include vengeance on those who ill-treated him during the period of his abandonment by his paternal figure. Chaka is an important figure in the development of the Zulu nation. Before his reign, the nation of AmaZulu was non-existent. It only existed in the form of a small clan founded by Zulu kaNtombhela. Chaka was born of Senzangakhona and Nandi, both of royal blood. Despite his association to royalty, Chaka grew up in foreign lands, away from his father and his people. Morris (2025) alludes that Chaka's military prowess was sharpened in foreign land under the leadership of Dingiswayo of the AbaThethwa. Morris (2025) further states that upon the death of Chaka's father, Senzangakhona, Dingiswayo relieves Chaka of his military duties and sends him away to his father's clan which had a relatively small population of about 1,500 people. Statistics South Africa (2023) reveals that the population

of IsiZulu-language speakers stands at 24.4% (about 15,134,710) of the population of South Africa. The number of speakers of IsiZulu has multiplied more than ten thousand times from the time that Chaka consolidated other nations to form the Zulu nation. Chaka's reign was marked by territorial expansion, and the aftermath of this expansion is easily observed in the population of IsiZulu-language speakers in contemporary South Africa. This novel is mythical in the sense that it presents accounts which are unverifiable but are central to the development of Chaka. Chaka underwent a ritual by Isanusi wherein he was "given" powers that would make him a great leader. Isanusi is presented as a "Godlike" figure who was able to determine an individual's future. Chaka's life is presented as testament that there is always divine intervention in the life of a human, especially those who are chosen to lead. Chaka is presented as an individual who had been chosen for the purpose of leading. Therefore, his rise was not just a political affair but something that was predestined. He is depicted to be an individual who was shaped by tremendous hardship that sought to prepare him for what he was to become in the future.

In Chapter 4 of the novel titled "*Chaka o eteloa ke morena oa madiba* [*Chaka* is visited by the Lord of deep waters]", *Chaka* was accompanied by his mother Nandi to the river. While Chaka was swimming in the river, supernatural events were happening around him where the was a sharp rise in misty water and the "snake" ascends from beneath the water levels to come face to face with Chaka. At the time when the water "snake" was retracting from Chaka, there was a violent clash of water. Suddenly there was calamity, then there was a cold cloudy breeze which blinded Chaka from seeing far. Suddenly, there was a voice that said:

"Mphu-mphu ahe-ee,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
Mphu-mphu ahe-ee,
Kalamajoeng. Kalamajoeng!
Selo-setona metsi-i-ng,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!

Se bonoa ke ba hloahloa fee-la,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
Se bonoa ke batla busa merorobe-la,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!"

Conversion:

"Oh my gosh, oh my gosh,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
Oh my gosh, oh my gosh,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
There is a great monster in the water,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
Seen only by the favoured,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!
Seen only by those who are born to rule over nations,
Kalamajoeng, Kalamajoeng!"

The praise here-above alludes to the fact that what had been observed in the river was something that could only be seen by the chosen ones. It was an event that could be experienced by individuals who were destined to rule. This event is symbolic of supernatural forces that had identified Chaka as a foreseeable ruler, and this was marked by his ability to experience events that no normal man could experience. The repetition and rhythm contained in the quotation mirrors oral traditions such as oral poetry. This positions Chaka as an individual who truly believed in cultural customs such that he allowed himself to go into sacred spaces as long it would help his cause. In other words, this could be read as a ritual where one sells one's soul. The great monster in the water is symbolic of a force that surfaces to only be seen by the favoured ones. The deity that lived in the water did not harm Chaka but instead it embraced him. The surfacing of the monster above the water surface is symbolic of a power source that is only observable to people who are born to lead. Du Toit (1960:140) posits that "The Nguni is in a psychological state of expectancy, like people looking into the dark sky and seeing a great many

Sputniks flash by, and is awaiting the appearance of his deceased father's spirit in the form of a snake, when a snake is seen near the grave or in the village, there are many snakes in South Africa, it is proof for him and his belief is strengthened". In light of Du Toit's sentiments, Chaka's experience in the river is symbolic of African spirituality that Chaka is a subject of, and that the sight of a snake affirmed to Chaka that the ancestors were by his side in his quest for leadership in the future that he was envisioning. The following sentences "Seen only by the favoured" and "Seen only by those who are born to rule over nations" creates a hierarchy in social formation such that only the ordained one will interact with sacred vision. The two sentences promulgate an elitist ideology that exist in the narrative that leadership is an innate ability that one is born with.

Immediately after this praise, another praise was heard nearby:

"Ahe, ahe! Lefatshe lena ke la hao, ngoan'a motho
U tla busa lichaba le marena a tsona.
U tla busa mefuta-futa ea batho,
U tla be u buse le meea le lifefo tsa maoatle,
Le maliba a linoka tse kholo tse tebang:
'Me tsohle di tla u utloa ka kutlo ea sebele,
Li khumame tlas'a maoto a hao!
E, oi! oi! Empa u tsamaee ka tsela ea teng."

Conversion:

"Ahe, ahe. The world is thine, child of my own people.
Thou shalt rule the nations and their governors.
Thou shalt rule all the nations of men.
Thou shalt rule the winds and the storms of the sea
And the deep pools of the mighty rivers.
And all things shall obey thy word.
They shall kneel down beneath thy feet.
E, oi, oi. But beware thou takest the right path"

The opening and subsequent sentences of this orature uses an authoritative voice which legitimises Chaka and his leadership destiny. This gave some level of validation to Chaka as he was about to embark on a course that sought to change the livelihood of many. Chaka was given a promise that he would have domination over people, nature and worldly things. Chaka was also sternly cautioned about how power can corrupt. The last sentence indicated to Chaka that power should be exercised in a just manner. This suggests that when power is used without caution it can be misused or lost.

Leadership and Power in *Chaka*

In the context of building a nation, it is required of those who deem themselves leaders and those who are called upon to lead to be acquainted with necessary skills needed to lead. In a developing nation, ethical leadership is quite necessary in order to achieve the desired goals for a nation. Chaka ascends his Kingship with a clear goal that he wanted to develop a centralised kingdom that constituted of fragmented Nguni-speaking communities. Under this centralised kingdom, he would have a unified political structure that would advance the plans that he had for the nation that he had envisioned. Giuliano *et al.* (2022) argue that many rulers are encouraged to invest immensely on nation-building efforts by threats to their regime and that provocations towards nation-building have really helped many nations to develop meaningfully. For Chaka, amongst other factors, the process of building a formidable and centralised kingdom was necessary for a unified political structure, military reform and expansion, economic control, and resistance to colonial intrusion. The attainment of all of this placed a demand for leadership that is sober and one that is truly proactive.

Chaka's method or approach for the expansion of his nation involved a clear element of subjugation of those whom he conquered. His war subjects had to assimilate with the culture of the newly established kingdom. This allowed for uniformity in terms of identity, language and tradition. Igbokwe-Ibeto (2024:1) postulates that "Most countries in Africa are heterogeneous in nature, as reflected in their ethno-religious, linguistic and

cultural diversities. Very few countries in the continent of Africa enjoy homogeneity in terms of customs, religion, and ethnic groups, amongst others. Unlike some countries in Europe that share many things in common and have been able to enjoy relative peace and development over time, Africa has been a hotbed of crises and conflicts". Igbokwe-Ibeto's (2024) views highlight a problem that Chaka evaded by forcing his captives to take a new identity and a new language. Chaka looked at homogeneity as strength. His views on diversity are not explicitly stated in the novel, but he certainly integrated people of diverse backgrounds under his in his formation of a united kingdom.

Chaka's leadership was shaped by violence at many levels, legitimacy and destiny. His reign as King is characterised by unimaginable hostility and bloodshed. He uses carnage as a means of instilling discipline amongst his people, and as an important means through which he was able to conquer many small clans. In his military prowess, he introduced new weaponry and combat tactics which were central to his expansion objectives. Through his victories he established dominance which would have many of his enemies quiver at the mention of his name. His ascendance to power was not straightforward despite being a rightful heir to the kingship. Chaka realised very early that he needed to align himself with powerful associates which would later help him to remove his half-brother from power. The removal of his half-brother took the shape of combat victory and, according to him, this victory justified that he was the one who should be taking the reins of leadership. This victory, to him, signalled that he was the one who was destined to rule and that he was the one who had been chosen to lead Zulu descendants to greatness.

An evaluation of the relevance of *Chaka* in South Africa's political and social discourses is essential in order to evaluate how precolonial, colonial and postcolonial discourses have influenced or shaped leadership or power relations in the country. A reading of this novel and the observed realities in the country signals that parallels can be drawn in that there exist continuities and contrast in leadership methods, strategies used for the purpose of nation-building, and the use of power. Between the novel and contemporary dispensation, themes such as unity, resistance

and vision are forever present. Over the past thirty years, South Africa has seen six administrations. Each of these administrations has been unique. Under President Rolihlahla Mandela, his administration administered a reconciliation project wherein the focus was to unite the nation despite the atrocities that had been committed by one race upon another. This happened through extensive dialoguing. Similarly, Chaka consolidated small Nguni clans to be ruled under his Kingdom. The contrast that exists between Mandela and Chaka is that Chaka's consolidation of Nguni clans under his rule was coercive. There is a contrast between Chaka's leadership and that of President Mandela prior to democratic dispensation, which presents an interesting similarity in that Mandela's resistance to apartheid changed from non-violence in the 1940s to militancy through the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe in the 1960s. This formation was strategic for resistance while Chaka's use of militant strategies was not reactionary; it was used for domination and intimidation. In the post-apartheid era, there is another shift where President Mandela embraced constitutionalism and moral authority. This is in contrast with Chaka's use of power where the use of force was inescapable. These two leaders both sought to unite disintegrated peoples under a uniform identity in the process of building nations.

Another important leader to look at is Bantu Biko, who founded the South African Students' Organisation. His aim was to liberate the mind of an African from a position of feeling inferior to his coloniser. Lötter (1992:1) argues that "Biko broke through the normative and pragmatic acceptance of the situation in the radically unjust apartheid society, and his contribution can be located in the work he has done to liberate blacks psychologically from the political system of apartheid". Aliyu (2021) postulates that Biko's Black Consciousness Movement was an important component of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. This movement's substance, in Biko's view as stated by Dolamo (2021), relates to the black man's realisation of the need to rally with other black people around the cause of their oppression, and the need to operate as a unit in ridding themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. Biko's dream about black people's self-determination and self-reliance constantly agitated apartheid actors such that he was permanently silenced

for his efforts of conscientising his people. Through his Black Consciousness Movement ideology, he sought to unify black South Africans. Chaka, on the other hand, refused to be ruled over by an individual whom he considered to be lacking legitimacy for the throne. Therefore, he mobilised influential associates to support his quest to dethrone his half-brother. Chaka's existence was a threat to his father's kingship, while Biko's life posed a threat to systemic oppression during apartheid. Both Chaka and Biko were the politics of identity, with Chaka creating a durable Zulu identity, and Biko advocating African pride and Black Consciousness.

Social Transformation and its Implications

Chaka is presented as a radical figure who introduces social reforms in compact strategy, society, and politics. Chaka expanded his military force by disrupting cultural practices such as the initiation school because he needed to absorb men into regiments. This led to his military expansion which was essential for the domination of small clans and subsequent consolidation into his Kingdom. Because of his military prowess, he strategically used intimidation to coerce and maintain control. This allowed him to replace chiefs with his trusted men in positions of influence. This resulted in his subjects having little to say about governance. Mofolo's presentation of Chaka in the narrative is of a hero whose demise was self-inflicted by unsupervised use of power and the lack of accountability to the citizens of his Kingdom.

In light of contemporary South Africa politics, the novel provides models about how unsupervised use of power is damaging especially in a developing country. The collapse of apartheid in South Africa placed power in the hands of black majority under the governance of the African National Congress. However, with this change in power, economic inequality remains largely unchanged. This is exacerbated by unending corruption scandals amongst the ruling elites. Caiden *et al.* (2001) posit that corruption is rooted in human vices of avarice and the desire for power. President Mandela's presidency thrived on the ideals of social transformation wherein the focus was placed on developing a non-racial country. However, South Africa remains a deeply divided nation as a legacy of apartheid, and the ramifications of

unsupervised use of power. This division negatively affects the programme of nation-building where citizens can coexist in harmony with each other.

There is a clear connection between Mofolo's *Chaka* and former President Jacob Zuma. Like Chaka, the former President Jacob Zuma rose to prominence through strategic alliances, including strong support from prominent traditional leaders from the province of KwaZulu-Natal. His earlier life was characterised by struggle, such that he had to drop out of school in earlier grades. This was actively used by his detractors as something that disqualified him being in governance of the nation. As a state president, Jacob Zuma's consolidation of power saw him being accused of state capture. Both Chaka and Jacob Zuma rewarded loyalty and punished those who undermined their rule. The demise of both leaders comes as a consequence of people closest to them turning against them as they felt that their rule was destructive.

Contemporary Relevance in South African Political and Social Discourses

Mofolo's *Chaka* aligns deeply with leadership challenges in South Africa in view of how the country's leadership is struggling with issues pertaining to inequality, corruption and the abuse of power. The novel is a necessary model to caution contemporary leaders about the dangers of unchecked ambitions as that has a potential to corrupt a leader. The novel manifests that the leadership of a nation requires a leader to be selfless and not be driven by egotistic agendas. Moreover, the novel alerts contemporary leaders to the effects of moving away from founding values. The governing party in South Africa received less than 50% of the votes in 2024 general elections. This is the expression of the public losing confidence in the party because it has shifted from its founding values which were centred on integrity, humility and honesty.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the contemporary relevance of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* within the context of South African political and social discourses. *Chaka* is a ground-breaking piece of literature written in an indigenous African language

that presents a multi-faceted depiction of leadership, power, and societal change, which are topics that still hold relevance in present-day South Africa. Through an analysis of Chaka's rise and fall as a leader, this chapter explored parallels with contemporary issues such as the ethics of governance, and the pursuit of social justice in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter relied on a multipronged theoretical approach that incorporates political theory and postcolonial criticism in its exploration of how Mofolo's narrative critiques leadership failures, tensions between ambition and responsibility, and how these elements impact power and leadership dynamics. Moreover, this chapter deliberated on how the novel's emphasis on identity, legacy, and moral accountability informs debates on nation-building and social transformation. This chapter concludes that Mofolo's *Chaka* is an interesting literary work for the exploration of leadership factors and challenges associated with it. In it, the portrayal of Chaka's rise and fall, serves as important cautionary narrative that can be useful for contemporary politics in the country. The novel provides valuable lessons into prevailing political discourses in the country wherein corruption is not disciplined enough, and moral leadership is optional. Despite being written in a different era, this novel continues to ask relevant questions about leadership and power in the context of a developing country.

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Chapter 3

An Analysis of Chaka as a Tragic Hero in the Novel *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo

Nogwaja Shadrack Zulu
College of Humanities, School of Arts: Discipline of African Languages, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Durban, South African:
zulun@ukzn.ac.za

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is a narrative that is based on the life and times of king Shaka, the early 19th-century ruler of the Zulu people. King Shaka's dominance had an immense influence on southern Africa during his reign, and after his demise. This analysis of *Chaka* focuses on the novel as being a work of fiction, and gives attention to tragic expressions of the novel. In the analysis of the novel, Chaka is seen as a literary character of the novel, and is taken as the main character who has hubris. In literature, hubris is taken as the chief character's superiority and overconfidence, which often leads to the character's downfall. Hubris frequently appears in literary texts as a main character's flaw that brings about their tragic end. The literary analysis of this novel draws from the approaches of the earliest literary structuralists who expanded Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of structuralism.

Keywords: Chaka as a tragic hero; *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo; Ferdinand de Saussure; hubris; literary structuralism; narrative fiction; tragic end; tragic expressions; tragic flaw

Introduction

I argue in this chapter that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is a fictional novel that is based on the life and times of the great, early-19th-century ruler of the Zulu people, whose reign had an immense influence on southern Africa. In the sense of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* being a work of fiction, I analyse tragic expressions in the novel. Consequently, I see Chaka as a literary character of the narrative fiction *Chaka*, and take him as the main character who has hubris. In literature, hubris is taken as the chief character's excessive pride and overconfidence, which often lead to the character's downfall. Hubris frequently appears as a main character's flaw that brings about their tragic end. In this novel, *Chaka*, I examine the events that led to Chaka's tragic end as the powerful Zulu king. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on the literary analysis of tragic expressions in the novel, *Chaka*. I, therefore, agree with Daniel P. Kunene (1981; see his introduction to his translation of *Chaka*) and C.F. Swanepoel (1988) about the mix of real and fictional events in Thomas Mofolo's (1983a) novel, *Chaka*. Swanepoel (1988) looks at the historicity of Shaka, the Zulu king, and realises that Mofolo's *Chaka* is a mixture of fact and fiction. He concludes that "Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka is to be regarded as his own, which developed from his aim to write *tshomo* (folktale)" (Swanepoel 1988:26). Consequently, *Chaka*, the novel – as Swanepoel (1989:146) writes – is about fictional events, and, therefore, is a story created by Mofolo himself: *Na litaba tsa eona ke tse ileng tsa etsahala, kapa ke pale feela?* (Are its events part of a true story, or they are fragments of a fictional story only?)

Although some events of the king Shaka who ruled the Zulu nation from 1816 until his death in 1828 are factual in the narrative fiction, the novel departs from narrating real historical events, as in R.R.R. Dlomo's novel, *UShaka*. In the preface of Dlomo's *UShaka*, the author indicates that his novel is about the true historical events of the legendary Zulu king:

> *Le yinoveli equkethe umlando weLembe eleqa amanye amalembe ngokukhalipha, iSilo uShaka kaSenzangakhona, umbumbi wesizwe samaZulu. Ilandisa ngakho konke*

> *ukuhamba kukaShaka kusuka ekuzalweni kwakhe kuze kuyofika ekukhothameni kwakhe* (Dlomo 2015).
>
> (This novel is about the historical events of king Shaka of Senzangakhona, the founder of the Zulu nation. The novel narrates all [real] events about Chaka from his birth to his death.)

In *Chaka*, Mofolo departs from writing about true and historical events only, and mixes fact and fiction for narrative effect. In fact, what Thomas Mofolo narrates in *Chaka* is what he heard from Zulu folklore (Kunene 1989). Mofolo did not end there, but he also created his own events and added new characters.

It is clear from the quotation above that Chaka contained aspects that puzzled readers upon its appearance. Swanepoel's (1989:146) reference to what one of its earlier readers, Khasi, called it not a "true story," no doubt reveals that the reader might have sensed missing fragments in the story of Chaka then, which that reader thinks make it *pale feela* (a fictitious story only). Thus, the relationship between history and fiction, fact and fable, becomes a major open and blurred space in the novel, but to the reader who knows little about the distinctions, all may be historical truth, and a representation of (the Zulu people as) Africans.

It was that colonial representation of the Zulu people, as represented by Chaka in Mofolo's *Chaka*, that worried Zulu people and academics such as Dlomo, until he, Dlomo, decided to write a novel with true historical events – a novel that "corrects" the distortions in Mofolo's novel. Dlomo (2015) indicates in the preface of his novel that the purpose of writing the novel *UShaka* was to correct the historical misrepresentations of king Shaka of Senzangakhona in Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*.

Dlomo also expresses his concern that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* was the first novel to be written about king Shaka, and that for a long time, the novel remained the sole text about king Shaka of Senzangakhona that was available in Western languages. Its "barbaric" events fed into the then Western stereotype of Africans. Zulu and Mkhize (2025) call the Western stereotype of the African, the "Western gaze."

It follows, therefore, that Mofolo's colonial representation of Africa in *Chaka* was influenced by Mofolo's reading of the colonial literary texts of the time. Swanepoel (1988) pinpoints Mofolo's main source of Zulu history in writing *Chaka* as being J.Y. Gibson's *The Story of the Zulus* (1911), of which the enlarged edition was published in 1919 – the first edition of which appeared in 1903. The book was apparently regarded by readers at the time as an "authoritative" historical account of the Zulu people in South Africa in the 19th century. In the words of Gibson himself in the 1919 preface, the book is "regard[ed] as authoritative" (Gibson 1919:iii). In the book, king Shaka is portrayed as being crudely evil and merciless, and Gibson (1919:37) writes that "the character of Tshaka [Shaka], as it is known to the descendants of the people over whom he ruled, was largely made up of the two qualities of generosity and wanton cruelty." Gibson sees Shaka as one of the "savage chiefs" (Gibson 1919:37) of the African continent at that time, something common in Africa, as he qualifies "savage chiefs" as being "not uncommon" (Gibson 1919:37) then. Gibson (1919) was certainly addressing his colonial reader – writing to the empire, so to say. Savages are a common trope in missionary and colonial literature about Africa.

However, there is no correlation of events and characters between Gibson's history book, *The Story of the Zulus*, and Mofolo's novel, *Chaka*. Mofolo created his own central character and fictitious events around him, yet the events of the death of the main character in Mofolo's and Gibson's are similar. The possible reason for this could be that, during the time of writing both texts, it was apparently in vogue to write about barbarians and cruel kings in Africa. Some of the prominent novels of that time that might have influenced Mofolo to write about savages in Africa were H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), translated into Sesotho as *Merafo ya Morena Solomone* (first publication not dated), and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Western novels of that time specifically, and missionary African literature generally, signified Africa as being dark and uncivilised, in contrast to the Western and Christian culture. Mofolo's first novel, *Moeti wa Bochabela* (1983b) is about a similar subject: the dark and uncivilised Africa in contrast to civilised Western and Christian culture.

However, back to the fictional and true events in *Chaka*. Booker (2006:786) affirms that *Chaka* draws on important ways of folk traditions and on the conventions of African oral epics. In many cases, however, it subverts those conventions, repudiating traditional African culture in favour of the Christian culture which Mofolo learnt at the Morija Mission in Lesotho, where he wrote the book. It is, therefore, reasonable to consider the book a novel, despite its complex mixture of generic elements.

I hold a similar view that *Chaka* is rich in African oral elements, and can be read as part of African oral literature. Further, the novel can be analysed using the oral and literary narrative structures that were employed by early structuralists. Therefore, in the literary analysis of this novel, I draw from the approaches of the earliest literary structuralists who expanded Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of structuralism.

Literary structuralism is associated with Ferdinand de Saussure's language model, which states that language is like a semiotic structure that is differential and arbitrary. The study of the semiotic sign deals with assigning meaning and interpretation, and treats literature like language. Ferdinand de Saussure's language model appeared in the book, *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (1916) and was translated into English as; *Course in General Linguistics*. The study of Ferdinand de Saussure's language model caught the attention of structuralist theoreticians such Propp (1971), Greimas (1973), Barthes (1974, 1977) and Todorov (1977). These theoreticians have used de Saussure's language model as the scientific base of literary structuralism, and narratologists such as Culler (1975), Chatman (1978), Genette (1980, 1988), Rimmon-Kenan (1983) and Bal (1984) have sourced it to lay the foundation for narrative fiction.

Structuralist literary criticism postulates that a literary text is a structured system of literary "portions," such as theme, plot and characters, to mention a few. These portions are linked to a larger structure, which may be a particular genre, narrative structure, or a system of recurrent patterns. This means, therefore, that structuralism in literature is concerned primarily with understanding how a literary text works as a structured system of meaning production. Further, literary structuralism

postulates that there must be a structure in every text that readers aim to interpret as part of the whole. In this chapter, using structuralist literary criticism, I focus on the interpretation of the novel *Chaka* as a narrative tragedy, and take Chaka as the tragic hero of the novel. But, before I delve into the interpretation, I discuss first what "narrative tragedy" is.

Chaka as a Classical Narrative Tragedy

I start this section by explaining what "narrative tragedy" is, providing a short background to the section, and then analyse tragic expressions as part of a narrative tragedy.

A narrative tragedy is a story, often a drama, but can be a novel as in *Chaka*, which follows the downfall of the central character, who is a tragic hero because of his high standing. The chief character of the narrative possesses a tragic flaw, or is subjected to a twist of fate, leading from fortune to misfortune. The narrative structure of a tragedy usually involves rising action, a climax and a resolution, but unlike other narratives, the resolution of the narrative leads to the character's downfall or destruction. The rise and fall of a tragic hero delves into the weighty themes of morality, responsibility and the human condition, often eliciting strong emotions from the audience that the tragic hero's judgement and behaviour have been immoral. In this sense, the moral aspect of the story fitted well with the colonial mission of the time to "barbaric Africa": repent.

Having said this, I regard *Chaka* as evidently Mofolo's tour de force in writing a narrative tragedy. Chaka is the protagonist and tragic hero of the novel. The novel can, thus, be viewed as a narrative tragedy: "*Chaka* can be defined as a narrative tragedy in prose built along the simple curve of growth and decline which defines the structure of a classic tragedy at its best" (Gérard 1971:117). Because *Chaka* is a narrative tragedy, it may be useful to look further at the concept of "tragedy" as our basis for analysing the *tragic* expressions in *Chaka*. Aristotle (quoted by Leech 1969:1) defines "tragedy" as the imitation of an action that is serious and has magnitude – complete in itself. It is set in language with pleasurable accessories – each kind brought in separately in various parts of the work in dramatic, not narrative, form, with

incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. Another aspect observed by Aristotle (quoted by Leech 1969:1) is that the main character of the tragedy is a man who is pre-eminently virtuous and just, and whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice and depravity, but by some error of judgement. Aristotle (quoted by Leech 1969:1) contends that the plots of tragedies are either simple or complex, and he points out that they have a single, and not a double, issue. The change in the hero's fortunes must not be from misery to happiness, but, on the contrary, from happiness to misery – and the cause of it must lie not in depravity, but in some great error on his part.

Baldick (1990:226–227) defines tragedy as a serious play, or, by extension, a novel, representing the disastrous downfall of a central character, the protagonist. The protagonist is led into a calamity by a hamartia (error), which often takes the form of hubris (excessive pride leading to divine retribution or nemesis). The tragic effect usually depends on our awareness of admirable qualities – manifest or potential in the protagonist – which are terribly wasted in the fateful disaster.

The "eminent" person is known as the "tragic hero." He has a "tragic flaw," which is the defect that brings about his downfall. His fall should be shocking and have great repercussions on the society in which he lives.

These are classical views about tragedies and are probably based on the tragedies that were available to Aristotle at the time. The tragic heroes and heroines of modern tragedies are not only kings, queens and princes. Nor are they "eminent" in Aristotle's sense. Nor do their miscalculations affect many people. Another issue is that tragedy is no longer restricted to drama, but includes poetry and the novel. It is also clear that tragedies were meant to be didactic in the sense that they aroused fear and pity, and, therefore, warned against evil. Muir (1991:376) feels that "one is tempted to suggest that the effect, though not the function, of tragedy is to increase, not to diminish the reader's pity and fear – the compassion which is essential to the survival of humanity, and the terror that is akin to awe. We are fearful of man's vulnerability, but awe-struck at his ability to endure. We feel, in Wordsworth's

phrase, that we are greater than we know, more able to suffer with dignity the changes and chances of this mortal life."

Reading Aristotle's view of tragedy, it seems that plot and characterisation have a close link in tragedy. Muir (1991:375) observes that Aristotle's belief was that plot, rather than character, was the prime essential of tragedy. Muir (1991:375), on the other hand, contends that both are important: "When plot is all important and characterisation minimal, we have the recipe for a detective story or thriller; and where character is the first essential and plot the minor importance, we get the kind of play which reads better than it acts."

However, Chatman (1978:85) reminds us that literary studies since Aristotle have based the analysis of plot macrostructures on the vicissitudes of the protagonist, and that Aristotle distinguished between fortunate and fatal plots – according to whether the protagonist's situation improved or declined. For the most interesting forms were complex – that is, they changed direction: the tragic or fatal plot line versus the comic or fortunate. These possibilities were extended according to the differing characteristics of the protagonist. Chatman (1978:85) identifies three types of classical fatal plots: first, that an unqualifiedly good hero fails: this is shockingly incomprehensible to us, since it violates probability; second, that a villainous protagonist fails - about his downfall we feel smug satisfaction, because justice has been served; and third, that the noble hero fails through miscalculation, which arouses our pity and fear.

I proceed below, with the analysis of the tragic hero in a narrative tragedy.

Chaka as a Tragic Hero of the Narrative Tragedy, *Chaka*

The chief character, Chaka, in Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is a tragic hero in the classical sense of the concept. He is born into the royal family. He becomes the best fighter. He is loved by those whom he rescues plus those who see him as deserving to be king, and he is heir to his father's throne. Before he meets Isanusi, all his intentions are good. Chaka's tragic flaw, as will be observed later,

is excessive love of kingship. His ambition to become the greatest king ever is carefully nurtured by two doctors – the woman doctor, who instils in him a love of war and fighting, and Isanusi, who tells him that he has medicinal powers that will allow him to achieve this ambition. However, in order to do so, Chaka must kill indiscriminately and without pity.

Chaka's character itself emerges only gradually from chapter 2 through to the end. The reader sees Chaka – the young boy – as a tireless fighter and lover of fights. He always defeats his opponents. He kills a lion alone and he saves a girl being mauled by a hyena and slays the beast. He becomes a hero. But, because of his fame, he is chased away by his father and his father's jealous wives.

This act of chasing Chaka away leads him to his hamartia. Whilst Chaka is in the wilderness, he undergoes a complete metamorphosis because of his feeling that he has, since childhood, been treated in the most inhumane way. He decides that, when he becomes king, he will do what pleases him, whether it is evil or not, and seek revenge to a degree of vengeance of which only he is capable. He arrives at this twisted morality after observing that, here on earth, people survive by physical strength, not justice. He realises that the one who is clever, strong and good is the only one who can use force – the one who resolves a dispute by using a fighting stick. He decides that, as from that day, he will do as he pleases – no matter whether or not the person is guilty. He will kill the person if it pleases him, because that is the law of the people.

The reader realises that, when Chaka becomes king, it will be easy for him to execute his wishes because, the king at that time – as the traditional leader of his people – wielded enormous power. He was regarded as the father of his people – its legislature as well as its head and its supreme judge. He was the commander-in-chief of its army. Such totalitarian power vested in kings made gross misuse of power and violent taking of people's lives at will, was characteristic of traditional leaders during Chaka's time, and was prevalent as if it were a norm. In such a view, Chaka's dictatorship is merely regarded as typical

of his time. If he turned out to be good into the bargain, that was simply a matter of choice.

The motivation behind Chaka's character change makes sense, because the reader remembers all the bad things that were done to him from infancy to boyhood. The narrator indicates that, when Chaka was in the wilderness, he saw all the events of his life from childhood and concluded that they were bad, causing him to experience a consequent stirring of horrible emotions. He remembered the day that he was rounding up the calves and found that he was secretly being discussed. He remembered too the day when the boys caught him in the fields. He recalled the days when he killed a lion and a hyena.

The reader realises that Chaka has been forced by circumstances to adopt a twisted philosophy. Even if the narrator does not tell the reader that *empa he, merero ya hae ho fihlela moo e ne e le metle* (but, up to this level, his intentions were still very good) (Mofolo 1983a:35), the reader still feels that any person persecuted in such a way during his formative years would certainly have had a strong desire to exact revenge.

Developmental and clinical psychology cite evidence from many case studies that a high percentage of adult deviant behaviour can be traced to early childhood problems. According to Coleman *et al*. (1980:140–141), the most pronounced causes of psychosocial factors are childhood trauma and parental deprivation. Coleman *et al*. (1980:140–142) contend that traumatic situations result in emotional conditioning, rather than in cognitive learning. Consequently, exposure to similar situations tends to reactivate an emotional response that pre-empts the possibility of a rational appraisal of the situation, which would provide a more flexible response and more likely be adaptive. The extent of the effects of early traumatic experiences depends heavily on the support and reassurance given to the child by parents or other significant persons. This appears particularly important when the trauma involves an experience that arouses strong feelings of inadequacy and self-devaluation, such as being ridiculed.

This view, to some extent, partially explains Chaka's strong wish for revenge – not only against his enemies, but against

humanity as well. The reader fails to understand the enormity and extent of his wish for revenge, but must realise that Chaka should be seen, first, as a traumatised child, and second, as a child who suffers from early childhood deprivation. Early childhood trauma and childhood deprivation shatter one's feelings of security, adequacy and worth – thus influencing one's later self-evaluation. The reader will remember that, in infancy, Chaka did not cry easily: *Chaka e le lesea … [l]e sa lleng le ha a wela fatshe*; *esita le ha a otlwa o ne a sa atise ho lla …* (Mofolo 1983a:6). (Chaka was a chubby child … who did not cry even when he fell down and when he was lashed ….)

This may be some indication that there was something wrong with Chaka's upbringing right from infancy. Psychologists tell us that children who do not cry, even under severe pain, usually reveal some signs of parental neglect. Parental deprivation and childhood trauma seem to have been Chaka's main problems, because certainly he did not experience parental love. He spent most of his time with his mother's relatives. It will be remembered that he was kept at Ncube after his birth, and was brought to his father for a short period and then returned to Ncube. After the birth of Dingana, Mfokazana and Mhlangana, he and his mother were ill-treated until Nandi went back to Ncube to have another child. Nandi was banished to Elangeni and later returned to Nobamba. The reader understands that, in his mother's absence, Chaka was left in the care of his grandmother – a time he spent chasing birds from the cornfields and in looking after the calves.

One day when they were looking after the cattle, the herd boys sent Chaka to round up the calves and, when he came back, one of them said: "Catch him!" They caught him, lashed him until he was half dead and left him there in the hope that he would die. The boys harassed Chaka because they heard that people wanted him to be killed. During his childhood, he was frequently referred to as an illegitimate child. It was also said that he was sired by *tikoloshe* (the evil genie) and that he was vaccinated by it.

The narrator gives us good motivation for Chaka's change. Given this view, the reader is, therefore, less surprised when Chaka decides to turn against humanity for revenge. However, the reader wonders whether or not Chaka would have managed

to execute his evil deeds to the degree that he did if it were not for the advice and help of Isanusi. It would seem that Isanusi knew the right time to inculcate a twisted morality in Chaka. He comes to him when he is terribly tired, dejected, hungry and frustrated, and, thus, very vulnerable. In this context, Isanusi can, therefore, be seen as the one who nurtures Chaka's hamartia and leads him to his nemesis. It is perhaps useful, therefore, to take a closer look at how Isanusi develops ambition through Chaka's miscalculations and leads him to his downfall.

Chaka's first encounter with Isanusi is a strange one. When Chaka wakes up under a tree in the wilderness, he sees a man whose face is distorted – his mouth twisted with hate, malice and unbounded cruelty. He sees someone who has more evil in his heart than any murderer – the very incarnation of malice, treachery and betrayal.

These evil qualities seen on Isanusi's face – as will be observed later – are to be inculcated into Chaka and, when he first sees them on Isanusi's face, Chaka is terrified. Had Isanusi given him sufficient time to really register the evil visage, Chaka might have run away or mistrusted him permanently, but the cruel face is quickly replaced by a happy and deeply sympathetic one. What is surprising is that the change takes place in only the wink of an eye, and Chaka starts: *mmele wa hae wa re nyaro, a panya* (his body felt strange, and he winked) (Mofolo 1983a:36). When he looks at the man again, he discovers that his face is showing deep sympathy and pity, and is sad on his behalf. When he looks deep into the eyes, he sees profound compassion and a heart that feels grief for others, with a true, deep love. The face that he saw first had vanished. Then when Chaka looks at him more closely, he realises that he is a doctor, but is surprised by the calmness of the man.

Isanusi deliberately gives Chaka enough time to internalise the happy face – apparently with the intention to pacify Chaka and to give him enough time to realise that he is the promised diviner. When Isanusi greets Chaka, his voice is sweet and contented – full of truth and conviction. Chaka sees a man who is honest and righteous. I am of the view that the revelation of many faces might reveal Mofolo's belief that forces of darkness, as embodied in

Isanusi and his servants, manifest in different forms. This seems to be the case. The reader will remember that, when Ndlebe and Malunga discuss secrets, they have a strange habit of sitting against each other's backs. This strange behaviour is symptomatic of the insincerity, deceit and treachery often associated with the two-faced Roman god of gates – Janus. Sulzer (quoted by Gérard 1971:120) regards Malunga and Ndlebe as personifications of the bestial features which take ever greater hold on Chaka. This could be a valid point, because Malunga and Ndlebe – like Isanusi – help to nurture evil spirits in Chaka. They feed him with insincerity, treachery, untrusting vigilance and the obsessive love of kingship and war.

When Isanusi first meets Chaka, like the three weird sisters in *Macbeth*, he represents evil that is disguised as good. He skilfully and deliberately picks on and refers to important past events in Chaka's life to show him that he knows him – apparently with the intention of beguiling him and gaining his trust. He reminds Chaka that he is of royal blood. He is on the run. He has not had food for about five days. He is tired of killing people, even though he has been brought up the hard way. He killed a lion and a hyena, he is disowned by his father, who is afraid of his women. And lastly, Isanusi reminds him that he saw a terrible water snake in the deep pool. These events are crucial in Chaka's life in the sense that they lead him to adopt his twisted philosophy of life. And it would seem that Isanusi deliberately picks on them – apparently with the intention of nurturing Chaka's desire for revenge against humanity's indiscriminate killing.

As the discussion proceeds, Chaka realises that the man who he is talking to may be the promised great diviner who is going to finish the work of the dead woman doctor. But Isanusi does not say so explicitly. Kunene (1989:115) is of the view that Isanusi's oblique, guarded and insidious tactics in guiding Chaka towards identifying him – the direct hints and clues – are all intended to put the onus for such a decision entirely on Chaka's shoulders. Thus, through a process of elimination and deduction, he concludes that it is he, which is in itself a choice.

It, therefore, does not at all shock the reader when Chaka chooses Isanusi as his saviour: *Na ke wena ya tlamehileng ho*

qetela …. (Mofolo 1983a:40). (Tell me, is it you who is supposed to complete ….)

By now, Isanusi is aware that Chaka is on his side and he answers him reassuringly: *O se hlole o ipelaetsa, ke se ke fihlile* (Mofolo 1983a:41). (Have no doubts, I have come.)

What must be realised is that, after gaining confidence in Isanusi, Chaka submits himself completely to Isanusi and places his life in his hands. He agrees to do everything that Isanusi says. The reader is, therefore, not surprised that, even when Chaka is told before the strengthening medicine is used, that Isanusi's instructions and commandment will be difficult, Chaka, nevertheless, desperately promises that he will follow them to the letter: *Ke itlama ho boloka ditaelo tsa hao ka hohle ka moo o ntaelang kateng* (Mofolo 1983a:41). (I bind myself to abide by your commandments in every way in which you will command me.)

And, when he is told for the second time that the instructions and commandments will be difficult, Chaka, again, takes an oath that he will follow them, if it is humanly possible.

This is the first error that Chaka commits. However, the reader feels that Chaka has little choice but to agree to what Isanusi cleverly suggests, because his senses have been rendered defenceless. He is very happy that he has eventually met his saviour. Isanusi, as has been said above, is psychic and powerful and knows exactly what to do about Chaka, and how to achieve his intentions. He finds Chaka when he is forlorn and destitute and uses every opportunity to lure him. His instructions and commandments are designed in such a way that Chaka will follow them and eventually destroy his own life. This would seem to be the case, because after Chaka has committed himself to following Isanusi's hard instructions, Isanusi promises him a great fortune: *mahlohonolo ao o a tshepisitsweng bongwaneng a tla qala hona kajeno ho o wela hodimo; o tla atleha ho tsohle tseo o di etsang* (Mofolo 1983a:41). (The fortunes that you were promised in your childhood will on this very day begin to fall upon you; you will succeed in everything that you do.)

The word *mahlohonolo* (fortune) is ambiguous in this literary context. Like Isanusi's visages, *mahlohonolo* at first appears to indicate good fortune, but when followed through to

the end of the novel, turns out to be Chaka's nemesis. Chaka's "fortunes," in fact, turn out to be "misfortunes." It will be remembered that, right from infancy through to adolescence, Chaka was strengthened with medicine by the woman doctor. The powerful medicine which Chaka drank during his childhood was mixed with the bile of a yellow snake. The woman's aim with this mixture, she told Nandi, was to "prepare" Chaka for his "fortune." It would seem that Chaka's fateful life was shaped from the moment he drank the medicine mixed with the bile of the yellow snake, because after Chaka had drunk it, the woman doctor told Nandi that Chaka would receive *mahlohonolo a maholo* (greatest fortunes) (Mofolo 1983a:7).

Kunene (1989) views *Chaka* as a Christian moralist novel, and feels that – since apparently written with a Christian message in mind – it would be unreasonable not to expect Mofolo to regard a snake in biblical terms. It would seem that, in *Chaka*, snakes represent the evil and deceit often associated with the snake in the Bible, and thus the bile that Chaka drank could be taken to symbolise the intake of evil. It must be realised that, every time that Chaka is about to undergo significant metamorphoses in his life, medicine is used, and there is frequent and concurrent reference to *mahlohonolo* (fortunes) (Mofolo 1983a:7 see paragraph 3), which becomes a leitmotif.

It is evident that *mahlohonolo* (fortunes), referred to above turn out to be the greatest misfortunes. The shift from fortune to misfortune can be traced to the references to *mahlohonolo* on no less than twelve occasions, namely: page 2 paragraph 3; page 7 paragraph 3; page 13 paragraph 1; page 24 line 1; page 41 paragraph 4; page 42 paragraph 1; page 80 paragraph 1; page 82 paragraph 2; page 120 paragraph 4; page 122 paragraph 2; page 124 paragraph 2; page 163 paragraph 1.

It would seem that the timing of Isanusi's visit to Chaka with a promise of "great fortunes" is perfect. He comes to Chaka at a crucial moment. The reader may form the impression here that Isanusi is there to nurture Chaka's evil intentions. It is for this accurate timing, amongst other things, that Isanusi is often taken to be an allegorical character. Many scholars of the Sesotho novel, amongst others Tekateka (1967), Scheub (1970), Gérard (1971),

Moloi (1973) and Kunene (1989), agree that Isanusi embodies all the evil aspects in Chaka's life. Yet, one must also consider Sulzer's (quoted by Gérard 1971:120) view that, although "Isanusi is genuinely a supernatural being and the decisive causal agent in Chaka's life career," one needs to take a closer look at him as a real person. For, it is as a person that Isanusi's evil influences on Chaka become more pronounced.

The reader first hears about Isanusi from the last paragraph on page 24 to the first one on page 25. Here, the reader learns that Isanusi taught the woman doctor her knowledge of medicinal herbs and that it is he who is going to "complete/finish" Chaka with medicinal herbs. His knowledge of medicine, the reader is told, far surpasses that of the woman doctor. He is not only a doctor, but a very perceptive diviner as well. He sees things long before they happen. He foretells wars even before they are planned and, because of his extreme perception and telepathy, he will know how to find Chaka.

It is at this stage that the reader begins to wonder whether or not Chaka's hard childhood was predestined to foster the twisted philosophy that Chaka adopts after running away. Isanusi's timing is too accurate to be a coincidence, and knowing his divine power, by now the reader suspects high conspiracy. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that, when it is the right moment to inculcate in Chaka the distorted philosophy, Isanusi knows where to reach him. He finds him asleep under a tree.

The motif of predetermination seems to be emphasised here, but Luc Decaunes (quoted by Gérard 1971:199–200) has a different view. He sees Chaka's fate not only as a matter of predestination, but of fate and freedom. He points out that the role of fatality is not predominant. The themes of predestination and personal freedom are here curiously fused together. Man is free to choose his destiny and the hero enters the realm of tragedy with full knowledge. In *Chaka*, the will to power is no innate tendency. His fate is controlled by persecutions and injustices to which he is subjected by his own people. Humiliated, betrayed, hunted from his village and disowned by his father, he first thirsts for revenge only – merely wishing to restore his natural rights. But, in fact, his status as an outcast has fostered an inferiority complex in him.

This complex, nurtured by the spirit of evil, is the mainspring of the action.

Bearing the shifting meaning of "fortune" in mind, the reader realises the equivocal nature of the word *mahlohonolo* (fortunes) and its ironic significance in relation to future events in the novel. Consequently, further reference to Chaka's "fortunes" foreshadows his doom. It should be remembered that the idea of future greatness is planted in Chaka's mind from childhood and carefully nurtured by the woman doctor. Having expectation of this "greatness" in mind, Chaka's ambition is aroused. He firmly believes that he is being led to the promised kingdom, but that the mantle of kingship – which needs Noliwa's blood – will be his final self-destruction and his acceptance into hell, which is symbolised by *Donga luka Tatiyana* (see later). But Isanusi, as the reader realises, does not destroy Chaka in one blow. He leads him on, step by step, to the level where he knows he is irredeemable.

The first wrong choice that Chaka makes is the deadly medicine which he accepts when he first meets Isanusi. Isanusi warns him that the medicine is extremely destructive, because, once it is used, it requires human blood to be spilled frequently. But, because Isanusi tells him that the medicine is also very useful, Chaka nevertheless chooses to use the medicine. It would seem that, at this level, Chaka's desperation compels him to follow blindly whatever steps Isanusi suggests to be useful. Kunene (1989:117) feels that the fact that Isanusi then stands aside and apparently leaves it to Chaka to "choose" cannot disguise the fact that, in reality, Mofolo has created a climate where certain so-called "choices" are actually inevitable, while their alternatives remain remote and unattractive possibilities.

When Isanusi has completed strengthening Chaka, they walk side by side to Dingiswayo's place. This side-by-side walk may be symbolic of Chaka's acceptance of evil. Again, before they part, Isanusi tells Chaka to forsake mercy and spill blood impassionately. He must annihilate and sweep away all his enemies. Indeed, at Dingiswayo's, Chaka uses his spear to cultivate his kingship. He kills a mad man who has troubled the nation for a long time. He helps Dingiswayo to defeat Zwide and is consequently promoted to chief commander of the

senior regiments. Zwide kills Dingiswayo, but Chaka takes over command and defeats Zwide. He, thus, inherits a kingdom greater than Dingiswayo's.

When Chaka thinks that he has attained the highest level of kingship, Isanusi encourages him to believe that he can make him a still greater king. Chaka is excited about the idea, but Isanusi knows that he is taking his victim to his ultimate demise. He begins to work on Chaka and later tells him that, in order to attain that kingship, he must kill Noliwa. Chaka agrees. The element of betrayal comes in here. Chaka loves Noliwa very much, but he wishes to sacrifice her for greater kingship. Their love relationship in chapters 12, 14 and 16 is portrayed as a perfect one, exemplified by the fact that – when they were about to become married – the legend grew that they were the messengers of *Nkulunkulu*, meaning God.

Noliwa is very beautiful. She is kind and amazingly compassionate. She is loved by people who swear that *Nkulunkulu* (God) used her as example so that, through her, they should see His amazing beauty, profound love, and perfection. The reader learns that Noliwa loved Chaka exceedingly.

Most of the good things that are said about Noliwa are also said about Chaka. Chaka is no longer the despised person who was said to have been lanced by – and indeed the child of – *tikoloshe* (the evil genie). There is a remarkable difference between the despised Chaka, and Chaka the great king described in paragraph 5 on page 102. As king, Chaka is highly revered. He is widely admired for his handsomeness, his impressive stature, his bravery, and his commanding nature. Because of these characteristics, Chaka was said to have been sent by God to his people. His heart and spirit were taken to be immortal and were regarded as the heart and spirit of *Nkulunkulu* himself. Indeed, it was rumoured that Chaka was sent by *Nkulunkulu* to teach his people war skills. Because of their supreme human qualities, both Chaka and Noliwa were actually worshipped, and this pleased Chaka greatly. However, Noliwa, who regarded herself as a normal human being, was extremely embarrassed by these praises.

The reader observes a great difference between Chaka and Noliwa. Despite their differences, it is evident at this stage that

both Chaka and Noliwa display extraordinarily superb human qualities, and their marriage, if it had taken place, would have symbolised a consummation of these good qualities. But their marriage does not take place. Because of Dingiswayo's death, which has been orchestrated by Isanusi, Noliwa and Chaka's marriage is delayed. There is no one to receive the *bohadi* cattle, because Noliwa cannot simply be taken without the *bohadi* cattle like a homeless woman. This condition favoured Noliwa's death. It would seem that Isanusi is against lavish love, humanity, trust and beauty, as epitomised by Noliwa's superb human qualities. These qualities – he apparently feels – should not thrive in Chaka's kingdom, where human blood rather should spill like water.

Again, although it is obvious at this level that it is Isanusi who suggests that Noliwa should be murdered, he puts it as a "choice" to Chaka. He tells him that he should definitely be sure whether or not he wants to kill her. Through Noliwa's death, Chaka is told, he will learn the art of sorcery. For sorcerers go to great lengths – such as even killing their children and parents – so that their sorcery may succeed.

Despite having been given this horrible picture of sorcery, Chaka weighs Noliwa's blood against the kingship that he will receive after her death, and finally decides on her sacrifice. He begins to see her as a minute thing in comparison to his vast, envisaged kingdom. He falsely convinces himself that there are many other beautiful girls, far more beautiful than Noliwa. When he is asked about his final decision, he tells Isanusi and his servants about his fatal decision: *Ke imametse, ke qetile, ditlhare di tla tswakwa ka madi a Noliwa* (Mofolo 1983a:101). (I have considered this matter carefully and concluded that the medicines will be mixed with Noliwa's blood.)

The reader then realises that Isanusi pretends to dissuade Chaka, but in fact insidiously persuades him to murder Noliwa. Yet Chaka understands him otherwise, and insists on murdering Noliwa, so that the choice, as Isanusi intends, does seem to be Chaka's: *Ke utlwile hantle, o mpoleletse theko ya borena boo, mme jwale ke ithekela bona e le nna, hobane ke a bo rata* (Mofolo 1983a:101). (I have heard you well, you have told me the price of

that kingship, and now I am deciding on my own to buy it myself, because I like it.)

Chaka is given a year, which – at his insistence – is reduced to nine months, to decide finally whether or not he still wants to sacrifice Noliwa's blood.

It is during this period that Chaka's people experience peace and serenity. For, Chaka reformed his nation during this period and built his new royal kraal. The army also enjoyed staying at home and hailed him with the habitual greeting, *Bayede*. The soldiers admire and revere Chaka. Everybody has a chance to socialise and rest. Thus, Chaka grows in stature and becomes a demigod. Yet, this temporary peace is deceptive, because all the time, Chaka was carrying Noliwa's death warrant. His conscience troubled him.

Because Chaka is instructed not to spill blood whilst he is awaiting Noliwa's death, he resorts to other forms of brutality and dehumanisation. The narrator says that he ate the young fruit of other men's daughters, picking the very flower of their youth. Then, when they became too worn out to please him, he would pass them on to his councillors if they were still alive. Some were executed instantly. Their children were also killed on their first day.

Noliwa's death marks the final decline of action in *Chaka*. The reader sees a Chaka who is about to destroy himself. Although Chaka is given a reasonably long time to decide about Noliwa's fate, it is interesting to notice that, during this period of waiting, Ndlebe and Malunga are already busy with preparations for Noliwa's sacrifice. When Isanusi arrives to find out about Chaka's final decision, Chaka arrogantly replies to him: *Nna Chaka, ha ke tsebe ho bua ditaba tse pedi ka molomo o le mong; seo ke se buileng ke se buile, Isanusi* (Mofolo 1983a:119). (I, Chaka, do not know how to speak two things with one mouth. What I have spoken, I have spoken, Isanusi.)

Isanusi is happy about Chaka's consistency, and is aware that Malunga and Ndlebe have "worked" on him to keep to his decision. When Isanusi asks them how they "worked," they say that their work is actually over. They are only waiting for him who will "complete" and "finish." The reader picks up the sinister

meaning in the words *qeta* (complete) and *phetha* (finish). It may mean completing and finishing Chaka's life. Again, here the "complete" motif comes into play.

There is an obvious shift of meaning in *ho qeta le ho phetha* (Mofolo 1983a:119) (complete and finish) in the sense that the reader recalls what the woman doctor promised. It will be remembered that, when Nandi sent a messenger to inform the woman doctor about the water snake, the messenger came back with the news that the doctor was dead. However, Nandi should not worry, because the work that she had started would be finished by the great diviner, Isanusi.

Although Chaka informs Isanusi about his final decision, Isanusi pretends again to "dissuade" him. He tells Chaka that what will be done with Noliwa's blood cannot be undone by any living being, so if he wants to change his mind, there is still time to do so. But Chaka firmly chooses doom: *Empa ke sa o botsa hape, o nkarabe o bolela nnete ya pelo ya hao, o sa tshabe letho, o sa tshabe le hore ke tla re o nkgathaleditse lefeela. O kgetha eng, Noliwa kapa borena?* Chaka: *Borena!* (Mofolo 1983a:120). (But I ask you once again, and do answer me with the truth that is in your heart, having fear of nothing. Not even that I shall say that you have troubled me over nothing. What do you choose for yourself, Noliwa or kingship. Chaka: Kingship!)

One wonders why Chaka, even if he is given ample time and asked so frequently to "change" his mind, continues to make the wrong choice. Kunene (1989:122) suggests that, in all the choices that Chaka has to make, Isanusi's role is one of suggestion, of planting an idea in Chaka's mind and then watching it grow. Isanusi himself stays in the background whilst goading Chaka towards the choice that he wants him to make. Yet, at this moment, Chaka, as king, is in a remarkably different situation from when he was a vagabond. As king, he has all the opportunities at his disposal. But the reader realises that, at this stage, Chaka has developed too much trust in Isanusi, so much so that he is completely in Isanusi's Venus flytrap and unaware that he is about to be crushed.

It is reasonable to expect Chaka to cling to any suggestion that Isanusi makes, because in the past all his promises came

true. Therefore, he expects the same now. He has been enticed to the level where he can no longer think independently of the consequences of his actions. Somebody does it for him. The reader realises also that Chaka, apart from being lured by Isanusi, has all the qualities of a tragic hero. His excessive ambition is evident in the following words:

> *Lefatsheng, ha ke bolela nnete, ha ho letho le leng leo ke le ratang; lerato la ka kaofela ha lona le boreneng, ntweng, makgotleng; ka lebaka leo ke tla le nea Noliwa, hore kgopiso e tlohe tseleng ya borena ba ka. Ke imametse, dihlare di tla tswakwa ka madi a Noliwa* (Mofolo 1983a:101).
>
> (On earth, if I am honest, there is nothing that I love more than kingship, war and warriors, and as a result I will sacrifice Noliwa so that nothing stands in the way of my kingship. I have considered and have decided that the herbs will be mixed with Noliwa's blood.)

But this excessive ambition in Chaka, Kunene (1989) contends, is purposed by Mofolo. As Mofolo's creation, Chaka has all the qualities intended by his creator. Mofolo knows his "creature."

When Chaka's life is about to be completely destroyed by his committing murder, the reader realises, as previously stated, that the destruction was "started" by the woman doctor. It would be illogical to expect the woman doctor, who is taught medicine by the cunning Isanusi, to have a radically different philosophy of life from her master. Like Isanusi's, her intentions are evil. This evil can be inferred in her relationship with the cruel and bloodthirsty Zwide. After strengthening Chaka with medicine on the last occasion, the woman doctor says the following before she departs: *ke tla itlhahanela ho kgutla ha Zwide, moo ke bitswang teng* (Mofolo 1983a:13). (I shall hurry back from Zwide's where I am now being summoned.)

This relationship between Zwide and the woman doctor is indicative of her evil intentions, because Zwide is the villain in the novel. In his will to conquer Dingiswayo's trade-oriented, peaceful and prosperous kingdom, Zwide is sharply contrasted with Dingiswayo. Dingiswayo, as portrayed in the novel, embodies all

the good qualities of leadership and statesmanship. His extreme impartiality is displayed when he goes as far as executing his own brother because he conspired to assassinate Chaka. Zwide, on the other hand, represents a kingdom based on treachery, insincerity and the destruction of prosperity and humanity. Given this negative image of Zwide, the reader is inclined to draw parallels between Zwide and the woman doctor. They both represent evil.

It is the woman doctor who nurtures the evil spirits which come to Chaka in various forms. The first one, the reader observes, is in the form of the drink which contains the bile of the yellow snake. The second one is anticipated in the following: *Na o se o kile wa bona ho hong ha o tola?* (Mofolo 1983a:13). (Tell me, have you ever seen anything in the river, while you were bathing?)

That "something" which Chaka is supposed to have seen, or will see when he is bathing, is the king of the deep pool – the large water snake. When Chaka finally sees the snake, he is already expecting "something." That is why he does not run away, despite the frightening confrontation. He has already been given instructions to obey: *Ha a ka bona ho hong ho mo tshosang a sa le metsing, a se ke a baleha, le ha ho ka hlaha eng kapa eng* (Mofolo 1983a:8). (If he could see something that frightens him while he is in the water, on no account must he run away, regardless of whatever may appear.)

After the snake retreats into the deep pool, Chaka hears eerie voices. He is told that the earth is his. He will rule nations and their kings and all sorts of peoples. He will also rule over winds and ocean storms. But, in order to be such a great king, he must follow the "proper way."

The reader realises here that the message of the snake foretells Chaka's future greatness as the ruler and king of all evil. One comes to this conclusion because snakes, to Mofolo, are instruments of darkness. In this context, the snakes are understood to give Chaka enormous evil power to destroy humanity. The rituals which the water snake performs in the deep pool can be taken symbolically as a form of evil baptism. The monthly rituals of bathing in the deep pool can be seen as giving Chaka the strength to conquer all forms of good.

The image that Mofolo portrays of the deep pool is a terrible one. Consequently, the terrible pool can be taken to represent the site of darkness and evil, those spirits in which Chaka must be baptised monthly in order to be hardened. It will be remembered that Chaka continues this ritual of monthly bathing until the day preceding Noliwa's death. But, after her death, the author makes no reference to this ritual. For it would seem that, after murdering Noliwa, Chaka himself becomes the king of the hell, which is symbolised by *Donga luka Tatiyana*.

The forces of darkness nurture Chaka's ambition, to the level where he is sufficiently powerful to destroy human life. The first message is brought to Chaka by the woman doctor, who tells him that he will receive the greatest fortune ever seen by any living human being. The second is from the eerie voices that speak to him after the snake has retreated into the deep pool. Chaka is told that he will not only rule nations and their kings, but also over ocean storms. The third one is from the dead Senzangakhona. His voice confirms that Chaka will be the greatest king ever. After hearing Senzangakhona's voice, Chaka develops complete trust and confidence in Isanusi. He submits himself completely to Isanusi and accepts all his "suggestions," no matter how cruel they are. And, when Isanusi "suggests" that Noliwa can, if Chaka wants, be sacrificed for greater kingship, Chaka agrees quickly, and sticks to his impetuous decision.

It is against this background, perhaps, that the reader begins to understand certain foolish choices that Chaka makes about his life. Before Noliwa's death, Chaka still has a conscience, for he is worried when the day of the sacrifice draws nearer. Noliwa herself sees that Chaka's face, although he behaves like a happy person, is troubled and looks cruel. These may be the last flickering symptoms of a dying conscience evident on Chaka's face as he is about to fall to the depths. At this point, Chaka could still have been saved – had he listened to his conscience; but, as always, Isanusi goads him on and he is a willing listener. Isanusi apparently goads Chaka because, if Chaka changes his mind, then Isanusi will not achieve his evil objectives.

On the day on which Noliwa is to be murdered, Isanusi asks if Chaka is still willing to sacrifice her blood. Chaka answers

positively. Isanusi tells Chaka that what he will do with Noliwa's blood is something that cannot be undone, even if he wished it. Such a step will be the end of ends. With Noliwa's blood, Chaka is told, he will know all secrets. Even though he will not be aware of them immediately, he will realise them later. He will also know that there is no death and that there is no dying. Chaka is told that he is on the verge of being counted amongst the heroes whom Isanusi says he "sees" sitting in the midst of their work: the mighty men who worked very hard. He is also told that he is on the verge of joining the great kings, such as Isanusi's kings. He is promised that the number of his regiments is about to surpass in number the stars that Chaka sees in the firmament. Amongst nations, he will be as bright as a sun that is so blinding when it is not covered by clouds that stars disappear when it rises, just as nations will similarly disappear in his presence, because Noliwa's blood will bring to him wondrous fortunes.

It does not dawn on Chaka that Isanusi is one of the forces of evil. Chaka does not know this because Isanusi has not given him the slightest clue as to who he really is, except to indicate that he is the one who was supposed to "finish" the work of the woman doctor. He does not even tell Chaka his real name, or where he lives. However, Chaka should have had some doubts when Isanusi indicated to him that he was not on good terms with the good man, Dingiswayo.

The reader will remember that Chaka and Isanusi parted when they were near Dingiswayo's, and Isanusi told him that he did not want to meet Dingiswayo because they were enemies. Another incident that should have alerted Chaka to Isanusi's evil intentions is when Dingiswayo tells Chaka that he does not like Malunga and Ndlebe. Dingiswayo tells Chaka that he dislikes Malunga because his eyes are like the eyes of an evil-doer and that he is full of deceit. He orders Chaka to take him away, because he fears him and because he is indeed bad. Dingiswayo further warns Chaka about Isanusi's servants. He tells Chaka to be careful because he observes that Malunga is hiding something very evil from him. He warns him that Malunga will harm him whilst he is off-guard. Dingiswayo is also very surprised when Chaka tells him that he has known Malunga from his childhood, because

Malunga's appearance, especially his face, tells him that he is not of Dingiswayo's and Chaka's world. He is a crook – the real evil-doer.

At this stage, Chaka is seen to have developed a hubris, that is, the excessive pride leading to his divine retribution, or nemesis. He does not heed Dingiswayo's warning. The reader understands the reason for Chaka's trust in Isanusi. The latter has become his saviour. But, given the long and fatherly relationship between Dingiswayo and Chaka, the reader sees no reason why he should trust people whose personalities and origins he does not even know. He is in a dilemma, but, having seen all Isanusi's prophecies become true, the reader is not surprised to see Chaka keeping with Isanusi, despite being warned. This is his fatal decision.

Before he murders Noliwa, he finds her extremely beautiful and tender-hearted. The sight of her beauty makes him speechless. Yet, despite this, he commits murder, the most heinous of acts. Noliwa's death is also an act of deceit and treachery. The author portrays it vividly, as follows:

> *Chaka a atamela ho yena, a nna a mmapadisa, a mo aka, a mmotsa mmo ho leng bohloko. Noliwa a re: "Chaka, morena ka, sefahleho sa hao se sosobane ha bohloko; molato keng?" Chaka a re ha ho molato, feela o halefisitswe ke setlaopa se seng papading ya bahlabani. Ba nna ba buisana jwalo hantle, ba akana, mme hanghang Chaka a thiba Noliwa molomo ka letsoho la hae le matla, a mo hlaba ka lehlabo lehafing; yaba o a mo fetola, lehafi le hlabilweng a le shebisa hodimo hore madi a tswele ka hare* (Mofolo 1983a:123–124).
>
> (Chaka came closer to her, they played and he kissed her. He also asked her where the pain was, and Noliwa said: "Chaka my king, your face looks very cruel and hard, the sound of your voice is painfully hoarse, what is the matter?" Chaka said that there was no problem. He was annoyed by one of the idiots when the regiments were exercising. They spoke and kissed, but suddenly Chaka covered Noliwa's mouth with his powerful hand and pierced her with a thatching needle in the armpit; he turned her up so that the wound should bleed internally.)

After killing Noliwa, Chaka passes out for a moment and feels something falling in his chest like a stone, settling there permanently. He runs out. When he regains consciousness, he is with Isanusi in a hut, where he is eulogised because *Hona jwale lebitso la hao le se le kene palong ya marena a heso, le hona a maholo a phahameng* (Mofolo 1983a:124). (Now, your name is counted amongst our kings, the greatest and the most powerful ones.)

Noliwa's death not only symbolises Chaka's spiritual death, but also the death of "superego," what psychoanalysts call the highest "house" of morality and virtue in the "self," which constitutes human personality. Having killed his superego, Chaka's life begins to be governed and ruled by the "id," an aspect of personality characterised and governed by antisocial and animal instincts and behaviour. These antisocial instincts are manifested in Chaka as he is transformed into a ruthless beast, a beast that has no morals. He descends into a state where he is totally incapable of feeling, either loving or hating.

The execution of cowards epitomises Chaka's total insensitivity and brutality after Noliwa's death. Kunene (1989:124) feels that, after killing Noliwa, Chaka "has moved out of the morality-immorality spectrum from which the fallen can still be saved, into the limbo of amorality in which a person is even incapable of losing his soul, and is therefore beyond redemption, the very epitome of spiritual deadness."

The fall of the tragic hero, as already indicated in the discussion of "tragedy," shocks and has great repercussions on the society in which he lives. His ruin affects many people. This is the case with Chaka's fall after murdering Noliwa and Nandi. Nandi's death is as ruthless as Noliwa's. She is trying to protect one of Chaka's children when Chaka discovers what she has been doing behind his back and brutally murders her.

There are parallels between Noliwa and Nandi's deaths. The reader learns that Chaka killed his mother in the same way that he killed Noliwa, and that he experienced the same feelings after killing her. Nandi's death symbolises the loss of the last shred of tenderness left in Chaka. The reader also learns that Nandi used to rebuke Chaka for killing people senselessly, and Chaka became tired of the rebukes.

After his mother's death, Chaka becomes completely insane. He kills all those who he falsely accuses of having bewitched his mother. He exterminates Moselekatse's regiment. He wipes out Nongogo's people, and he executes all Nandi's peers. As the people are executed, Chaka feels pleasure. All the dead are thrown into the ravine, *Donga luka Tatiyana*, and the ravine is twice filled with corpses. There is a terrible smell as the bodies begin to rot.

After Chaka has murdered his mother, the author uses a series of recalling analepses in paragraph 2 on page 150 to evoke Chaka's evil deeds. The reader learns that, with the spear that Isanusi made for him, Chaka killed mercilessly. He achieved greatness and became a king. With his armies he plundered nations around him. Those who fled caused great damage to human life, particularly those who were killed by Matiwane, Batlokwa and Moselekatse. He slew the infants born of his concubines. To this terrible number must be added Noliwa's death, plus those of Nongogo, Mnyamana, Nandi and Chaka's wives respectively. Chaka also caused a great destruction historically known as the *Difaqane*. Yet, instead of being happy about these "achievements," Chaka begins to worry terribly. He experiences a great thirst and, in order to quench it, he kills people in ever greater numbers. But the thirst continues. In paragraph 3 on page 154, Chaka has a terrible nightmare. This dream is proleptic because, it would seem, Chaka is given a foretaste of his own death. He sees a Zulu spear piercing his heart. It foreshadows his possible assassination by his own people, and this becomes true.

Chaka has another series of hallucinations in chapter 25, from paragraph 2 on page 157 to paragraph 1 on page 158. In one of his hallucinations, he "sees" his whole life from childhood to his last act of brutality. Viewed from another angle, the role of these terrible dreams can be taken to be moralistic, if not Christian-moralistic. Some Christians believe that there is a hell wherein all sinners will burn for ever because every sin is punishable. Mofolo might have held this view, which was rife at the time that he wrote. Having this view in mind, Mofolo makes Chaka "see" his evils in dreams so that he will, through suffering, pay for his sins.

After Chaka has killed his mother, Isanusi does not really care about him, for it seems that he has now achieved his aim with him. For the first time after Nandi and Noliwa's deaths, he comes to Chaka. He tells him that he was passing by and thought it best to inform him that he will come one day to collect his payment. Ironically, Chaka tells him how vast his kingdom is. But, as already indicated in the discussion of the motif *mahlohonolo* (fortune), Isanusi does not refer literally to cows. Rather, it would seem that he refers to the people who Chaka has killed ever since he met him. And this view seems to be confirmed by Isanusi's strange appearance when Chaka is being assassinated. He demands his payment and, for the first time, Chaka realises what he means. He temporarily becomes sane, yet remains defenceless before his assassins. He shows an inhuman lack of feeling, apparently because of his insanity, yet speaks most sensibly: *Le mpolaya ka tshepo ya hore le tla ba marena ha ke se ke shwele, athe le lahlehile, ha ho jwalo, hobane umlungu o a tla, mme ke yena ya tla le busa, lona le be bahlanka ba hae* (Mofolo 1983a:163). (You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong, that is not the way it will be because *umlungu* (the white man) is coming, and it is he who will rule you, and you will be his servants.)

Kunene (1989) feels that these are Mofolo's words, put into Chaka's mouth. According to Kunene (1989), Mofolo not only detested Chaka's imperialism, but also the Zulu nation which laid claim to the Basotho people to whom Mofolo belonged. Gérard (1971:126) feels that writing these words, Mofolo may have felt some complacency at this reversal in the fortunes of the enemies of his people, particularly in view of the fact that Zulu resistance to white occupation had been put down in 1906. Swanepoel (1989:61–62) confirms the view that Chaka's prophecy is the brainchild of Mofolo, expanding the enigmatic image of Chaka which he created from fact, fiction, myth and legend. The reversal in the fortunes of the enemies of Mofolo's people also expands the tragedy surrounding this mystic Zulu figure, whose end foreshadowed the downfall of other African dynasties in the region.

Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka as a product of sin, in my opinion, says that such a child deserves to be treated the way in which Chaka is treated, and that such a child is already destined for doom from birth. The reader sees this in the way that Chaka is predestined to his fate by his father's sin. Mofolo's message is, therefore, clear: Love before marriage is a sin and is against custom. Kunene (1989:110) observes that Senzangakhona is pushed by his desire to disregard the restraints of custom, which dictate that a girl shall not be deflowered out of wedlock, and tries to camouflage his crime against society by a hurried marriage once he knows that Nandi is pregnant. Out of their rather untidy mess, he gets his long-desired son and heir, Chaka. Kunene (1989:110) feels that it is understandable, then, that Chaka, the fruit of sin, should be overtaken by the wrath of God and made to suffer. For the sins of the father shall be visited upon the son, is Mofolo's biblical message.

In this way, *Chaka*, like most classical tragedies, becomes a moralist tragedy. Mofolo's moral views are evident in the following three passages, in which he makes direct comments to the reader about his culprit, Senzangakhona, who ravishes the pure Nandi:

> *Mohlang oo Senzangakhona a pheella Nandi ka matla a maholo hore ba etse disele, tse hanwang ke molao le ke tlhaho ya batho, Nandi a ba a tsamaya a mo siya a le mong hara masimo; a tsamaya a swabile haholo ha a bona hore eo a mo kanneng ha a mo rate ka lerato le hlwekileng (Mofolo 1983a:5).*
>
> (On that day, Senzangakhona forced Nandi with great power that they should do wrong, something against law and human nature. Nandi left him in the fields, and she felt ashamed when she realised that her potential husband did not love her with clean love ....)
>
> *Hana e bohloko ha kaakang tholwana ya sebe, ha e le mona Senzangakhona a kgaohane le mosadi wa hae eo a mo ratang....a bile a kgaohane le ngwana wa hae Chaka, eo a qadileng ho bona mora ka yena, mme ho fetisisa a tlamehile ho ba hlorisa! (Mofolo 1983a:15).*

(How painful is the fruit of sin when now Senzangakhona parts with his beloved wife ... also parting with his only son, the one who was an indication that he too was a man, and he had to persecute them instead!)

Kgaohanyong ena re fumana hore efela ruri tholwana ya sebe e le bohloko ka mokgwa o makatsang, hobane ha re bone tshito ya Chaka tabeng tsena, empa le ha ho le jwalo ntatae o laela hore a bolawe. Molatolato, sesosa ke hobane Nandi hammoho le Senzankakhona ba ne ba na le modimo; mme Senzangakhona, moo a tshabang ha ditaba tsa hae di tsejwa, a ba a rera ho bolaya mora wa hae; athe hoja Senzangakhona a se etse ditaba tsena tse dihlong botjheng ba hae, Chaka a ka be a le habo, Nobamba, e le ngwana wa mpoane, ngwana ya hlokolosi haholo ho ntatae (Mofolo 1983a:34).

(In this parting, we find that, indeed, the fruit of sin is painful in a terrible way, because we do not see any mistake with Chaka in this matter, but his father instructs that he must be killed. The real reason, the cause, is that because Nandi and Senzangakhona had God, and they feared that their secret would be known, he decides to kill his son, but if Senzangakhona did not commit this dreadful sin during his youth, Chaka would be where he belongs, at Nobamba. He would be the best-loved child, a child who is very important to his father.)

Concluding Remarks

After Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka as a child of sin, he ends his moral lesson with a sad note by reminding the reader that Chaka reached his fate because he is a product of sin: *Ho bile jwalo ho fela ha Chaka, mora wa Senzangakhona* (Mofolo 1983a:163). (So was the end of Chaka, the son of Senzangakhona.) Why Mofolo planted ambition as hubris in Chaka is not quite clear, although Gérard (1971), Moloi (1973) and Kunene (1989) agree that it was for Christian, moral and didactic reasons. Gérard (1971:117) feels that Mofolo may be deliberately equivocating on the word "sin" by using it to denote an infraction of accepted standards, whether Christian or pre-Christian. Moloi (1973:44) believes that Mofolo was a man of his time. When Christianity was beginning

to impinge on African minds, Mofolo saw his world split between its African background and Christianity. According to Kunene (1989:110), Mofolo was motivated by both traditional African and Christian values to portray Chaka as a child of sin.

However, the characterisation of Chaka as a tragic hero is plausible, in my opinion, because his character develops in a convincing way, and the author fully motivates that character development. The reasons for Chaka's change from one human state to the other are, therefore, believable, and Tekateka (1967:77–78) has a point in claiming that Mofolo's real concern in *Chaka* is the development of tragic personality, and the gradual unfolding of the inner man in his principal character. Further, Mofolo gives a realistic portrayal of the actual process of life which underlies the community of man with man – its various tensions, stresses and conflicts. Furthermore, Chaka's character is presented in depth, because he is seen against different ranges of characters with sufficient vitality and elaboration to make their own demands on the reader's attention and interest. Tekateka (1967:78) shares similar views on the character of Chaka, whom he feels embodies successful characterisation, because the reader witnesses the dramatic self-revelation of the character through speech and action. My observation about characterisation in the novel is that all characters are drawn through what they do and say – through what they are said to think and feel – and not by direct comments about them by their creator. To me, this is a sign of maturity on the part of Mofolo in a first-ever attempt to write an African novel in his time. That he employs so ably the possibilities of speech and action in depicting his characters are indications of being a genius of his time. Perhaps these, and other qualities, make *Chaka* the greatest novel of all times in the Sesotho literary tradition, and that is why the novel continues to be a great source of literary interpretation.

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Chapter 4

Literary Characterisation of *Chaka*: An Ideational Metafunctional Analysis

Elias Nyefolo Malete
Department of African Languages, University of the Free State
Bloemfontein, South Africa:
maleteen@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

The roles and contributions of African leaders in pre-colonial and colonial African societies were captured through biographies, oral history in praise poems, and historical literary works such as novels. Historical novels derived their inspiration from traditional leaders such as kings and chiefs, and very few, if any, deliberated on the roles and achievements of African leadership. According to Selepe (1999), *Chaka* is Mofolo's third Sesotho novel and occupies an extraordinary place in Sesotho's literary history. It generated interest unequalled in the history of Sesotho literature, and several scholars have analysed it from various perspectives. This chapter explores the literary characterisation of Mofolo's main character in his novel, *Chaka*, by deploying Halliday's *metafunctional framework*, a theoretical tenet of Systemic Functional Linguistics, which holds that authors select language in writing their specific texts to convey meaning. The focus is on one metafunction of the language, namely the *ideational* metafunction that expresses the clausal experiences. The study is informed by an interpretative paradigm, with a descriptive research design within the

qualitative (*content analysis*) and quantitative (*descriptive statistics*) approaches. The Voyant Tools software was used to extract and analyse data from the novel to provide a statistical analysis. This chapter observes that the author, based on the historical context, uses linguistic expressions that illustrate the characterisation of the main character in his novel, achieved through his actions in the physical world (*material process types),* and his thoughts, perceptions, and affections (*mental process types)*, and that what he says, and what he has, only solidifies his mental and physical state. This chapter maintains that Mofolo (1910) managed to use the grammar of the clause to construct a textual persona of the main character through the historical context and social context (typical traditional Zulu environment) of his time for the Basotho community.

Keywords: characterisation, ideational metafunction, Thomas Mofolo, Voyant Tools

Introduction

The introduction of literacy in Lesotho during the mid-19th century laid the foundation for the emergence of the first generation of Basotho authors and the development of written literature in the country. Amongst the earliest published works were four novels - three by Thomas Mofolo and one by E.S. Segoete produced in this formative period. Selepe (1999) notes that three Sesotho novels appeared between 1900 and 1930, two of which were authored by Mofolo: *Pitseng* (1910) and *Chaka* (1925). Kunene (1983:187), as cited in Ngugi (2018), further confirms that *Chaka* was published in 1925 by Lovedale Press, marking the text's centenary in 2025. These early texts not only marked the institutionalisation of Sesotho as a written literary language but also established thematic and stylistic precedents that shaped subsequent developments in southern African literature.

The roles and contributions of African leaders in pre-colonial and colonial African societies have been preserved and celebrated through various forms of cultural expression, including biographies, oral histories such as praise poems, and historical literary works like novels. These narratives often drew inspiration from traditional leaders such as kings, chiefs,

and Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* has significantly played that role. However, few works have explicitly examined the roles and achievements of African leadership critically or analytically. Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, his third Sesotho novel, occupies an extraordinary place in the history of Sesotho literature. According to Selepe (1999), it generated unprecedented interest and has been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis from multiple perspectives.

Lilford (2012) affirms the popularity of the novel by identifying *Chaka* as a rare *masterpiece* in African Literature, in that it is an inspiring recreation of the past, a base towards a literature of liberation where Mofolo defamiliarises Chaka's history to highlight his potential to transform society. In addition, Lilford (2012) quotes Gérard (1971), who describes Mofolo's *Chaka* as a genuine masterpiece of insight and composition, and the first major African contribution to world literature. He further quotes Ayi Kwei Armah (1976), who reviewed the novel as the world's most skilfully crafted work of Art (Lilford 2012). Selepe (1999) goes further to list several scholars who have written about Thomas Mokopu Mofolo and his novel *Chaka*: Swanepoel (1988:23-27), in *Historicity and Mofolo's Chaka: A comparison of text and possible sources*, concentrates on the aspects of the raw materials, such as history and culture, which could have possibly informed the conceptualisation of Mofolo's novel. The article by Swanepoel (1989b), The *Leselinyana Letters and early reception of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka*, seems to be the extension of the former. Sulzer (1984), in Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka: Literary Interpretations and Modifications of a Hero*, is mainly concerned with issues revealed in *Chaka* as a hero, issues such as dichotomous oppositions of Christianity and animism, individualism and politics, nature and civilisation.

Furthermore, Scheub (1970), in *Some Interpretative Approaches to Thomas Mofolo's Chaka*, focuses mainly on the characterisation of *Chaka* and draws material from both historical and cultural issues. Tekateka (1967), in his Master's dissertation entitled *A Critical Survey of Thomas Mofolo's Writing*, focuses on aspects relating to characterisation, language, and style, the role of the missionaries in the development of Sesotho literature,

as well as cultural aspects that characterise Mofolo's works. Moloi (1973), who produced a Doctoral thesis entitled, *The Southern Sotho novel: A Study of its Form, Theme and Expression*, focuses on a few specific aspects of the novel, namely, form, theme, and expression. According to Selepe (1999), Moloi also attempts to highlight factors responsible for distinct trends in the development and criticism of the Sesotho novel over several years. Amongst these are the attitudes of the missionaries, education authorities, and the Western critics regarding their aesthetic attitudes on what is "good" or "bad" in the Sesotho novel.

Gildenhuys (1973), in *'n Kritiese Ontleding van die Aard en Ontwikkeling van die Novelle in Suid-Sotho*, chiefly constitutes a historical survey, a process which brings him teetering on this important question of the relationship between literature and society, especially concerning the exploration of themes in the novels which he surveyed. Swanepoel's (1976) doctoral thesis, *Die Wereld van Tjhaka* examines some of the historical and social factors that might have influenced the conception of Mofolo's novel, as well as its reception by the reading public, who are the consumers of the product. In Kunene's (1989) publication, *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Sesotho Prose*, he makes some interesting observations relating to the circumstances that might have led to the emergence of the works of this great author, Thomas Mofolo. He also suggests the possible impact that such works have made on the Sesotho prose in general, although he does not explain it from the broader perspective of literary production.

Lilford (2012), in his article, *Kingship and Prophecy in Thomas Mofolo's Chaka*, asserts that Mofolo used the Biblical narrative to illustrate his extensive awareness of the South African history and culture, showing the specific relevance of the Christian gospel to his society. To support this view, Lilford (2012) identifies similarities between African traditions and the Old Testament incidents, where he states that Chaka echoes David in the early stages of his career, in that both were the victims of jealousy and conspiracy; Chaka resembles Saul as he grew older, in that both had a fear of losing power and consulted with witchcraft to secure power; Chaka resembles Manasseh, the most corrupt king

of Israel, as both of them relied much on traditional diviners. Another interpretation by Lilford (2021) of Mofolo's *Chaka* is that Mofolo portrays tradition and African beliefs as a demonic seduction in the person of Isanusi, leading to the downfall of enlightened African leadership.

Sandwith (2018) identifies four distinct lineages of Mofolo's *Chaka*, namely the mission text, the English colonial text, the French colonial production and the post-colonial text, thus, tracing the historical passage of an African-authored text through colonial, apartheid, post-colonial, and post-apartheid contexts. She sheds light on ways in which the novel and African literature have been made to signify, what interpretive frames have been privileged, and what kinds of genre categorisation have predominated.

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* stands as a seminal work in African literature, not only for its historical and cultural significance but also for its profound exploration of metaphysical themes. Amongst the most compelling themes is the theme of The Supernatural and Fate, which permeates the narrative and shapes the psychological and moral trajectory of its protagonist, Chaka. Through the character of Isanusi, the diviner, Mofolo introduces a complex interplay between mystical forces and human agency, raising critical questions about destiny, morality, and leadership. In the case of the Gatekeeper of Mystical Power, Isanusi is more than a supporting character; he is the embodiment of supernatural influence. His role in Chaka's life marks a key transformation from a rejected youth to a powerful, feared ruler. Isanusi initiates Chaka into a world governed by witchcraft, prophecy, and spiritual manipulation, offering him access to power that transcends the physical realm. This initiation is not merely symbolic; it is ritualistic and deeply spiritual, suggesting that Chaka's rise is orchestrated by forces beyond his comprehension. The rituals and teachings of Isanusi blur the boundaries between spiritual enlightenment and moral corruption. While Chaka gains strength and strategic insight, he also becomes increasingly detached from ethical considerations. Isanusi's influence, thus, serves as a double-edged sword, empowering Chaka while simultaneously sowing the seeds of his downfall.

The other theme is the Fate and the Illusion of Choice, where one of the central tensions in *Chaka* is the conflict between free will and predestination. From early in the narrative, Chaka is portrayed as a figure marked by destiny. Prophecies and spiritual revelations suggest that his path to greatness is inevitable. However, this deterministic framing raises important questions: Is Chaka truly in control of his actions, or is he merely fulfilling a script written by supernatural forces?

Mofolo (1991) uses this tension to explore the psychological burden of leadership. Chaka's decisions, particularly those involving violence and betrayal, are often justified as necessary steps towards fulfilling his destiny. This creates a moral ambiguity that challenges the reader to consider whether Chaka is a tragic hero or a victim of cosmic manipulation. On the Spiritual Duality and Moral Ambiguity perspectives, the supernatural in *Chaka* is not presented in isolation; it is juxtaposed with Christian morality, reflecting Mofolo's engagement with missionary teachings and African traditions. Isanusi's practices, rooted in animism and traditional divination, stand in contrast to the Christian ideals of compassion, humility, and redemption. This duality is central to the novel's thematic structure. On the other hand, Mofolo (1991) does not offer a simplistic condemnation of African spirituality, but he does suggest that spiritual power without moral grounding can be dangerous. Isanusi's guidance leads Chaka to greatness, but also to paranoia, cruelty, and eventual ruin. The supernatural is, thus, portrayed as a seductive force capable of elevating a leader but also capable of corrupting him.

From the Symbolism and Allegory perspective and beyond its narrative function, the supernatural in *Chaka* serves as a symbolic lens through which Mofolo critiques leadership and society. Isanusi can be interpreted as an allegorical figure representing the temptation of absolute power, while Chaka's journey reflects the broader historical patterns of African rulers who grappled with the tension between tradition and modernity. The novel's use of prophecy and mystical elements also aligns with biblical allegory, as noted by scholars like Lilford (2012), who draw parallels between Chaka and figures such as Saul, David, and Manasseh. These comparisons deepen the thematic alignment of

the supernatural, positioning Chaka within a broader spiritual and historical framework.

Therefore, with this chapter, an attempt is made to explore the literary characterisation of Mofolo's main character in his novel, *Chaka*, by deploying Halliday's *metafunctional framework*, a theoretical tenet of Systemic Functional Linguistics, where authors select language in writing their specific text to convey meaning. It is imperative to give a brief overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Theoretical Framework

The functions of a language are approached from different perspectives, such as the ethnographical perspective, psychological perspective, communicative perspective, and educational perspective (Hoang 2021:8). All these models are constructed on a conceptual framework in non-linguistic terms, looking at language from outside and using non-linguistic terms to interpret different ways that people use language (Hoang 2021:8). As a result, the approach equates function with use. The concept of function is synonymous with the concept of *use*. Halliday, Hasan and Christie (1989), quoted by Hoang (2021:8), propose a theory that will identify functions at a high level of abstraction so that they can be recognised as essential to all uses of language. This theory allows the entire linguistic social process to be viewed as integral to the system of language and explains the nature of its internal structure by relating it to its social use. It is for this reason that Halliday (1973 1975) incorporated the social dimension into his linguistic theory, connecting children's function of language to that of adults' general functions of language.

The Proto-Language of adults has two levels only: the content (*semantic* and *lexicogrammar*) and the expression (*phonology and phonetics*). In addition to the four levels, Halliday added context (which constitutes *field, tenor, and mode*). It is this context that gave rise to Halliday's three metafunctions, namely: *Ideational* metafunction, *interpersonal* metafunction, and *textual* metafunction. These meanings are referred to as Metafunctions of Language: They are *ideational metafunction*

(serves to represent situations and events in the world and it is concerned with explaining experience), *interpersonal metafiction* (the participatory function of the language, concerned with the analysis of the expression of attitudes and evaluations realised by mood and modality) and *textual metafunction* (ideational and interpersonal meanings are organised into coherent texts appropriate for a given communicative setting. Haratyan (2011) adds that the three act simultaneously and systematically, not distinctly nor independently in a text, meaning that mood (interpersonal), transitivity (ideational), and theme (textual) function interdependently in that language system. Halliday developed a world-famous linguistic theory known as Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistic theory within discourse analysis that considers the contextual dimensions of language. Sabao (2013) observes Systemic Functional Linguistics as a theory that views language as a social semiosis, a systemic resource for expressing meaning in context. In terms of data, it does not address how language is processed or represented within the human brain but rather looks at the discourses produced (whether spoken or written) and the contexts of the production of these texts. Because it is concerned with language use, Systemic Functional Linguistics places higher importance on language function (what it is used for) than on language structure (how it is composed). Bakuuro (2017:211) states that Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Grammar considers the clause as a unit in which meanings of three different kinds (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) are combined, where the clause serves as an axis around which metafunctional discussions centre. It will be imperative to give a brief explanation of the ideational metafunction.

The Ideational Function of a Language

Halliday (1961) defines the ideational or experiential metafunction of language as an instrument of thought or conceptualisation, or representation of the experiential or real world, including the inner world of consciousness. In using the clause to represent or conceptualise the real world, the principal

grammatical element identified by Halliday in the ideational metafunction of language is *Transitivity*. This term stands for the verbal group in the clause, and Halliday defines it as the overall resource for constructing experience. Haig (2009:48) describes *Transitivity* as the entire system of representational resources made available by a particular language at the level of the clause. The component of the lexicogrammar which realises the Experiential metafunction (concerned with the representation of experience). This metafunction, together with the Logical metafunction (concerned with how clauses are linked into sentences and paragraphs), constitutes the Ideational metafunction of language. In short, the Ideational metafunction is the summation of all the linguistic resources through which our experience of reality (including also fictional and mental realities) is represented in language. The components of the system are the *processes* in a text and the types of *participants* and *circumstances* typically associated with them.

Bakuuro (2017:213) states that language is a means of reflecting on things. It represents or conceptualises the individual's real outside and inner worlds. It is a means of acting on things employing a symbolic system. Language is also used for interactivity between or amongst people. A clause as a representation has three distinct components. The participant(s) (subject(s) and objects(s)), the process (verb(s)), and the circumstances (adjunct(s) and adverb(s)). It is these identifiable components that outline the human experience, conceptualised or represented. Sabao (2013) describes it as the content function of the language. It is realised intransitively (i.e., the relationships established between: (a) processes involved in a clause, (b) the participants implicated; and (c) circumstances encoded in a clause. It serves to represent situations and events in the world. It is concerned with explaining experience. It is in the metafunction that the author/speaker (text producers) embodies in a language that they experience – what is going on, who is doing what to whom, where, when, why, and how.

Kapau and Banda (2019:291) classify the grammar of the clause into six process types. There are three basic processes: material, mental, and relational, with the processes that can be

described as a mix of two of the basic ones situated between them - behavioural, existential, and verbal. It should be noted that this is a prototype network: some processes can be categorised under one process type (p. 12), In a functional approach to language, where the meaning of linguistic elements is central, the participants involved in different types of processes logically receive different names according to the roles that they play in the goings-on and the different properties that each process ascribes to them. Some of these participants are displayed under the names of the process types: For the material process type, the subject takes the name of "actor / agent"; The behavioural process type take the name of "behaver"; the mental process type takes the name of "sensor"; the verbal process type takes the name of "sayer", the relational process type take the name of "carrier" and "identifier", while the existential process type take the name of "existent".

The approach is now used globally, particularly in language education and for purposes of discourse analysis. This is supported by Alsina *et al*. (2017), who state that there is a growing interest in the application of the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework to the analysis and interpretation of literary texts, including narrative fiction. Alsina *et al.* (2017:1) used Appraisal Theory (interpersonal metafunction) to analyse the first chapter of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, which addresses the dialogic dimension. They focused on the resources of engagement, the second subsystem of Appraisal Theory, with which speakers or writers express their commitment to the truth of a proposition and their willingness to open the negotiation space to other voices. Busetto and Delmonte (2019:2) used Appraisal Theory to annotate Shakespeare's sonnets, collecting opinions from famous literary critics on Shakespeare's sonnets, focusing on irony. They manually annotated the data using attitude, the first Appraisal Theory subsystem. Kapau and Banda (2019) used ideational metafunction to analyse the character of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*. Hoang (2021) employed Systemic Functional Linguistics to interpret only two stanzas of the famous Vietnamese poem, translated as "Two colours of Antigone", in terms of experiential (ideational), interpersonal, and textual metafunctions.

The same trend can be observed concerning the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics in African languages, where the interpersonal metafunction is applied to analyse African literary works, specifically Sesotho literary works. Skosana (2018) and Monyakane (2020) employed Appraisal Theory to analyse and interpret a novel *Mohaladitwe a e eketheha* and Maphalla's collection of poems called *Ditema* (decoration patterns) respectively. Skosana and Malete (2020) evaluated Mafata's language through Appraisal Theory and observed that, in the novel, 'Mehaladitwe ha eketheha', culture and Western education play pivotal roles in shaping the personas of the characters. Monyakane and Malete (2023) evaluated Maphalla's language in a poem called *Ditema*, using the first subsystem of Appraisal Theory, focusing on attitudinal elements of *affect, judgement, and appreciation*. Selemela (2024) analysed Maphalla's collection of short stories, *Mohlomong Hosane* (Maybe Tomorrow), in her Master's studies written in Sesotho, and Rantja (2024) examined JJ Moiloa's humorous stories, both of which utilised the Appraisal Theory. They both observed that the theory is also applicable to Sesotho literary texts, to highlight the authorial stances of the prolific Sesotho authors, like Moiloa and Maphalla. In addition, Mokhathi-Mbhele (2014) used attitude in Appraisal Theory to seek and examine independent clauses in Sesotho personal names as authentic social discourse.

Based on the literature consulted, it is observed that while Systemic Functional Linguistics seems to be growing and is applicable in different linguistic fields and literary works across the various international languages, its application and interpretation in Sesotho literature seems to have been used mainly in the interpersonal metafunction framework, which gives rise to Appraisal Theory, a subsection of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The ideational metafunction analysis in Sesotho literary works, except in Sesotho Praise Poetry, by Moreothibang (2023), where he analysed "*Ntoa ea Lithunya*", has not been applied broadly in Sesotho.

As indicated above, the focus is on the ideational metafunctional framework found in Systemic Functional Linguistics, which expresses the clausal experiences and content from a grammatical perspective to construct a textual persona of the main character through the historical context and social context.

Methodology

This study adopted the methodological framework of Corpus Linguistics. According to Kapau and Banda (2019:293), "a corpus-based methodology is a methodology for investigating language and language use, to obtain quantitative evidence through large quantities of naturally occurring texts – called the corpora". It employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The primary data source was Mofolo's novel *Chaka* (1991), analysed using Halliday's transitivity system to identify and categorise process types associated with the main character. Material processes were used to represent Chaka's actions in the physical world, mental processes to depict his thoughts and emotions, and relational and verbal processes to illustrate his states and expressions. The frequency and distribution of these process types were quantified to support the qualitative interpretations. Data from the novel was placed on the online Voyant Tools to assist with counting and identifying Sesotho words and distributing the characters across the story. Voyant Tools is a web-based text reading and analysis environment. It's designed to make it easy for researchers to work with their text or collection of texts in a variety of formats, including plain text, HTML, PDF, RTF, and MS Word. The word counts also helped to determine the main characters and the supporting characters. The analysis was based on twelve selected chapters from the twenty-six chapters of the novel. The selected chapters were chosen based on the high frequency rate of the main character, Chaka.

Voyant Tools Analysis

Before the analysis in terms of the ideational approach, this study gave a brief description of the distribution of the characters or participants through the employment of the Voyant Tools.

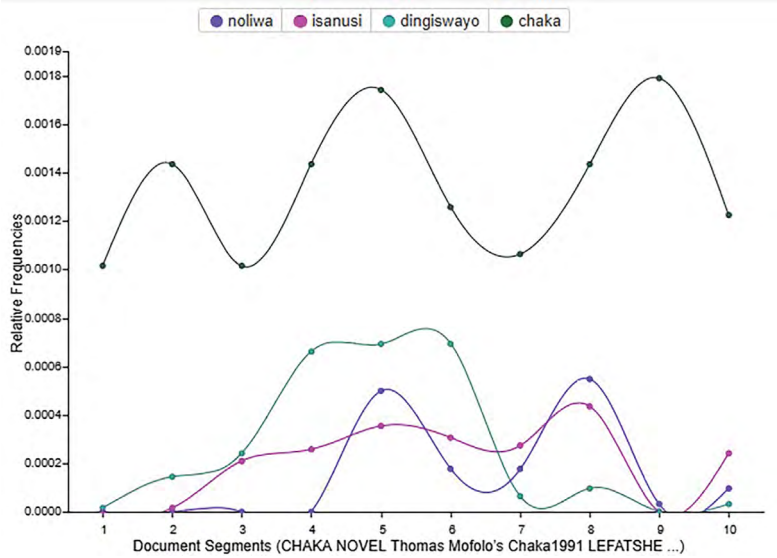


Figure 1: A graphic representation of literary characters in *Chaka*

The graph in Figure 1 illustrates the frequency rate of the main character, Chaka, and the supporting characters with the highest frequency rate after the main character, namely, Noliwa, Isanusi, and Dingiswayo. From the term list of the Voyant Tools, the text in the novel has a total of 62,080 words from Chapter 1 to Chapter 26. The Voyant Tools system revealed that there are 5,678 unique word forms, which may be regarded as Sesotho word formations, excluding constructions such as subject concords, conjunctives, prepositions, inflectional categories like auxiliaries or deficient verbs, and aspect morphemes. The distribution of the name Chaka is represented by the line at the top of the graph and cuts across the document segments, which also indicate the frequency of the main character, Chaka, in the novel. The name Chaka appears less at the beginning of the book, specifically in the last paragraph of Chapter 1.

> *"Ngwana eo a rewa lebitso la Shaka (Chaka)*ke ntatae; .... Ka morao ho moo Nandi a boela a kgutlela ha habo le lesea la hae Chaka..."*. Mofolo (1991:05).

> "That child was given the name *Shaka* by his father; ... Thereafter, his mother, Nandi, went back home with her Baby, Chaka ..."

According to the graph in Figure 1, the appearance of the name Chaka intensifies in the middle of the novel, most probably after Chaka was welcomed by Dingiswayo, and at the time when he assumed leadership. It also intensifies towards the end of the story, especially when his life begins to deteriorate. This is not surprising as the title of the book and the main character 's name are the same, "Chaka". The rest of the characters are also found across the segments of the story, but the intensity is far lower compared to Chaka's line of representation. This is supported by Scheub:

> Chaka is the only substantial character in the novel ... All others are single-dimensioned creations, designed as foils to Chaka, each given sufficient life and colour to describe some facet of the hero's nature, each contrasted with Chaka or mirroring his character. (Scheub: 1970:237)

The statistics in Table 1 illustrate the distribution of literary characters' appearances in selected chapters of the novel *Chaka*. The statistics at the top of the table indicate the total number of words per selected chapters and the total number of unique words that may be classified as Sesotho word categories. The analysis indicates that Chaka, the main character, has the highest count of 831 in the whole novel and 448 in the selected twelve chapters.

The next character with the highest frequency is Dingiswayo, with 164 appearances at position 41 in the Voyant term list. Dingiswayo played an important role in the life of the main character and appears 22 and 20 times in Chapters 8 and 13, respectively. He prepared and initiated Chaka's assumption of his father's throne. He is followed by Isanusi, with 130 appearances, at position 54 in the Voyant term list, then Noliwa followed, with 95 appearances, at position 69 in the term list, followed by Zwide, with 90 appearances, at position 75, Ndlebe, with 87, at position 79, Senzangakhona, with 85, at position 80, followed by Nandi, with 76, at position 101, then Malinga, with 41, at position 167. Regarding the supporting characters, Scheub (1970) stated:

Table 1: Summary: Number of counts per character in a whole book and number of counts per 12 chapters

	Chapter	**2**	**5**	**8**	**12**	**13**	**18**	**20**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**Total**
Total No.words		3158	2857	3028	1849	3426	2644	2647	1878	1296	1794	1719	999	
No.word forms		797	742	731	495	781	686	682	532	409	510	490	337	
CHARACTERS	Book Count	Count per Chapter												
Chaka	**831**	53	42	57	32	63	46	49	40	12	18	16	20	**448**
Senzangakhona	**85**	20	09	03	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**46**
Nandi	**76**	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	08	01	0	0	03	**36**
Dingiswayo	**164**	0	0	22	13	20	04	0	0	0	0	0	01	**60**
Noliwa	**95**	0	0	0	21	13	30	0	0	0	0	0	05	**69**
Isanusi/Ngaka	**130**	0	0	03	0	21	26	0	03	01	05	03	03	**65**
Ndlebe	**87**	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	04	0	02	0	0	**29**
Malunga	**41**	0	0	0	0	09	0	0	O2	0	03	0	0	**14**
Mfokazana	**41**	0	20	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**34**
Zwide	**90**	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	01	0	0	0	0	**12**
Dingne	**20**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	07	**19**

> Dingiswayo, Noliwe, and Nandi embody virtues that Chaka symbolically excludes from his life when he physically destroys these friends... Isanusi and his followers symbolize evil in a metaphorical or psychological sense, and Senzangakhona and others who either persecute Chaka or otherwise range their forces against him suggest a less pure form of evil (Scheub: 1970:239).

Ideational Analysis of the Main Character: Chaka

The ideational metafunctional framework, which is found in Systemic Functional Linguistics, expresses the clausal experiences and content from a grammatical perspective to construct a textual persona of the main character through the historical context and social context. The components of the system are the *processes* in a text and the types of *participants* and *circumstances* typically associated with them. Kapau and Banda (2019:291) classify the grammar of the clause into six process types. The process types are listed as:

Material process type: [MaP] - the process of doing and happening in the physical world – they have two inherent participants - actor and goal. These are events of "doing and happening", and always involve a central participant called the Actor, which is "the source of the energy bringing about the change". The Actor can be the sole participant featured in the process, in which case the clause is analysed in traditional frameworks as an intransitive clause.

Mental process type [MeP] - encoding the meaning of feeling, thinking, and perception – they have inherent participants of sensor and phenomenon.

Relational process type [ReP] - the process of being and having – realised by intensive verbs, possessive verbs, and circumstantial relations (e.g., is at).

Verbal Process: [VeP] - The process of saying and telling.

Behavioural process: [BeP] - The process of physiological and psychological behaviour.

Existential process: [ExP] - They are realised in ReP and MeP.

The ideational analysis is illustrated by Table 2, using some clauses from the *Chaka* story:

Table 2: Transitivity Coding from Chaka

Clause	Process Type	Process	Participants	Ideational Meaning
Chaka a bolaya tau	Material (MaP) (destructive) **(80)**	**Bolaya**	Actor: Chaka; Goal: sera sa hae	Violence; domination;
Mabotho a hae a ile a hlasela Motseng	Material (Map) (offensive) (40)	**Hlasela**	Actor: Mabotho a hae; Goal: Motseng	Organised warfare; collective action
Chaka e ne e le morena e moholo.	Relational (ReP)(attributive) **(25)**	**E ne ele**	Carrier: Chaka. Attribute: morena e moholo	Construction of status and rank
Batho ba ne ba tshaba Chaka	Mental (MeP) (affect) **(80)**	**Tshaba**	Sensor batho; phenomenon Chaka	Appraisal: fear; leader as threat
Chaka o ile a bina pele ho ntwa.	Behaviour (BeP) **(15)**	**Bina**	Behaver Chaka	Ritual preparation; warrior identity

To determine the character of Chaka, whose name, according to Table 1, has 831 appearances, this study only used 240 verbs [MaP 80+40 =120]; [MeP:80]; [ReP:25 and [BeP: 15], which is 35% of the data used. The linguistic characterisation of Chaka in Mofolo's *Chaka* can be better understood through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the transitivity system. Transitivity analysis enables an examination of how different process types, such as material processes (MaP), mental processes (MeP), relational processes (ReP), verbal processes (VeP), and behavioural processes (BeP), contribute to the construction of character identity and power relations within a narrative (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). Table 2 illustrates the distribution of these processes in selected chapters of the novel, revealing significant patterns in the portrayal of the main character. Chaka is depicted as engaging minimally with mental processes and emotional expression within the narrative. Likewise, the author provides limited opportunities for Chaka to interact verbally with other characters. His direct speech appears only at key narrative moments: during his initial encounter with Isanusi in Chapter 6 ("*Chaka o teana le Isanusi*" - Chaka meets with Isanusi), when he introduces himself to Dingiswayo in Chapter 8 ("*Chaka o fihla ha Dingiswayo*" - Chaka arrives at Dingiswayo's place), and later in brief exchanges with Ndlebe (p. 57), Malunga (p. 58), Nongogo (p. 139), and Mnyamane (p. 143).

Haig (2009:52) notes that participants in a transitivity structure occupy hierarchical positions according to the types of processes that they perform. Actors in material processes, particularly in transitive clauses, possess greater textual power than Sayers in verbal processes or Experiencers in mental processes. This hierarchy is clearly reflected in Mofolo's narrative. As a central and seemingly powerful Actor, Chaka is frequently associated with strong, assertive, and often violent verbs, such as *bolaya* (kill) and *hlaba* (stab), as well as intransitives such as *shwa* (die), *baleha* (retreat), and *lwana* (fight). These processes highlight key aspects of his character, including his military conquests, strategic decisions, and interactions with others. Mental processes, while less prominent, offer valuable insights into Chaka's internal world - his ambition, fears, and moments of reflection. Verbal processes, though comparatively limited,

highlight his authority and influence when he does speak. Relational processes further shape his identity, reinforcing his status and leadership within the narrative.

Taken together, these process types create a multidimensional portrayal of Chaka, capturing both his external achievements and his internal complexities. The distribution of assertive material processes across the novel's 26 chapters, illustrated in Figure 2, shows a marked intensification of the verb *bolaya* (kill) towards the conclusion of the narrative. This pattern aligns with the escalating violence enacted by Chaka, including the killing of his mother and the innocent girls who accompany him.

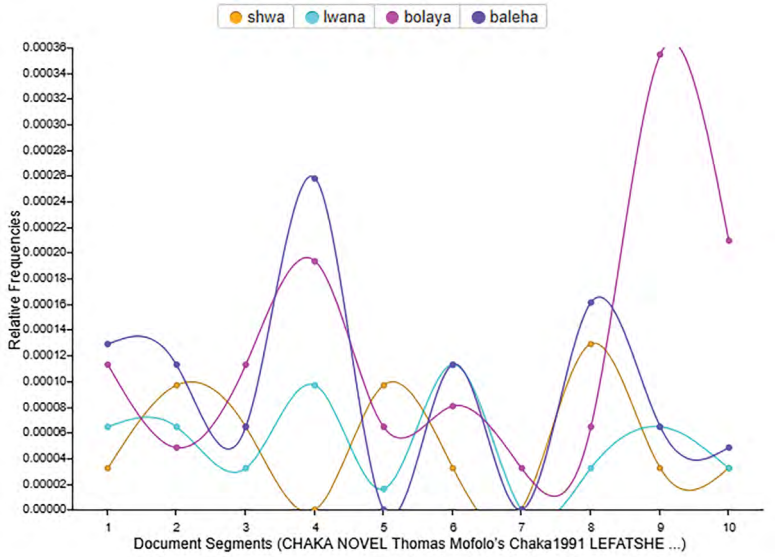


Figure 2: A graphic representation of selected material processes.

The material process types are also supported by the words or nouns that are more related to violence: *ntwa* (fight), morena (chief), *mabotho* (warriors), and *lerumo* (spear), illustrated in Figure 3.

From an SFL perspective, the novel's thematic focus on power and chieftaincy is strongly encoded in its ideational metafunction, particularly through its patterns of lexical distribution and the transitivity structures that dominate the narrative. As illustrated in Figure 3, the selected lexical items

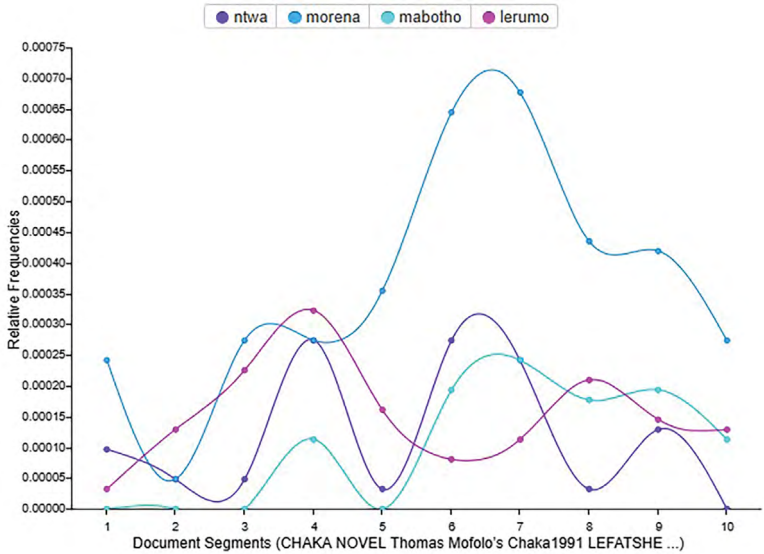


Figure 3: A graphic representation of selected nouns related to violence.

ntwa (battle), *morena* (chief), *mabotho* (warriors), and *lerumo* (spear) are evenly dispersed across the narrative, though their intensity varies by chapter. According to the Voyant term list, *morena* registers the highest frequency, appearing 413 times, with its prominence increasing in the central chapters, presumably corresponding with Chaka's attainment of chieftaincy from his father, Senzangakhona, and later kingship following Dingiswayo's death. This is followed by *mabotho* (warriors), which occurs 246 times, *ntwa* (battle), with 144 occurrences, and *lerumo* (spear), with 131 occurrences. The cumulative effect of these lexical patterns, particularly when considered alongside high-frequency material processes such as *bolaya* (kill), *lwana* (fight), *shwa* (die), and *baleha* (retreat), and the recurrent participants whom they collocate with (e.g., *morena*, *mabotho*), constructs a textual environment characterised by persistent violence and militarisation. This lexico-grammatical configuration contributes to the representation of Chaka as a figure shaped by hostility and conflict.

Within the transitivity system, the narrative is dominated by material processes, especially *bolaya* (kill), *lwana* (fight),

shwa (die), and *baleha* (retreat). These processes suggest physical action and violence, assigning Chaka, Mabotho, and other participants the roles of Actors, Goals, and sometimes Sensers in patterns that privilege action over reflection. The persistent coupling of these material processes with nominal participants such as *morena* (chief), *mabotho* (warriors), *ntwa* (battle), and *lerumo* (spear) generates a dense network of ideational meanings that construe Chaka's world as inherently adversarial and militarised. In Scheub's terms, Chaka emerges as a literary character forged within, and ultimately defined by, a world of relentless struggle and the pursuit of absolute power.

> 'The lonely man, who in his zeal for power and his quest for recognition, annihilates humans at an agonizing rate, and when his rule of terror is at an end, he leaves behind only a ravaged land, dispersed peoples, a gorge crammed with the bodies of slaughtered friends, ...'' (Sheub 1970:252)

This aligns with Scheub's (1970:252) argument that Chaka is portrayed as a figure "forged in the crucible of conflict", whose character is shaped by the pressures and expectations of a world governed by violence and political ambition. The lexico-grammatical evidence of the novel, therefore, substantiates Scheub's view: Chaka emerges as a literary character constructed through the interplay of material processes, conflict-oriented participants, and ideational meaning, ultimately embodying a figure defined by perpetual struggle and the pursuit of absolute power.

Conclusion

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* is a rich literary text that offers profound insights into African leadership and identity. By applying Halliday's ideational metafunction, this chapter demonstrates how linguistic choices contribute to the characterisation of Chaka. Mofolo's use of material, mental, verbal, and relational processes constructs a textual persona that is both historically grounded and culturally relevant. By applying the Voyant Tools analysis, which provides statistical analysis, it complements the nature and frequency of word choice employed or preferred by the author. The high frequency of words in a story may be used to determine

the types of characters in terms of main and supporting characters and may also help in the creation of the nature of characters in a story. The ideational and Voyant analyses emphasise the interplay between language, context, frequency, and character development in African literature.

The dominance of material processes, particularly those encoding killing, fighting, pursuing, and attacking, reinforces the quantitative corpus findings discussed earlier. Chaka is repeatedly constructed as the Actor in these processes, situating him as the grammatical centre of violence. His warriors (*mabotho*) also frequently occupy Actor roles, indicating a narrative preoccupation with organised militarised action.

The relational clause functions to stabilise Chaka's social status, embedding his authority within the grammar of attribution. This grammatical pattern supports the lexical prominence of *morena* (with 413 occurrences), linking linguistic frequency to character construction. Mental processes such as *tshaba* (fear) contribute evaluative meaning through the appraisal system, particularly Judgement. Although the narrative seldom makes overt moral statements, the recurrent depiction of characters fearing Chaka encodes implicit evaluation: he is constructed as formidable, threatening, and awe-inspiring. Behavioural processes, while less frequent, contribute to the texture of the character by situating him within ritual and performative contexts associated with warfare. These clauses reveal how leadership is embodied in action and ritual, adding depth to Chaka's warrior identity.

In conclusion, Mofolo (1910) managed to use the grammar of the clause to construct a textual persona of the main character through the historical context and social context (typical traditional Zulu environment) of his time for the Basotho community.

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Chapter 5

How is the Character Chaka Revealed in his Praises in Mofolo's (1983) *Chaka*

Moeketsi Letuka
Walter Sisulu University
Mthatha, South Africa:
mletuka@wsu.ac.za

Abstract

The warriors' perception of Chaka is illustrated through the praises attributed to him, as detailed in Mofolo (1983). As reflected in these praises, his heroism, courage, and dominance characterise him as a formidable and feared figure. This perception may be shaped by his acts of bravery and his often, harsh treatment of both subjects and adversaries. The praises elevate Chaka to a status akin to that of the God depicted in the Bible, implying a parallel between him and divine attributes. This chapter analyses these praises to uncover the potential reasons behind Chaka's elevated status. Additionally, it explores his character as perceived by his warriors. The theoretical framework for this chapter is based on hegemonic masculinity, which addresses the dominance exercised by individuals in positions of considerable power (Jewkes *et al*. 2015). Additionally, appraisal theory serves as a secondary theoretical lens, as it recognises the varied perceptions that individuals may have regarding a specific situation, as suggested by Roseman and Smith (2001), particularly in relation to Chaka's commendations in this context. The findings of this chapter, amongst others, is that epics depict emotions that arise from fear, because they illustrate a dominant form of masculinity.

Keywords: Dominance, Hegemonic masculinity, Heroism, Masculinity, Praises

Introduction

Mofolo's novel *Chaka* was first published in Morija in 1925. As noted by Kunene (1989), there were issues with the manuscript before its release that the missionary publishers found unappealing. Mofolo (1983) states that Chaka is a heroic figure and warrior whose character has intrigued scholars.

The novel *Chaka* centres around a character named Chaka. He is the offspring of Senzangakhona, although he was born out of wedlock. Chaka was raised in a challenging environment, largely caused by his status as the king's illegitimate son. Nevertheless, he possesses extraordinary qualities, including remarkable bravery. He and his mother, Nandi, escape into exile, where they also face adversity. Eventually, he finds himself wandering under the intense sun. It is during this time that he encounters Isanusi. Isanusi provides Chaka with herbs and a talisman that aid him in asserting his claim to kingship. This marks the beginning of his rise to fame and absolute power. His followers honour him as the King of Kings and the lion. This chapter focuses on the praises and epics that were directed at Chaka in recognition of his leadership and courage.

Numerous theories have been employed by various scholars to explain his personality and, in certain situations, provide justifications for it. In this chapter, the researcher will employ two theories to examine the use of language and the general appraisal of these epics.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Chaka's praises reveal aspects of his personality. He is regarded by his subjects as both their king and a sort of god, whose reign is referred to as the King of Kings. His laudatory remarks reflect these qualities, and he uses hegemonic masculinity to uncover his subjects' perceptions of him as well as their degree of fear of him. In their praise, his subjects have set a high regard and have given him the attributes of God or the biblical Jesus, who is said to be the King of Kings. This chapter examines this phenomenon

and situates it within the context of hegemonic masculinity and appraisal theories. The novel *Chaka* has been researched by various scholars. Amongst them is Ayivor (1997), who describes how Chaka is depicted as an inverted epic hero. In this chapter, he juxtaposes the two qualities, horror and heroic attributes of Chaka. Ayivor's (1997) research has influenced this research. He has looked into Chaka the character, as an inverted epic hero. In his research, he places Mofolo's (1983) novel as an epic folk tale. He looks into the growth of Chaka from birth to a point where he is regarded as a hero. He also asserts that Chaka is a "supernatural child endowed with the ferocious qualities of wild beasts" (Ayivor 1997:52). It is this description that influenced this chapter, to scrutinise Chaka's epics. Ayivor (1997) examines the creation of the hero Chaka, and this chapter delves into the actual epics and their meaning and implications.

Booker's (2006) research places Chaka as a historical novel. In his research, he has not considered the artistic aspects and the fictional aspects of the novel. This is because of the fact that he has juxtaposed the real life of Shaka and that of the fictional character Chaka. Chaka's epics do portray him as a fictional character whose kingship is above all other kings. These epics are also used in historical narratives of Shaka, the real king. The implication is that Booker (2006) is partially correct in categorising *Chaka* as a historical novel, as the epics used in the novel are also associated with Shaka, the king. This is partially correct for the fact that it is not a historical novel, but rather a fictionalised history. In this chapter, it is essential to refer to Shaka's epics in order to portray the side of the character Chaka, contrary to the person Shaka.

Seepheephe and Makha-Ntlaloe (2024) have examined the use of metaphor in the novel *Chaka*. This article of Seepheephe and Makha-Ntlaloe (2024) would also fit into the linguistic aspect, but it is specific to the metaphor in the novel. However, Seepheephe and Makha-Ntlaloe (2024) have not examined the linguistic aspects of the epics, which this chapter aims to address. The focus of this chapter, however, is on the poetic aspects, which are linguistic in nature.

Methodology

The research methodology presented by Goundar (2012) entails an exploration of various techniques employed in research practices, including tests, experiments, surveys, and critical analyses. This chapter utilises desktop materials, specifically published journals and relevant electronic sources. The primary source is the novel *Chaka* by Mofolo (1983). A qualitative approach is preferred, as it takes into account the experiences, significance, and objectives of specific phenomena, as noted by Brodsky *et al*. (2016). This chapter is significantly based on the experiences of the subjects in *Chaka*. Additionally, the deeper meaning of Chaka's epic will be analysed, utilising selected epics from the novel and applying the chosen theories as a framework. These elements will also encompass a metaphorical comparison of Chaka to a lion and the intended implications of this comparison, as well as the biblical reference to the King of Kings found in the Bible and the attributes associated with Chaka. The novel by Mofolo (1983) serves as the primary source. The selected epics from Mofolo (1983) are referenced to support the chapter. Furthermore, it is essential to employ a contextual analysis method, as the research is based on existing materials.

Theoretical Framework

The events during the reign of Chaka in Mofolo (1983) are marked by acts of violence and the killing of both women and men. These acts of violence emanate from Chaka's absolute power. His upbringing is marked by violence. The mere fact that Chaka was born out of wedlock contributed to his being treated as an outcast. This hostile upbringing caused him to be violent, which is the projection of his subconscious mind, as postulated by Das (2021), who purports that most of humans' activities are processed in the subconscious mind. He further suggests that these activities come into play without individuals' efforts, as they just come into being, because they are embedded in memories. Therefore, Chaka's actions may be a projection of memories embedded in his subconscious mind since childhood. This research is, therefore, anchored by hegemonic masculinity and appraisal theory.

Hegemony involves exerting influence over a large segment of the population, particularly through media outlets, and organising social institutions to appear "natural," "ordinary," or "normal." The state plays a crucial role in this process, as it enforces penalties for non-conformity, thereby aiding in negotiation and enforcement.

Brown (2020:191) defines hegemony as "... the historical process by which a class comes to occupy a ruling position in society and how that ruling position is maintained." According to this definition, Chaka's return from exile to reclaim his "birthright" (his birthright is contested as he was born out of wedlock), his occupation of the ruling position and his leadership style, depict him as a hegemonic leader and his governance in general.

Hegemonic masculinity, as suggested by Van Doorn and March (2021:306), is also known as "toxic masculinity," and a collection of all negative behaviours that are founded on masculine practices of society.

Li *et al*. (2020) categorise appraisal theory into primary and secondary appraisal. They purport that in primary appraisal, people assess whether there is anything at stake in their experiences. This assessment appeals to their emotion, whether the encounter is harmful or stressful. Secondary appraisal takes into cognisance the individual's evaluation of how one can overcome or prevent harm (Li *et al*. 2020). Furthermore, Appraisal theory's main tenet is that emotions are triggered by how individuals perceive and assess events, as posited by Chen and Farn (2020). Individuals' assessment of the same situation may vary and evoke different emotions. Some of the tenets of appraisal theory relevant for this chapter include the fact that appraisals determine the type and intensity of emotions, as suggested by Barradas *et al*. (2025). These discussions are relevant to this chapter, as the research examines how Chaka's iron fist is perceived by his subjects, particularly his victims, such as Nongogo. This includes how the subjects react to this fearsome king, Chaka, who is regarded as the King of Kings. The magnitude of words chosen by the epic composer, or the subjects, is crucial, as it portrays the level of emotion and their general reaction and/or adaptation to the cruel leadership

of Chaka. It is proposed, therefore, that Chaka's subjects act and react under duress and fear of Chaka.

The two selected theories have been chosen to complement each other and are employed to unearth the connotative use of diction and the justification of the subjects' perceptions and actions and/or reactions to the heavy hand of King Chaka.

Chaka the Hero

The character Chaka is portrayed as the hero to his subjects. He is the illegitimate son of Senzangakhona, the king, and was born out of wedlock. This background has subjected him to cruelty from other members of the community.

When Chaka is weaned, he is brought to a person at a place named Bungane, recognised for her expertise in herbs. She prepared a medicine using the bile of a yellow snake, which was held in high regard by the Zulu nation. This was intended to ensure that Chaka would experience good fortune and achieve success in his reign (Kunene 1981). It was anticipated that Chaka would receive a more potent medicine, but this was not feasible as he was still too young for such strong remedies to be given to him. Might this medicine have played a role in the violent manner in which Chaka governed his people? This question will be explored further, when examining the reasons behind Chaka's violence.

The development of Chaka is marked by animosity, disdain, and persecution directed towards him by the community. From his childhood, he faced persecution from his peers. There is a specific incident in which he is assaulted by other boys, who restrain him and physically assault him (Mofolo 1983). This serves as an initiation into hegemonic masculinity, as described by Dharani *et al*. (2021). They argue that within hegemonic masculinity, subordination is imposed on other groups of men. This occurrence is also referred to as internal hegemony, where it is directed against other men through hierarchical stratification (Dharani *et al*. 2021). Consequently, Chaka endures mistreatment from other boys because of his illegitimate birth.

Despite facing animosity from both the community and his peers, he continues to assist them by slaying a lion to safeguard his people. His courageous deeds have resulted in complications,

as girls and women express admiration for Chaka while ridiculing the boys and men of the village. This admiration also extends to the women residing in Senzangakhona's household:

> Hae ha Ncube ha ho bahlankana,
> *Mohlakana o mong feela*;
> *Hae ha Ncube ha ho banna*,
> *Banna ke makwala kaofela*;
> *Ba balehile, ba siya wa mophato wa bona naheng … (Mofolo 1983:17)*
> (Here at our home, at Ncube's, there are no young men,
> There is but one young man of worth;
> Here at our home, at Ncube's, there are no men,
> For all the men here are cowards
> They ran away leaving their age-mate in the field, …)
> (Kunene 1981:19)

The aforementioned song illustrates Chaka's courage in relation to his peers and the men of the village. The ironic and sarcastic words of the song promote Chaka's esteem as a true leader. Ironic and sarcastic, as, indeed, there are other young men who are also capable, for he uses them as his warriors, Nongogo being one of them. This courageous act contributes to the development of Chaka's character. Conversely, the elderly women create a song that honours Nandi while ridiculing the women from Senzangakhona's household, as previously mentioned. Through this demonstration of bravery and valour, Chaka earns respect and acknowledgement. This experience has elevated him above his peers. It is suggested that this has also sparked his hegemonic masculinity. He finds himself ascending the social hierarchy, as his bravery stands unmatched by any of the males in the village.

The violence escalated to a level where he had to adapt by being violent. This, to him, is the way that life should be. After the death of Noliwa, Chaka's character changes drastically. The author mentions that the sign of humanity died in Chaka; his heart and the way of doing things changed. He becomes cruel and starts

killing men who he considers to be cowards. This dominance has reached its maximum level.

The manner in which Chaka's subjects view him expresses fear and terror under which they live, under his iron hand.

His reign is coupled with cruelty. His leadership style is marked by hegemonic masculinity. His ill-treatment of his subjects and women in particular, reflects his attitude of dominance, based on his social status and the fact that he is a male character. Chaka's reign is characterised by conquering battles. This has rendered him the status of being a hero. His subjects are trained to fight with a spear. However, he decides to kill all warriors who were regarded as cowards. This act of cruelty is discussed by Moleko (1992), who purports that this is as a result of his hostile upbringing. Further, this is the extension of his hegemonic masculinity, where men are stratified based on their fighting skills and are then killed for their "cowardice."

Chaka's accolades depict him as a sovereign superior to all others. While this is not an objective truth, it reflects the perception held by his followers. His brutality and dominant masculinity have transformed him into a menacing figure who exhibits no compassion towards his subjects. The subsequent praise will be examined through the lens of appraisal theory. The central tenet of this theory, pertinent to this chapter, asserts that emotions arise from cognitive assessments. This suggests that emotions are not spontaneous responses to stimuli; instead, they are contingent upon how individuals interpret or evaluate those stimuli.

Depiction of Chaka's Character in His Praises

Chaka is perceived as a demigod by his subjects. This is evident in how he is praised by his subjects, especially the warriors, whenever they greet him. The following is how he is regarded, Mofolo (1983:116):

Bayede, baba, Nkosi yamakhosi!
Wena Ngonyama, Ndlovu-ayiphendulwa!
Wena owakhula sesilibele!
Bayede baba, Nkosi yezulu

Wena omnyama, owavela wasiphatha ngetahu!
(Bayede, O Father, King of Kings!
You who are a Lion, Elephant-never-to-be-answered!
You who grew up while we dawdled,
Bayede, Father, King of heaven
You, O Black one, who appeared and ruled us with compassion!) (Kunene 1981:116)

This is what Mofolo (1983:116) says about the above praise to Chaka:

> *Moifo o tsohe e sa le neng, o ye kgotla hore o tle o tsebe ho dumedisa Morena; mme a re a sa qala ho hlaha, ba re refo, ba eme ka maoto; Mbopha, hloho ya bona, a re: "Lehodimo le sele kajeno"(ke ho re morena o thabile), ba mo arabele ba re: "Lehodimo ha le sele, re tla futhumala hamonate." Mme ba tlohele mahong ho dumedisa Morena: "bayede Nkosi! Wena eo mofuthu wa hao o leng jwale ka wa letsatsi le medisang dijalo. Dumela, letsatsi la rona!"*
>
> (The men of the council woke up in the early hours and went to the court so that they should be able to greet the king; and as soon as he appeared they would stand up as one man and remain on their feet; Mbopha, their leader, would say: 'The sky is clear today'(that is to say the king is happy), and they would respond by saying: 'If the sky is clear, we shall be happy), and they would respond b saying: 'If the sky is clear, we shall enjoy its pleasing warmth': and then they would greet the king in unison: 'Bayede, O King! You whose wrath is like that of the sun which makes the seedlings grow. Greetings to you, O our Sun!") (Kunene 1981:116–117)

The prominent aspect of the aforementioned extract is the extent of metaphor employed by the individuals. They liken Chaka's greatness to that of the sky and the sun. A clear sky signifies that the people will experience happiness. This metaphor serves to illustrate Chaka's emotional state. Chaka's warriors greeted him with the heroic acclaim mentioned above. They held him in the same regard

and with the same degree of respect that Christians accord Jesus Christ. In fact, Mofolo (1983:115) explains *Bayede* in this way:

> Hlaloso ya Bayede ke ena: ke ho re, "ya pakeng tsa Modimo le batho," ke ho re; "modimo e monyenyane oo Modimo o moholo o busang marena a lefatshe le ditjhaba tsa ona ka oona."
>
> *(The definition of Bayede is this, "he who stands between God and man, it means the junior god through whom the great God rules the kings of the earth and their nations.)*

The distinction between Jesus Christ and Chaka is that Chaka has defended his position and has persisted in murdering those who he believes to be cowards or who may be opposing his authority. On the other hand, unlike Chaka, Jesus Christ has not murdered people and made them honour and revere Him. Chaka's greatness is compared to that of the Lord of heaven. This concept seems to be featured in many myths and traditions. The above praise is uttered by Nongogo, who fears for his life. It is worrying Nongogo that the king is summoning him. He knows that this could be the end of his life. His fear could be the one that made him lie on his stomach and crawl towards the king, uttering praises to Chaka. Appraisal theory does refer to the emotions that arise from the interpretation of an individual's experiences, as purported by Yeo and Ong (2024). Nongogo knows that the summons by Chaka may lead to his death. He, therefore, decides to quell Chaka's wrath by praises and the posture of worship. Chaka seems unmoved by this gesture. His hegemonic masculinity tendencies seem to have overshadowed the act of subordination by Nongogo. This has not helped him, as Chaka gives an order to kill him.

> *"Tlosang ntja ena, le e fenethe, o bolaile batho ba ka, jwale o ntse a bolela mashano; hape ke ne ke itse a tle le majwe a lekaneng ho tea marumo a mangata, jwale ke enwa o kgutla a le feela."* (Mofolo 1983:143)
>
> (Remove this dog, strangle it, he killed my people, now he is telling lies; again, I said he should bring enough stones to sharpen many spears, now here he is coming back with nothing.) (Kunene 1981:146)

He dies, and this is realised when they reach the spot where he is supposed to be killed. The order to kill Nongogo disregarded the gesture that Nongogo displayed before Chaka, the king.

Firstly, in Greek Mythology, there is Zeus. Nagy (2016) portrays Zeus as a good god who provides humans with rain that sustains their livelihood. On the contrary, he also destroys the unrighteous by floods or lightning. The same is the case in Chaka, as Chaka kills the cowards and those who he suspects of betraying him. The estimation of Chaka as the King of heaven is parallel to Zeus, the god of the sky. That Zeus has the power to provide water and kill, Chaka is able to protect his subjects. On the other hand, he kills those who he considers to be cowards. This comparison puts Chaka in the same mythological level with Zeus. However, this chapter's focus is not on establishing the mythology level of Chaka.

Secondly, in Christian religion, Jesus is considered to be the King of heaven. On the other hand, Chaka is regarded by his subjects as King of heaven. His greatness is equated to Jesus, the King of heaven. His subjects worship him and recite his praises and praises. The posture of Nongogo when he recites the praises of Chaka, is that he kneels and crawls, with his head close to the ground. The difference between this kind of honour in worship by Christians and Chaka's subjects is that there is no forced crawling on the stomach, because of fear, which is enforced in Christian worship, but there is kneeling.

The two parallels have a slight difference in that one is a Christian King of Kings, whose kingship is celebrated across the globe, as the Bible is used in many countries. On the other hand, the kingship of Shaka is acknowledged by his subjects.

The language use and the semantic aspects of these epics show similarities with how the Bible depicts Jesus, as discussed below.

Bayede Nkosi yamakhosi,
Wena ngonyama enzipho zibukhali,
Wena odla amadoda,
bayede baba!
bayede Zulu! (Mofolo 1983:139)

(Bayede, O King of Kings
You, Lion with sharp claws
You who devour other men
Bayede father
Bayede Zulu) (Kunene 1981:143)

Semantically, the above has biblical overtones. Nongogo expresses feelings of both fear and reverence in the way in which he sings these praises. The fact that Chaka calls Nongogo out of jealousy after realising that everyone adores him, causes fear. Nongogo may be aware of potential animosity directed at him. He then turns to elevating Chaka to a position superior to all other kings, which is the attribute of Jesus Christ, as in the following scriptures:

> **Revelation 19: 13,** The robe he wore was covered with blood. His name is "The Word of God" ..., 16, On His robe and on His thigh was written the name, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." TEV (Good News Bible 1998:344)
>
> **1 Timothy 6: 15** His appearing will be brought about at the right time by God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. TEV (Good News Bible 1998:280)

The above scriptures are attributes of Jesus Christ. Jesus is said to be the King of Kings. The historical authorship of the Bible and the novel *Chaka* is immaterial for this chapter, as it will derail the topic under discussion. In Nongogo's praises, Chaka is compared to Jesus Christ, being referred to as the "King of Kings." Appraisal theory states that people's feelings are determined by their interpretations of events, rather than the other way around. Nongogo's admiration for Chaka may have been prompted by his awareness of Chaka's antagonistic nature. An analysis of the meaning of the aforementioned praise song reveals that, in Zulu language and culture specifically, *bayede* is a symbol of reverence. In Western culture, it is equivalent to "All Hail," which is used to greet or applaud the king. Because it is typically reserved for

kings, this acclaim is of the highest order. Chaka is a hostile king, so Nongogo tries to calm him down.

The translated phrase *Nkosi yamakhosi* means "King of Kings." The author capitalises Nkosi in a purposeful manner. The scriptures mentioned above are written in this manner. As with King of Kings in the Bible, the capitalisation of the letter "K" elevates the status of Chaka, the King. Chaka's kingship is compared to Jesus. The novel mentions Christianity only briefly and makes no mention of Jesus. However, it is postulated that Nongogo knows the magnitude of this phrase, and he uses it to his advantage, not Chaka. The violent and hostile character of Chaka seems to be his signature. This is evident that even the words that imply violence are used to calm Chaka down. This line shows how Nongogo perceives the greatness of Chaka, "*Wena ngonyama enzipho zibukhali*" (Mofolo 1983:139). He likens Chaka, in this line, to a lion with jagged claws. The allegory of the lion with sharp claws suggests that Chaka is a fierce lion capable of tearing its prey with its razor-sharp claws. The lion represents strength, as purported by Watanabe (2000). She has discussed the lion metaphor in the context of royalty in ancient Mesopotamia. In her article, she submits that the lion never fails in its vigour and strength, when applied to the king. This compares the strength of a king to that of a lion, as is the case with Chaka.

The lion serves as a powerful symbol, as noted by Williams and Kinoshita (2015), who discuss its significance in both Greek and Indian cultures. They further associate the lion with divine power, indicating that, in their research, a lion embodies not just strength but also a sacred authority. This representation of the lion in relation to Chaka illustrates the influence that he wields over his people. Additionally, it is worth noting that he has been attributed qualities traditionally associated with Jesus, as previously mentioned.

The attributes that Nongogo assign to Chaka have been observed by his subjects, especially after he demonstrated his cruelty and heavy-handed rule. He has observed how Chaka conducted himself as a king. He is perfectly justified in using them in such a deep and symbolic way. He is projecting his interpretation of what he believes to be the situation, even though he also projects some level of fear (for his life).

Furthermore, the comparison of Chaka to the lion is another parallel to the reference of Jesus Christ as the "Lion" of the tribe of Judah in Revelation 5:5. However, the lion attributes portrayed by Chaka are those of cruelty towards his subjects and dominance over men. This power is toxic masculinity and marked by negativity, as expressed by Van Doorn and March (2021).

The depth of Chaka's animosity towards the world is deeply rooted in his upbringing. His formative years fostered a profound thirst for power, a desire influenced by the potent herbs given to him by Isanusi. Chaka's yearning for power was artificially intensified, driving him to behave in an increasingly aggressive manner.

Psychoanalytic theory, as purported by Moleko (1992), provides significant insights into Chaka's mental state. It highlights the projection of the subconscious onto his environment or other individuals, allowing for a deeper understanding of such animosity. In the confined and repetitive world that Chaka inhabited, projection becomes a fundamental aspect of his character. Emotional uncertainties impact Chaka because his ego inflates with external validation, leading him to view dominance as essential for both survival and approval. This inflated sense of self, in turn, triggers responses of emotional aggression.

Delving further into Chaka's psyche uncovers the root causes of his need for dominance and the hostility that accompanies it. These characteristics stem from his past: a hostile upbringing that made his continual displays of power a necessary means of survival. Ultimately, an analysis by the character-chapter broadcaster Moleko (1992) indicates that amongst a multitude of emotions, Chaka's is a projection of power from his subconscious. He depleted his emotional reserves in his quest for domination and ultimate power.

Findings

The application of the selected theories in this chapter has yielded findings that portray Chaka as a king whose reign is characterised by fear and terror.

Chaka's epics illustrate a dominant form of masculinity. His total authority is expressed throughout the narratives. He is

depicted as a hero who instils fear. His followers bow before him to the extent that they crawl on their bellies. This demonstrates the harmful nature of his masculinity. Additionally, it is evident that fear serves as the driving force behind these epics. They shake with apprehension, uncertain if they will exit Chaka's presence unscathed.

The epics depict emotions that arise from fear. This is evident in the summoning of Nongogo by Chaka. As he nears Chaka's throne, he does so with respect, keeping his gaze directed at the ground. He is unable to meet Chaka's eyes. He is compelled to crawl and meticulously recite Chaka's praises in the hopes of earning his favour. This gesture is evidence of how emotions determine the actions of individuals in dealing with the threat of death, in this scenario. Li *et al*. (2020) purport that in primary appraisal, people assess the situation to determine whether there is something at stake, as is the case with Nongogo.

Regarding the character of Chaka: This chapter has explored the perspectives of Chaka's subjects, focusing on their emotional responses and his toxic masculinity. The conclusion drawn is that Chaka's character instils fear and terror amongst his subjects. They offer him praise as a means of survival and to curry his favour. This praise comes particularly from the vulnerable and those who wish to gain his approval.

Recommendations

This chapter has not exhausted the potential research on the epics and praises of Chaka. One aspect that needs to be investigated is the direct effects of these praises on Chaka. This may examine how other praises influence Chaka's ego to become a puffed-up hero who trusts and values no one. It is further proposed that other praises be examined, as those that are analysed by Malaba (1988:478). He quotes one of the diatribes by Ngomane, who says this about Shaka:

> We, a nation of heroes that subdued the bandid nations,
> We, humiliated, conceited rulers of the earth.
> We are blasphemed by those who refuse to mourn with us,
> Who by their acts violated the customs of the Palm Race.

> I am talking of such men as Soshangane of the north.
>
> I have in mind such rulers as Faku of Ngqungqushe of Nyanga, ...

The excerpt above illustrates the magnificence of the Zulu nation during Shaka's reign. A comparable representation is found in the praises being analysed, where Chaka is depicted as the King of Kings. Examining these similarities will aid in exploring the underlying themes presented in the novel in contrast to the historical realities of Shaka's supremacy.

Conclusion

The character of Chaka has prompted his subjects to perceive him as a formidable hero who instils fear in the hearts of many. The praises which they offer to him consistently elevate him as the king who is above all others. He has consistently portrayed exceptional and overwhelming power over his enemies, demonstrating an unparalleled strength that few can contest. The rage and potency of his spear are well-known and feared by those who dare to oppose him and challenge his authority. He kills those who he believes are cowardly in action, executing them mercilessly without a second thought (Mofolo 1983:125)

> *Ho tloha lefung la Noliwa, Chaka a fetoha hampe sebopehong sa mmele wa hae le sebopehong sa kahare, sa pelo, sa merero le diketso. Taba ya pele, tlhasenyana ya botho e neng e saletse ya tima, ya re lore mafifing a tshabehang a pelo ya hae; kutlwisiso ya ho tseba ho kgetha ntwa ho polao ho fenetha, ya fela, ya fella ruri, ha kena bophoofolo ka ho tlala; hobane leha e ne e ntse e le motho ya sehloho le pele, empa e ne e le motho, sehloho sa hae e le sa botho. Motho ya tsholotseng madi a fetang a hae ka borena, ya tsholotseng madi a motho ya kang Noliwa, ho a utlwhala hore ho yena madi a bafo a tla tshwana hantle le a diphoofolo tseo re di hlabang.*
>
> (After Noliwa's death Chaka underwent a frightful change both in his external appearance and also in his very heart; and so did his aims and his deeds. Firstly, the last spark of humanity still remaining in him was utterly and finally

> extinguished in the terrible darkness of his heart; his ability to distinguish between war and wanton killing or murder vanished without a trace, so that to him all these things were the same, and he regarded them in the same light. Secondly, his human nature died totally and irretrievably, and a beast-like nature took possession of him; because although he had been a cruel person even before this, he had remained a human being, his cruelty but a human weakness. But a man who had spilt the blood of someone like Noliwa, would understandably regard the blood of his subjects exactly as if it were no different from that of animals which we slaughter at will.) (Kunene 1981:127–128)

This fierce approach stands in stark contrast to the King of Kings mentioned in the Bible, who is characterised by mercy and compassion towards his followers and even those who fall short.

Mofolo's comprehension of the Christian faith has come to light, as purported by Moleleki (1993). For the Zulu people, he has fashioned a hero who is both fierce and tyrannical towards his followers. Conversely, he endows this character with traits. reminiscent of Jesus Christ from the Bible. This illustrates Mofolo's familiarity with the Scriptures and his insights into Chaka, along with the historical context surrounding him. Mofolo (1983) claims to have conducted research on several of Chaka's epics. He incorporates these into his novel, *Chaka*. This integration brings historical reality into what is primarily a work of art. The addition of these historical epics illustrates how Mofolo has developed the fictional character. A notable characteristic is the pronounced hostility and dominant masculinity. The opening line of Shaka's praises in Mofolo (1983:117), "*UShaka ngiyesaba ukuthi nguShaka*," suggests that Shaka was feared in real life, and his praise singer conveys that fear by hesitating to declare Shaka as Shaka. This reflects an emotion of fear experienced by the praise singer, akin to the fear of God in the Bible, paralleling the god of the Zulu nation. When Chaka is advised by Isanusi to adopt a new totem, he chooses to identify himself with heaven (Zulu). This choice reveals the depth of his ambition to become a great king, as symbolised by the totem. The accolades for Chaka highlight his persona, as he is associated with power and dominant masculinity.

The revelation of this character has also been achieved by examining the perceptions of his subjects.

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Chapter 6

Revisiting *Chaka*'s Plot Analysis from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory

Mathai Calextina Monyakane
Department of African Languages,
North-West University
Potchefstroom, South Africa:
48956139@nwu.ac.za

Elias Nyefolo Malete
Department of African Languages,
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein, South Africa:
maleteen@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

The novel *Chaka* is one of the best-written novels in the history of Sesotho literary works. Its existence raised eyebrows of different literary analysts, and most of them analysed the novel *Chaka* from different perspectives using literary theories. None of the work was performed with the application of the emerging linguistic theory called Appraisal. Appraisal Theory puts more emphasis on emotions, evaluates how language is utilised to convey evaluative meanings, particularly in discourse analysis. This study suggests that emotion is to fiction as truth is to science. No one reads a novel that does not move them or an empirical article that does not offer a validly drawn conclusion. Authors use plots to control the readers' emotional responses, the arousal of the readers' interest and anxiety, and the careful control of that anxiety over a duration of time. This literary study adopted quantitative research, and it was guided by an interpretivist research paradigm. Attitudinal

elements of Appraisal Theory have successfully analysed the plot of the novel *Chaka*. The results of the study revealed that positive Affect was found at the setting stage of the plot and negative Affect was found at the rising action stage. Negative Judgement (social sanctions) was found at the climax stage and end stage. The study revealed that the novel *Chaka* does not have Appreciation, which is equivalent to falling action. The study discovered that this novel is dominated by misery, pain, and anger, reflected by the negative Affect and Negative Judgement that Mofolo portrayed in the plot of the novel. This study discovered that the attitudinal elements of Appraisal Theory are equivalent to the six elements of literature, whereby Affect is equivalent to the setting and rising stage, Judgement to Climax.

Keywords: Affect, Appraisal Theory, Appreciation, Attitudinal elements, Judgement, Plot analysis

Introduction

This study aims to apply the Appraisal Theory to Sesotho literary works, specifically Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* from the missionary period (1833–1907). This theory initially inside the fields of psychology and linguistics, serves as an augmentation of current theoretical frameworks to elucidate how appraisals and elucidations of experiences lead to emotional responses and how language is used to communicate these evaluations. More work has been performed on the analysis of the novel *Chaka*, and none of the consulted work has analysed the novel *Chaka* from the perspective of Appraisal Theory. This current work will use Appraisal Theory to analyse the plot of the novel *Chaka* to find out how attitudinal elements of Appraisal Theory manifest themselves in the novel plot and how that helps the story to connect with the reader. The analysis will, again, show the thematic stance of the author, Thomas Mofolo.

Sandwith (2018) opines that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* was first published in Sesotho in 1925 by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot under the auspices of the Societé des missions évangéliques de Paris. . Written in Sesotho, it is a mythic, fictional retelling of the story of the rise and fall of the Zulu emperor-king Shaka. It has been translated into several languages, including English, French, and German.

In addition, Seephephe and Makha-Ntlaloe (2024:24) assert that Mofolo's novels are similar in some respects, such as their themes and style. *Chaka* is inimitable in that its hero is based on a luminary, King Shaka kaSenzangakhona. They further note that the novel *Chaka* has also been outstanding, considering the number of encomiums that it has garnered, not only amongst Mofolo's literary works, but also amongst other literary works written in Southern indigenous languages. (Maake 1992:67). Quoted in Seephephe and Makha-Ntlaloe (2024), it was pointed out that the novel *Chaka* was incorporated into the list of "100 Best Books" ever written on the African continent and into the list of 12 Best African Novels. "Weighed as a masterpiece, the novel *Chaka* has been translated and adapted into multiple languages" (Vassilatos 2016:167). Maake (1992) remarks that "the novels *Chaka* and *Monono ke Muowane* are arguably the highest watermarks in Sesotho literature, especially in terms of their narrative technique, mesmerising style and creative capabilities" (p. 67).

This strongly assumes that for Thomas Mofolo to draft the novel *Chaka*, there were some emotions that triggered him, especially because of the circumstances that were prevailing during those times. Katthedinogirl (2017) affirms this by saying that Mofolo portrayed Chaka's plight as an example of resistance or a story of warning. She further indicates that both resistance and warning were aspects that would have been exceedingly relevant in colonial South Africa and Lesotho.

Multiple scholars have analysed *Chaka* from different perspectives, and this chapter will limit its scope to works that analysed the novel *Chaka* from a literary point of view. The literature consulted analysed *Chaka* from the perspective of its influence on other literature outputs, Chaka as a hero, chronological relations of events in the novel *Chaka*, portrayal of tragedy, and the influence of Christianity in the novel *Chaka*.

Vassilatos (2016) asserts his interest in how a Lesotho African author, Thomas Mofolo, influenced other African writers' ideas regarding the Zulu king, which later sparked an array of Africanist interpretations and rewritings. He indicated that through the novel *Chaka*, African literature had an immersed

ideology and impact. This suggests that this novel was created by many African writers who contributed to African authors' output. His analysis proposes that the complexity of Mofolo's text *Chaka* and its transculturation emanate from the novel's many forms and transformations.

In his study, Koné (2012) indicates that Chaka portrays all the characteristics of a classical hero. He states that Chaka's birth and childhood were extraordinary. He postulates that even though Chaka remained an epic hero, some of his character traits will easily rank him amongst the villains of the African literary realm. He says that Chaka remained a hero who inspired astuteness in actions and discussions. According to Koné (2012), Chaka's character raised many controversies. In his analysis, he found Chaka to be an adamant character who fought for pride, resistance, and glory. He concludes by viewing Chaka as a hero who can be looked up to write a hero back home.

Zulu's (2000) study analysed chronological relations in *Chaka*. His findings show that although the author used anachronism abundantly, they did not infringe on the chronological order of events. Instead, they served to recall past events and to mention what was expected in the story. No violation of narrative duration was found.

Mohatlane (2002:54) says that the novel *Chaka* managed to show tragedy to allow readers to realise that Chaka is moving from bad to good and later deteriorating from good to bad. His analysis emphasises that *Chaka* is being presented as a tragic character, and his tragic events (plot) are linked relatively to his human nature as a character, and, thus, the two aspects collectively express the theme.

Selepe (1999) analysed *Chaka* from a Christian perspective using the theory of production. He pointed out that Mofolo, as a prominent African writer whose work was supposed to be influenced by Christianity, failed dismally to show the power of Christianity in his novel *Chaka*. He further stated that no incident in *Chaka* was positively influenced by Christianity. He assumes that the novel was rejected because the power of Christianity was not portrayed in his novel but instead promoted black

African magic. He added that neither was good African practice encouraged in *Chaka*.

Theoretical Framework

Since its beginnings in the early 2000s, Appraisal Theory has shown promise and proved useful in a variety of contexts. According to Wei *et al*. (2015:1), earlier research used Appraisal Theory to analyse a range of English literary works. According to (Martin 2000:145 quoted in Zeng *et al.* 2024:1), Appraisal Theory, pioneered by Martin and White, designates a taxonomy of semantic resources that allow for the expression of emotions, judgements, and valuations as well as the means to enhance and engage with these evaluations. This theory is divided into three systems, being Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. This chapter will put its focus on Attitude, which is divided into three subsystems being, *Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation*. Affect is concerned with values to do with feelings and emotions, and Martin (2003:145) affirms this by saying that Affect can be seen as a resource for construing emotional response. The *Affec*t branch of the framework is split into four sub-branches of happiness, security, satisfaction, or desirability, with each of these having a positive or negative split. Martin and White (2005:49) describe Affect as grouping "emotions into three major sets having to do with un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction". The un/happiness set relates to feeling happy or sad in relation to a trigger. This covers the range of feelings that "are probably the first to come to mind when we think of emotions" (Martin & White 2005:49). In/security relates to feelings of peace and anxiety, while dis/satisfaction deals with our feelings of achievement and frustration in relation to the activities in which we are engaged, including our roles as both participants and spectators (Martin & White 2005:50).

Judgement describes attitudes towards human behaviour. Wilson (2011) affirms by saying that judgement is related to human behaviour and how it compares to social norms. Martin & White (2005) states that "judgement" constitutes the semantic resource for construing the evaluation of behaviour in the context of institutional norms about how people should or should not

behave. Judgement is split into six further categories: normality; capacity; tenacity; veracity; propriety; and actions.

Appreciation is concerned with values that describe human beings (only while viewed as entities), objects, and things or being construed as things. Martin and White (2005:56) suggest that appreciation accounts for "meanings construing our evaluations of 'things' especially things we make". The framework for analysing appreciation can be used to assess what the speaker thinks about the product in terms of their overall reaction to it, their thoughts on its composition, and whether they like the final design and think it was a worthwhile enterprise. The framework of appreciation is organised around the three variables: reaction, composition, and valuation. *Reaction* deals with both the impact of the product and its perceived quality. Martin (2003:160) describes impact as having to do with "the degree to which the text/process in question captures our attention". Being able to assess the immediate impact of a product is very important, and this ties in with looking at ways of making the "first moment of truth" more appealing to consumers. Martin and White (2005) define quality as accounting for "assessments of an object's likeability". *Composition* is related to the balance and the complexity of an object. Composition: balance relates to "perceptions of proportionality" (Martin & White 2005) and accounts for how the speaker feels about the physical aspects of the target of the communication. Composition: complexity is concerned with the details of the object and how easy it is to understand or use. An analysis of composition might help to understand how a respondent feels about the stimulus in terms of how well it fits together and all aspects of its size, in addition to assessing how easy it is to use or to understand. This might be of particular interest to the designers or brand owners of a product that has an unfamiliar feature, such as a new opening method, which needs to be easily understood. *Valuation* simply looks at whether the overall design works and is worthwhile.

Martin & White (2005) describe it as relating to "the social significance of a product or phenomenon". This can be related to the "second moment of truth" as it is almost an after-the-event evaluation of the product once it has been looked at and

experienced by the consumer or respondent. In addition to this, all three areas of appreciation have both a 100 positive and negative dimension, mirroring the possible positive and negative evaluations.

According to Oatley (2002:1), emotion is to fiction as truth is to science. Oatley (2002:1) further supports this by saying that reading a novel that does not move one's emotions is inevitable, as much as reading an empirical article that does not offer a validly drawn conclusion is senseless. In addition to that, Oatley (2002:1) affirms that fictional narrative has its impact primarily through emotions. When an emotion occurs, readers experience it as striking.

The study found Appraisal Theory a suitable theory because it would guide the study to classify the six elements of literature into three subsystems of Attitude, being Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. The assumption was that Exposition and rising action in the study are equivalent to Affect (both positive and negative). Climax in the plot is equivalent to judgement (both negative and positive), and lastly, Appreciation in the plot is equivalent to falling action and the end stage. By classifying the six elements of literature into the three subsystems of Appraisal Theory, this study suggests that Appraisal Theory can be used as a method of analysing a novel plot, putting more focus on the nature of emotions being triggered by each part in the novel plot.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study under an interpretivist research paradigm. According to Nneoma and Udoka (2023:1), qualitative research puts more emphasis on feelings, ideas, or experiences. Using the qualitative research method assisted this study in finding some new ideas on how Appraisal Theory can be used as a critical linguistics theory to analyse a novel plot. It assisted the study to identify the thematic stance of the author, Thomas Mofolo. This chapter hypothesises that the novel *Chaka* has a deeper message, which was a prediction that Thomas Mofolo wanted to voice out, but not in a straightforward way, because the novel *Chaka* was written and published during the difficult times of missionaries, when all the authors were restricted in what they

could publish. Thematic analysis was used to identify incidents within the plot that trigger similar emotions. This allowed the study to classify those incidents within the same emotions into different attitudinal elements: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, and the analysis are summarised by using Frytag's pyramid to show how the structure of the plot unfolds.

The Analysis and Interpretation

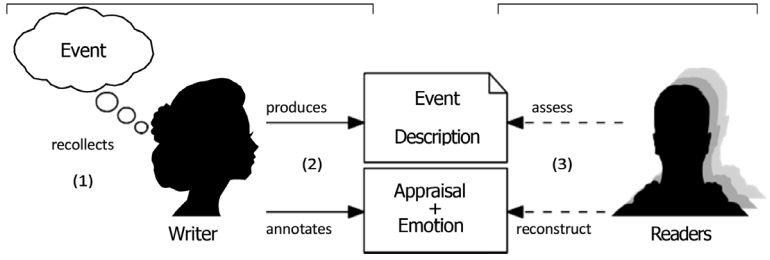


Figure 1: ***Plot analysis* (Troiano *et al.* 2022)**

The analysis method (Figure 1) was adopted from Troiano *et al.* (2022) to describe how the analysis of *Chaka* will unfold in this chapter. The study finds the author of *Chaka* as the primary constructor of the stories to be analysed, recalling all events, writing them on paper, and producing a novel whereby they describe the events and annotate the appraisals and emotions. An analyst reader plays the part of assessing the description of events and reconstructing the appraisals and emotions of the novel *Chaka* using Appraisal Theory.

Exposition / Positive Affect (Security)

> *"Boholo ba naha ya ena ya Bokone, yona e pakeng tsa loti le lewatle, e kgurumeditswe ke meru; hape ha e bajwe, ho habolwa feela ka baka la hoba haufi le lewatle", Mofolo (1991:1)*
>
> "A huge chunk of South Africa is between mountains and the sea, it's shadowed by forests, and it does not get dry; food is in abundance."

The place is depicted as a fertile and populous area with thriving large villages, contrasting with poorer surrounding areas and

characterised by its lush landscapes and agricultural productivity. Most people living there were taught to be handy by their Chief, Jobe. They used to sew their own clothes and shoes, and made some handmade utensils. Because of his kind heart, many nations that were at risk used to seek refuge from King Jobe, and he used to welcome them with open arms.

The above description of South Africa triggers the emotions of satisfaction in the reader. The peace, harmony, and satiety that were found in that place are an indication that people there were free from troubles. All these portray some emotions of satisfaction in the author.

Exposition / Negative Affect

> *"Mohlang oo Senzangakhona a pheella Nandi ka matla a maholo hore ba etse disele, tse hanwang ke molao le ke tlhaho ya batho." Mofolo (1991:5)*
>
> "On that day, Senzangakhona pursued Nandi to do other things, something that was against their law and regulations".

Conflict arose when Senzakakhona asked Nandi to have sex with him, yet they were not married. As it was said in Chaka that anyone who engages in sexual activities before marriage deserved to die, Senzakakhona's request did not sit well with Nandi because she knew the consequences of that act. Unfortunately, Senzakakhona did as he wished, and Chaka was born. Although they were happy that the family had a baby boy, they had to hide the circumstances of his birth.

Sexual immorality is the cause of conflict in the novel *Chaka*, and it triggers emotions of insecurity in the reader. The reader starts to be anxious, feel unease or vulnerable, or feel threatened immediately when Senzakakhona made his request to Nandi. This is because, morally, that was wrong, and secondly, it had some negative implications of the death of both the committers and innocent people, as well as the unborn child. Disappointment is also triggered in this situation where the reader found Senzakakhona as a man with no true love, because, by putting Nandi's life at risk, he never cared for her, as it seems

like he was ready to have her killed. As a chief, he had the luxury of having multiple wives, but instead of marrying Nandi first, he opted to impregnate her before marriage.

Rising Action / Negative Affect

The main idea at this stage was to exhaust every plan to get rid of Chaka by killing him:

> *"Empa bona ba hla ba rata eka Chaka a ka bolawa hobane ke ngwana wa sebe"* Mofolo (1991:10)
>
> "But they wished that Chaka could be killed because he was the fruit of sin"

This marks the initiation of Chaka's miseries and arouses the Affect emotions of insecurity in the reader. Senzakakhona's wives started bearing sons for him, and they requested that Senzakakhona get away with Chaka by appointing their sons as kings. Immediately after that, Chaka was estranged from Senzakakhona's family, and no support was received from his father. He endured torture from society and his paternal family. He lived a miserable life in the veld because other boys used to please themselves by beating him, and he was not supposed to defend himself. And he wondered why he was given such treatment. After killing a lion, Chaka was beaten by a group of jealous boys, including his own brothers. He defended himself and killed, but his father took sides when he arrived and ordered Chaka to be killed. He was even exposed to danger when he was a young adult by being made to sleep at the door so that wild animals could attack him when they entered *Thakaneng* (Youth centre). Amid all this, *Chaka* had no idea why he was receiving such bad treatment from everyone.

The above description of the rising action triggers emotions of insecurity. The inclusion of obstacles or complications further heightens insecurity, propelling the reader to feel the characters' struggles and uncertainties. As the reader goes through Chaka's troubles, the reader becomes more overwhelmed with fear and misery. This is a stage where the reader feels pity for Chaka as he undergoes further suffering, which was later perpetuated by his own father, who commanded that he should be killed.

Climax / Judgement / Propriety (Institutional Blame)

Judgement

Table 1: Description of the variety of Judgement as an attitudinal element

JUDGEMENTS TO DO WITH MORAL RIGHT AND WRONG		
Social Sanction · Veracity	**Institutional Praise** Honest, frank, real, genuine, credible	**Institutional Blame** Deceitful, fake, bogus, dishonest, deceptive
· Propriety	Right, good, ethical, kind, generous, loyal, forgiving	Wrong, evil, sinful, mean, cruel, greedy, arrogant, corrupt

> *"Lefatsheng ha ke bolela nnete ha ho letho leo ke le ratang, lerato la ka kaofela ha lona le boreneng, ntweng, makgotleng; ka baka leo ke tla le neha Noliwa hore kgopiso e tlohe tseleng ya borena baka"* Mofolo (1991:101).
>
> "To be fair and honest there is nothing that matters to me in this world apart from kingship, army and fights. Because of that I will give you Noliwa as a sacrifice."

This is a turning point in this novel *Chaka*, where he started to show heartlessness. After Noliwa's death, Chaka found it very easy to mercilessly kill other people. Amongst the people who he brutally killed were his mother, and after his mother's death, he killed innocent women, claiming that they had bewitched his mother. He later killed Nongogo, who was one of his faithful army regiment leaders. He was no longer considerate about the cultural norms of the Zulus; he did not become married, but he slept with the most beautiful girls and killed every child from those women whom he slept with, as he claimed that he did not want any children. After using those girls, when he lost interest in them, he passed them to his army members to marry them. He spoiled all the peace and harmony that was reigning amongst the Zulu nation and other nations by killing everyone anytime that

he wanted to shed blood. During his reign as King, people were living miserably:

> *"Naha ya hlwenya, ya eja boya, ya hlahafala; lefu la nkga fatshe, la ba la nkga sebakeng. Masimo a lala, a hloka balemi, hobane hang ha motho a qala ho lemak e moo Chaka a mmonang teng mme o tla anela hoy a lema moo e neng ele metse ya eba dithakong habo meritshana-swee,"* Mofolo (1991:133)
>
> "The whole country was destroyed; blood started to smell all over. Hunger took over because no one was able to plough the fields for fear that Chaka would recognise them and kill them. Villages were also abandoned."

The above evidence is a depiction of how the reader found Chaka as an awful human being. The judgement passed to him is that of propriety / institutional blame. The reader found Chaka as an ungrateful and cruel human being for killing Noliwa, who loved him and supported him all the time. He was a churlish human being because the very same people who he was brutally killing were the people who put him on Dingiswayo's throne and gave him Noliwa to marry. His churlishness is affirmed by killing his faithful army leader, Nongogo. The reader passes judgement of social sanctions when Chaka shows his heartlessness by killing his own blood and his own mother, given what his mother went through with him when he was rejected by everyone. The reader again passes judgement of social sanction to Chaka when he shows immorality of sleeping with all the girls who he was not married to and giving them away to his army members. This act has been found not only to show immorality but also to demean and disrespect women.

The End / Judgement / Social Sanctions / Institutional Blame

> *"Morena* Chaka *a qala ho hlobaela hampempe moyeng. A hlobaela e le morena; bakeng sa ho thabela borena ba hae bo boholo, le maruo a hae a maholo, ha a fumane ditakatso tsa pelo ya hae"* Mofolo (1991:150).
>
> "King Chaka started having some sleepless nights and miserable time instead of celebrating his wealth as well as his accomplishment of being a king"

All this pain was because of his *cruelty*, *evilness* and *greediness* of wanting more, even when he achieved what he wanted. The reader, at the stage where Chaka faces his demise, finds Chaka in an agony state where nothing made him happy after receiving the kingship that he longed for. At this stage, Chaka had everything: wealth, feared and respected by everyone, but still he was still thirsty for something else that he could not explain. He fought this pain by shedding blood of his own nation, made his armies kill each other, killed his bodyguards, but still the situation never improved. He could barely sleep at night and when he found a chance to sleep, he had terrible nightmares. In his sleep he saw the faces of his mother and his wife Noliwa, he saw Nongogo's death and the people he had killed and thrown into *Donga luka Tatiyana*, berating and swearing at him. He looked all over for Ndlebe and Malunga during this difficult painful time, but they were nowhere to be found. This did not sit well with him, and he realised that his time was over. While he was trying to sleep, Isanusi and his two men appeared to him and wanted his payment, while telling Chaka that he received the kingship that he longed for and it was time to pay him. This did not sit well with him, as it sounded as if Isanusi was mocking him. When his body failed him, he called his blood brothers with the hope that they would make him feel better, but instead, his own brothers took that chance to strategically kill him. He was in pain but with no one to help him.

At this final stage where Chaka was facing his own demise, the judgement that is found here is social sanctions (institutional blame), where Chaka was in agony because of *evilness, greediness and cruelty*. The study found Chaka's pain as a revenge of the cruelty and evilness which he portrayed towards the people whom he was ruling, his wife and mother as well as ruining harmony and peace that he found when he took over the kingship. The reader's emotions here are of social sanctions of judgement (institutional blame) because the reader is condemning what Chaka was doing as it does not go along with humanity and social norms. The study found agony at the end of the novel *Chaka*, where the author Thomas Mofolo showed how the deep internal struggle and dehumanisation in the protagonist Chaka resulted in his painful fate. In this part, Mofolo portrays Chaka as a figure who, through his actions and disregard for morality, loses his "true self," becoming a "hollow shell" of the man who he once was, and all these resulted in social

sanctions (institutional blame) where Chaka was regarded as being punished for being greedy, cruel towards his family and nation.

Conclusion of the Analysis of a Plot

The study found that the exposition of the novel *Chaka* triggered more positive emotions of satisfaction because of the way that the author gave a description of the time and place of the novel. This is where the author describes the place and time, and how people lived before Chaka became a King. The reader becomes attracted to the indigenous space and how the King was living with his people.

Judgement of social sanctions (institutional blame) repeats itself at the end of the novel. Chaka does not display remorseful behaviour but continues to be rude and evil until he dies. Social sanctions are reactions that enforce social norms, while institutional blame refers to the attribution of responsibility for misconduct or failure within a formal organisation or institution, often leading to punitive responses. Social sanctions are crucial for maintaining social order and regulating behaviour, ensuring social cohesion and cooperation by encouraging adherence to established norms and deterring deviations. This novel plot does not have any appreciation. The attitudinal elements found in the novel are Affect (positive and negative), Judgement social sanctions (institutional blame). This is summarised in the pyramid plot structure below:

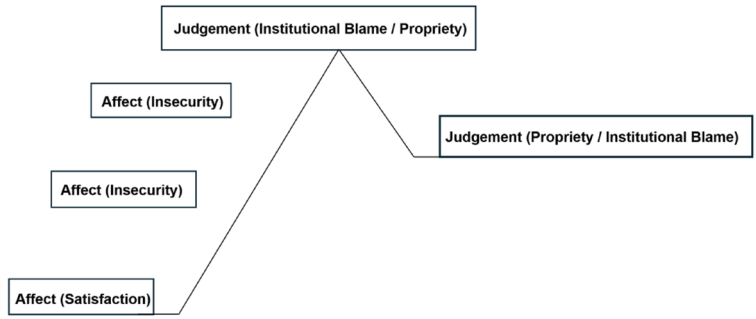


Figure 2: ***Distribution of attitudinal elements in Chaka on the Pyramid***

This study found that all the positive and negative emotions at the beginning of the novel *Chaka*, which, according to the Frytag pyramid, are on the exposition and rising action stage. Positive Affect dominates the exposition, where the author describes the place and time, while the negative Affect is found in the rising action parts. Negative Judgement (social sanction) is found at the climax and the end of the novel's plot. Some findings of the study denote that there is no falling action in this novel; as a result, a subsystem Appreciation was not found.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the plot of the novel *Chaka* using the first subsystem of Appraisal Theory. Attitudinal elements of Appraisal Theory have successfully analysed the plot of the novel *Chaka*, and the findings are that emotions related to Affect are found at the exposition and rising action stages. These two stages have shown similarity to Affect because of the kind of emotions that are being triggered by the incidents found in them. In *Chaka*, the exposition stage triggers the emotions of satisfaction when the author describes Bokone. At the rising action stage, the emotions of insecurity are being triggered by the troubles and miseries that Chaka went through while he was still a child and a young adult. Because of the miseries that were surrounding Chaka, the reader feels pain and loses hope that things will ever fall into place for Chaka: they bring teary feelings to the reader.

At the climax stage, the study found that Chaka turned into a bad king who was not ruling his nation the way that their previous king was ruling them, and emotions of judgement, social sanctions of constitutional blame were found by the study. The killings that he immersed himself in turned him into an evil king, hence, why he was constitutionally blamed. This is where the study found out that there is similarity between climax and Judgement because in climax, that is where the truth is revealed, or readers see a winner and a loser. The protagonist is judged if he is a loser or a winner, and in Chaka's case, the study judged him as a loser because, instead of being happy that he was a King, he opted to be greedy and even killed people who had been by his side. The study revealed that the plot of the novel does not have any appreciation because Chaka died suffering and unhappy.

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Chapter 7

Syntactic Evaluation and Interpretation of Thomas Mofolo's Classic Novel, *Chaka*

Moselane Andrew Nhlapo
Department of Communication Sciences, Central University of Technology Bloemfontein, South Africa: nhlapom@cut.ac.za

Abstract

Thomas Mofolo's third novel, *Chaka*, occupies an extraordinary place in Sesotho literary history, and it is a groundbreaking literary work in an indigenous language in sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose of this chapter, in celebration of *Chaka*'s 100th anniversary, is to examine and evaluate Thomas Mofolo's literary writing style as it expresses his worldview. Literary style is a crucial component of all literary works and may be defined as the way in which authors convey their ideas. Literary style refers to literary diction, literary imagery, and literary syntax. Literary syntax (syntactic analysis) is a means of communicating mood, attitude, or characterisation based on linguistic units; it refers to rhetorical devices based on changes in word order or positions of words within a sentence. The primary goal is to offer a detailed literary and syntactic analysis and interpretation of Mofolo's literary text. With a deductive research design and a qualitative (content analysis) research methodology, the chapter is guided by an interpretivism paradigm. The chapter is restricted to lexical and syntactic norms in terms of a syntax-based or literary syntax analysis. It is observed that Mofolo's choice of language was intended for the Basotho community within a typical

isiZulu environment, a setting and history that are remote from those of the Basotho.

Keywords: Literary devices, literary text, literary style, Sesotho literature, syntactic analysis

Introduction and Background

The enduring masterpiece of Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*, published in 1925, stands as a monumental work in African literature, transcending temporal and cultural boundaries to offer profound insights into power, ambition, and the human condition (Sandwith 2018). This novel, deeply rooted in the historical context of 19th-century southern Africa, reimagines the life of Shaka Zulu, a figure of immense historical and mythical significance, whose reign was characterised by both remarkable military innovation and ruthless conquest (Titlestad 2006). Mofolo's narrative skilfully intertwines historical fact with imaginative interpretation, crafting a complex portrait of a man driven by forces both internal and external, making *Chaka* a subject of ongoing scholarly debate and analysis (Nyambi 2016). The novel's exploration of themes such as the corrupting influence of power, the clash between traditional beliefs and modernity, and the tragic consequences of unchecked ambition continue to inspire readers and critics alike (Vambe 2012). The syntactic structure of *Chaka*, often overlooked in favour of thematic analysis, provides a critical lens through which to examine the distinctions of Mofolo's narrative voice and the construction of meaning within the text; a thorough examination of Mofolo's syntactic choices reveals how language shapes the reader's understanding of character, plot, and theme, contributing to a deeper appreciation of the novel's artistic merit and cultural significance. Furthermore, the novel's impact extends beyond its literary value, serving as a crucial cultural artifact that reflects the complexities of colonial encounters and the struggle for identity in a rapidly changing world. Through its enduring themes and compelling narrative, *Chaka* invites readers to engage with fundamental questions about leadership, morality, and the legacy of history, solidifying its place as a cornerstone of African literature and a testament to the power of storytelling.

This chapter embarks on a comprehensive syntactic evaluation and interpretation of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*,

aiming to brighten the intricate relationship between language, meaning, and historical context within the novel. While existing scholarship has extensively explored the thematic, historical, and cultural dimensions of *Chaka*, a detailed analysis of its syntactic structure remains a relatively unexplored territory. By employing a combination of theoretical frameworks from linguistics and literary criticism, this chapter seeks to unravel the syntactic patterns and devices employed by Mofolo to construct his narrative, shape character portrayals, and convey the novel's central themes. This chapter will delve into the specific syntactic features that characterise Mofolo's writing style, such as sentence length, clause structure, verb tense usage, and the deployment of rhetorical devices like parallelism and repetition. This investigation will also consider how Mofolo's syntactic choices contribute to the overall tone and atmosphere of the novel, influencing the reader's emotional response and shaping their interpretation of events. By examining the interplay between syntax and narrative content, this chapter aims to demonstrate how Mofolo's linguistic craftsmanship enhances the novel's artistic impact and reinforces its thematic concerns. In addition, this chapter will analyse how the syntactic structure of *Chaka* reflects the cultural and linguistic context in which it was written, considering the influence of Sesotho language and oral storytelling traditions on Mofolo's writing style. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to provide a fresh perspective on *Chaka*, revealing the subtle yet powerful ways in which syntax contributes to the novel's enduring appeal and its status as a seminal work of African literature.

Syntactic analysis, as a methodological approach, offers an accurate framework for dissecting the complex layers of Mofolo's prose, unveiling the subtle variations that contribute to the novel's overall meaning and impact. The syntactic evaluation will involve a systematic examination of sentence structures, clause types, and the arrangement of words within phrases, revealing patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed. The analysis will extend to the identification and interpretation of various syntactic devices, such as parallelism, antithesis, and rhetorical questions, which Mofolo employs to emphasise key themes, create dramatic tension, and engage the reader's attention. Furthermore, this chapter will explore the use of specific verb tenses and moods to convey temporal relationships, express character perspectives, and shape

the narrative's flow. Investigating the frequency and distribution of different sentence types, such as simple, compound, and complex sentences, can reveal insights into Mofolo's pacing, his emphasis on ideas, and his creation of a distinctive narrative voice. By examining the interplay between these syntactic elements, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Mofolo's linguistic choices contribute to the novel's aesthetic and intellectual depth.

Furthermore, the interpretation phase of this research will go beyond mere description, seeking to connect syntactic observations with broader thematic and contextual considerations. Specifically, this investigation will assess the degree to which Mofolo's deployment of syntactic structures and patterns aligns with, or diverges from, the established norms and conventions of Sesotho oral tradition and early 20th-century written discourse. The chapter's analysis will also explore how Mofolo uses syntax to build character, giving each character a unique voice and perspective; syntactic patterns associated with *Chaka*, for instance, may reflect his dictatorial nature and internal turmoil, while the language of other characters may reveal their hopes, anxieties, and moral dilemmas.

The central argument of this chapter is that a close examination of the syntactic structure of *Chaka* provides invaluable insights into the novel's complex themes, character development, and historical context. This exploration contends that Mofolo's masterful use of syntax is not merely a matter of stylistic beautification, but a deliberate and strategic tool for conveying meaning, shaping reader perception, and reinforcing the novel's overall message.

The existing body of scholarship on *Chaka* has primarily focused on its historical, cultural, and thematic dimensions, with less attention given to its syntactic intricacies. Therefore, this chapter aims to fill a significant gap in the existing literature by offering a detailed and systematic analysis of Mofolo's syntactic choices, demonstrating how these choices contribute to the novel's overall artistic and intellectual impact.

The theoretical framework supporting this chapter draws upon a range of linguistic and literary theories, including

structuralism, formalism, and post-structuralism, to provide a comprehensive and subtle analysis of Mofolo's syntactic techniques. The postcolonial theory will be particularly instrumental in the reading, analysis and interpretation of the text.

To address the existing gap on *Chaka* in the scholarship, the chapter identifies key themes and interpretations and highlights the need for a more focused analysis of syntactic structures. Scholarly discourse has extensively examined *Chaka*'s historical context, exploring the novel's engagement with the life and legacy of the Zulu king Shaka (Achebe 1987). Researchers have investigated the novel's portrayal of Shaka's rise to power, his military strategies, and his complex relationship with his people, often linking these themes to broader issues of colonialism, African identity, and the struggle for self-determination. The exploration and understanding of historical accuracy in Mofolo's portrayal of the Zulu kingdom continues to be an important subject for academic study.

Further investigation could reveal the text's engagement with historical narratives and how it might challenge or reinforce specific colonial or indigenous perspectives (Obobolo 2016). Cultural interpretations of *Chaka* have focused on the novel's depiction of Sesotho culture, traditions, and beliefs. These analyses often explore the ways in which Mofolo incorporates elements of oral literature, folklore, and traditional cosmology into his narrative, highlighting the novel's role in preserving and celebrating Sesotho heritage. The novel's representation of traditional social structures, gender roles, and spiritual practices have also been subjects of scholarly inquiry, revealing the complexities and contradictions within Sesotho society during a period of rapid social change.

Thematic analyses of *Chaka* have explored a wide range of issues, including power, ambition, betrayal, and the human cost of war. These studies often delve into the psychological complexities of Shaka's character, examining his motivations, his inner conflicts, and his ultimate downfall. The novel's exploration of moral dilemmas, the corrupting influence of power, and the clash between individual desires and communal responsibilities have been central to thematic interpretations. However, even within these thematic analyses, the role of syntax in conveying these complex ideas remains largely unexplored.

Methodology

This chapter employs a qualitative approach to analyse the syntactic structures of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*. The qualitative analysis involves close reading and interpretive techniques to identify and examine prominent syntactic features, rhetorical devices, and stylistic patterns within the novel.

Additionally, the chapter involves a thorough, close reading of *Chaka*, paying particular attention to the sentence structure, word order, and grammatical relationships within the text. This close reading identifies recurring syntactic patterns, unusual or striking constructions, and instances where syntax contributes significantly to the meaning or effect of the passage. Close reading also serves to identify instances where Mofolo (through the translated version) deviates from standard Sesotho grammar or employs innovative syntactic techniques to create emphasis, convey emotion, or shape the reader's perception of events and characters.

The data (extracts) used is collected from Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*. The choice of extracts was controlled by the thematic sub-headings.

The chapter is guided by the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism paradigm in research emphasises that social reality is subjective and constructed by individuals through their experiences and interactions (Pervin & Mokhtar 2022).

Results and Discussion

Following the theme of power and resistance, the analysis in this section will fall under two parts, revolutionary transformation of the character, Chaka and the authoritarian rule of Chaka. The passages have been extracted from the novel, *Chaka*. The analysis will focus on Mofolo's word choice, sentence structure and literary devices.

1. Revolutionary transformation of Chaka

> Extract 1: Exposition
>
> *LEFATSHE la Afrika Borwa ke hlohla e kgolo, e pakeng tsa mawatle a mabedi, lewatle la botjhabela le la bophirimela. Ditjhaba tse ahileng teng di ngata, ke tsa mefutafuta le*

dipuopuo; empa leha ho le jwalo di ikarola dikarolo tse kgolo tse tharo habonolo: ditjhaba tse sikang le lewatle la bophirimela di mmala o mosehla, ke Barwa, Bakgothu; tse hare ke Batswana, Basotho; tsa botjhabela ke Bakone, Matebele. Meedi ya tsona e meholo, e a bonahala, ke meedi e entsweng ke Modimo, e seng batho; hobane ba bophirimela ba arohantswe le ba hare ke mafeella a maholo a mahlabathe, a hlokang metsi, mme ha hare ba arohantswe le ba botjhabela ke loti le leholo, le phahameng, leo esaleng le tloha Koloni le ntse le nyolosa le sikile le lewatle, empa holehole le Iona. Phapano e hlile e kgolo, hoo motho ya tlohang bophirimela a eya botjhabela, a hleng a ikutlwe, a be a bone hore o fihlile naheng esele le bathong basele, ha a fihla ditjhabeng tsa Basotho tse hare, mme ho be jwalo leha a theohela ditjhabeng tsa Matebele ka nqane ho Loti (Mofolo 1981:1).

South Africa is a large headland situated between two oceans, one to the east and one to the west. The nations that inhabit it are numerous and greatly varied in custom and language. Yet they easily divide themselves into three large groups: the nations settled along the western seaboard are of a yellow complexion. They are the San and the Khoi. The ones in the centre are the Batswana and the Basotho. Those to the east are the Bakone or the Matebele. The boundaries between them are prominent and visible; they are boundaries created by God, not man, because the nations to the west are separated from the ones in the centre by great sandy waterless deserts, and those in the centre are separated from those to the east by a massive mountain range of towering peaks rising in the Cape Colony and running parallel to the sea, yet far, far away from it. These nations are markedly distinct from each other, so much so that a person travelling from the west to the east is immediately conscious of having come into a different country and among strange people when he arrives among the Sotho nations in the centre, and likewise when he descends towards the Matebele nations over there beyond the Maloti mountains (Kunene 2013:9).

Analysis

Word Choice

The language is descriptive and somewhat formal, using terms like "*hlohla*". The emphasis on division ("*di ikarola dikarolo tse kgolo*," "*Meedi ya tsona e meholo, e a bonahala*") establishes a theme of separation and distinctness. The phrase "*meedi e entsweng ke Modimo, e seng batho*" suggests a divinely ordained separation, lending a sense of permanence and inevitability to the divisions.

Sentence Structure

The passage consists of longer, complex sentences that build upon one another. The use of parallelism ("*ditjhaba tse sikang le lewatle la bophirimela di mmala o mosehla, ke Barwa, Bakgothu; tse hare ke Batswana, Basotho; tsa botjhabela ke Bakone, Matebele…*") reinforces the idea of distinct geographical groupings. The sentence describing the mountain range is particularly long and winding, mirroring the physical barrier that it describes. The passage continues to use longer sentences, but they are generally simpler in structure.

Literary Devices

The passage employs imagery to create a vivid picture of the South African landscape. The contrast between "*mafeella a maholo a mahlabathe, a hlokang metsi*" and a "*loti le leholo, le phahameng*" highlights the geographical diversity of the region. There is also a subtle use of personification, as the boundaries are described as "*Meedi e meholo, e bonahalang.*" This passage is rich in imagery, painting a picture of a fertile and abundant land. It also employs vivid imagery to depict the customs and beliefs of the people of Bokone. The description of their ability to communicate with ancestors and their reverence for snakes creates a sense of mystery and otherworldliness.

Observations

The extract establishes a clear sense of place and introduces the key geographical and cultural divisions within South Africa.

The language is descriptive and evocative, creating a vivid picture of the landscape and the people who inhabit it. The sentence structure is varied, with longer, complex sentences used to describe the broader geographical context and shorter, more direct sentences used to focus on specific details. The extract employs literary devices, including imagery and personification to enhance its impact and create a more engaging reading experience.

Extract 2: Chaka kills a lion

Chaka, ka ho hloka letswalo a e emela; ya tla, ya tlola; yare ha e le hodimo sebakeng, a re thee hanyenyane feela, ea tla tseparela moo a neng a le teng, ka ha e ne e ke ke ya thinya sebakeng e se nonyana; empa yare e sa le hodimo, e eso fihle fatshe, feela ha e qala ho atamela, a e nyafa ka le lephatshwa mohlabetsaneng; yare ha e fihla fatshe, e ewa, ya wela ruri. Moo, ha e qetedisa ho shwa, meroro ya yona ya eba ntho esele; Chaka a e tadima, a e tadima a sa tshoha, esake o tadimile sebata se bolayang, le hona se neng se tlolella yena. Ha Chaka a e hlaba, sehloho sa banna se se se kena hae; mme mororo wa yona o tshabehang wa qetello wa etsa hore bao ba balehang ba be ba kene matlung, le ho hetla ba sa ka ba hetla; ba busa mahlafi, ba ikwalla ba tantela, ba kwalla bana le basadi ntle, moo ba emeng teng; ho bona ya ka hoja jwale e se e le hara motse. Lerata la basadi kantle, ho bona ka matlung, ya ka seboko sa bao e ba bolayang, mme ba nna ba tiisa menyako! (Mofolo 1981:16).

Chaka waited for it without fear; it came, it jumped; when it was in mid-air he shifted his position ever so slightly, and on landing it dug its claws into the ground where he had stood, having been unable to change its direction while in the air since it was not a bird, but, even while it was still in the air, before it reached the ground, just as it came close to him, he plunged his black-and-white spear into a vital spot just under its shoulder blade, and when it fell on the ground, it fell for good. At that moment, when it was in the final [Page 18] throes of death, its roaring was something, indescribable. Chaka looked at it without showing any fear,

> and it was not as if he was looking at a ferocious beast, one that was attacking him besides. When Chaka stabbed it, the vanguard of the men was already entering the village, and its blood-curdling final roar made them fling themselves into the houses without even looking back, and they pulled the doors shut and tied them securely, leaving the children and the women outside where they were standing. To them it was as if the lion was now in the middle of the village. The noise of the women outside was, to them, like he screams of those whom it was killing, and they therefore went on tying the doors even more tightly (Kunene 2013:17).

Analysis

Word Choice

The passage employs vivid and visceral language to depict the encounter between Chaka and the lion. Words like "*nyafa*," "*mohlabetsaneng*," "*ha e qetedisa ho shwa*," and "*mororo wa yona o tshabehang wa qetello*" create a sense of immediacy and intensity. The use of figurative language, such as simile "*ho bona ka matlung, yaka seboko sa bao e ba bolayang*" adds depth and complexity to the narrative.

Sentence Structure

The passage features a mix of long, complex sentences and shorter, more direct sentences. The longer sentences are used to build suspense and create a sense of immersion, while the shorter sentences provide moments of clarity and emphasis. The use of parallelism and repetition, such as "*ya tla, ya tlola*," emphasises the lion's relentless attack and Chaka's unwavering focus.

Literary Devices

Imagery: The passage is rich in imagery, appealing to the senses of sight, sound, and touch. The description of the lion's movements, the sound of its roar, and the feeling of its claws digging into the ground all contribute to the passage's impact. **Symbolism:** The lion can be interpreted as a symbol of the challenges and obstacles that Chaka faces as a leader. Chaka's victory over the lion can be seen as a symbol of his strength, courage, and ability to overcome

adversity. **Foreshadowing:** The passage contains elements of foreshadowing, hinting at the violence and bloodshed that will characterise Chaka's reign.

Observations

The passage is a powerful and evocative depiction of Chaka's encounter with the lion. The language is vivid and visceral, creating a sense of immediacy and intensity. The sentence structure is varied and dynamic, with a mix of long, complex sentences and shorter, more direct sentences. The passage employs a range of literary devices, including imagery, symbolism, and foreshadowing.

> Extract 3: Chaka captures Zwide
>
> *A hetla ka ho le letona, mme a makala ho qeta ha a bona Malunga a se a bapile le yena, lerumo la hae le lekgutshwanyane le se le lokile, a kgutsitse tu, mahlo a tjametse tselaneng eo e patisaneng, eo Zwide a tlang ka yona, mme a tlerefetse ke madi; a eme sa phoofolo e boboraneng ha e itokisetsa tlola. Sebaka sa ho mmotsa moo a tswang sa hlokahala. Zwide a hlaha ha tlamisane habohloko, hoo bakeng tse ding ba neng ba tlamisana feela, ho se ya fetang; le hona, ka baka la ho teteana ha moru ba dieha ho bona Chaka, ba mo qaboha ba bona ba bangata e se e le ditopo; hape, ka hona ho tetea ha moru, ba sitwa le ho boya ka santhao, kapa ho itwanela. A fihla ho bona Chaka, a ba bolaya ka phakiso, batho ba tlamisane. Ndlebe a ba rema dihloho ka kwakwa, mme ka phakiso le hona, batho ba tlamisane. Malunga a ha hlaba sa Chaka empa yena a fetisa ka ho bolaya, etswe eka yena le ho teteana ha moru ho ne ho sa mo sitise ka letho. Ba Chaka, ha kamorao ba ba kgarameletsa pele ka lerumo, mme bao ba bararo ba thiba kgoro ka marumo. Ke hona mohlang oo Chaka, a bileng a ruruha letsoho ke ho bolaya batho. Zwide a tshwarwa a phela a iswa ho Dingiswayo, hobane o ne a sa dumele hore morena a bolawe; yare ha Chaka a qala ho qamaka, a fihlela Ndlebe le Malunga ba se ba le siyo, a se a setse le bale ha neng ba ile ho kgwaisa Zwide* (Mofolo 1981:64).
>
> Chaka looked to the right, and he was greatly surprised when he saw Malunga already standing by his side with his short

> spear at the ready. He was completely quiet and his eyes which were blood-red, stared furiously at that narrow little path from which Zwide was [Page 65] going to appear. He stood like a crouching wild beast getting ready to leap. There was no time to ask him where he had come from. Zwide came into view with his people, and they were squeezed so tight that at times they pressed against each other with none able to move forward. Besides, because of the thickness of the forest, it took some time before they saw Chaka, and they were surprised by his presence when many of them were already lying dead on the ground; furthermore, also because of this denseness of the forest, they were unable to retreat, or to fight. Chaka rushed on them and killed them rapidly because they were squeezed together so tightly. Malunga stabbed them in the same manner as Chaka, but he even surpassed him in the number he killed, for it appeared that the thickness of the forest did not hinder him in any way. Chaka's warriors who were pursuing Zwide and his men pushed them forward with their spears, while Chaka, Ndlebe and Malunga blocked the passage with their spears. On that day Chaka's arm grew swollen from the work of stabbing and killing. Zwide was captured alive and taken to Dingiswayo, because Dingiswayo did not permit a king to be killed. When Chaka looked around, he found that Ndlebe and Malunga were not there anymore, and he remained alone with those warriors who had gone to force Zwide out of his hiding (Kunene 2013:43).

Analysis

Word Choice

Vivid action verbs: The passage is filled with strong action verbs that convey the intensity and brutality of the battle ("*hlaba*," "*ho bolaya ka phakiso*," "*kgarameletsa pele ka lerumo*"). These verbs create a sense of immediacy and draw the reader into the scene. **Relatives:** The use of relatives helps to paint a vivid picture of the setting and the characters ("*mahlo a tjametseng*," "*e patisaneng*," "*o teteaneng*," "*le ruruhileng*"). **Words of violence:** Mofolo uses words with violent connotations to emphasise the brutality of

the battle. For example, the phrase "*ba bona ba bangata e se e le ditopo*" starkly illustrates the deadly consequences of the conflict. **Figurative language:** Phrases like "*a eme sa phoofolo e boboraneng*" use similes to compare the characters to wild animals, emphasising their primal instincts and aggression.

Sentence Structure

Short, direct sentences: Mofolo uses short, direct sentences to create a sense of urgency and to mirror the rapid pace of the battle. **Complex sentences:** The inclusion of complex sentences adds detail and provides context for the events that were taking place. For example, the sentence describing the difficulty of Zwide's people to move because of the forest's thickness explains why they were vulnerable to Chaka's attack. **Use of repetition:** The repetition of words and phrases, such as "Chaka" and "*lerumo/marumo*," reinforces their importance and emphasises their role in the battle.

Literary Devices

Imagery: The passage is rich in imagery, appealing to the reader's senses and creating a vivid impression of the battle. The description of Malunga's blood-red eyes and the image of the warriors being squeezed so tight are particularly striking. **Simile:** The comparison of Malunga to a crouching wild beast is a simile that highlights his predatory nature and his readiness to attack. **Hyperbole:** The statement that "Chaka's arm grew swollen from the work of stabbing and killing" is an example of hyperbole, exaggerating the physical exertion involved in the battle. **Irony:** The capture of Zwide alive is somewhat ironic, given the violence and bloodshed that has preceded it. This suggests that even amid war, there are certain rules and customs that must be observed.

Observations

The word choice, sentence structure, and literary devices work together to create an emotive and engaging depiction of the battle. Mofolo uses language to effectively convey the intensity of the fighting, the brutality of the violence, and the strategic elements of the conflict. The passage highlights the roles of key figures

like Chaka and Malunga, emphasising their skill and ruthlessness as warriors. The use of imagery and figurative language helps to bring the scene to life, immersing the reader amid the battle.

2. Chaka's Authoritarian rule

> Extract 4: The reforms and changes brought about by Chaka
>
> *Chaka hobane a fetole seboko sa hae, a bokella bahlankaria ba setjhaba se qhalaneng sa Zwide, le ba tse neng di mo nyehella, a re ho bona: "Kajeno ha le sa na morena, le hona ha le sa le setjhaba, le bile le lokelwa ke lefu, hobane le bolaile morena wa ka Dingiswayo, ya neng a le etsetsa tsohle ka mohau; empa nke ke ka le bola ya le sa rate. Ke le beela ntho tse pedi, hore le ikgethele: ha le tela seboko sa Iona le puo ya Iona, le kena mabothong a ka, le fetoha Mazulu, le tla phela; ha le haoa, teng ke tla le bolaya kaofela, hona kajeno le hona, nka re hona·jwale, ha ke utlwa karabo ya Iona." Ya eba ntho e bonolo haholo ho bao ho kena mabothong a Chaka, hore ba phele. Chaka a ba kopanya le Mazulu, haholo hore ba hle ba fetohe ona le ka dipelong; a ha a bea ha bang ba matona a hae ho mo alosetsa naha ya Zwide. Chaka ha esale le bongwaneng ha hae a hloka ditakatso tse ngata, takatso ya hae esale e le nngwe feela: borena, le setumo. Kajeno o tumile haholo, e bile ke morena e moholo; Na ekaba o tla ha kgotso? Le ho leka! Kajeno o nyolohile, o se a batla ntho eo le yena a sa e tsebeng* (Mofolo 1981:104).
>
> After changing the national name, Chaka brought together the young men from Zwide's scattered nation, as well as those from nations who owed allegiance to him, and he said to them: "Today you have no king of your own anymore, nor are you any longer a nation; besides, you deserve to be killed because you killed my king, Dingiswayo, who always treated you with compassion, but I will not kill you against your wishes. I place before you two alternatives so that you may choose for yourselves: if you give up your national name as well as your language, and join my regiments, and become Zulus, then you shall live; if you refuse, then I will kill you all, and that no later than today, in fact at this very moment, as soon as I have heard your answer." They found it the

> easiest thing on earth to decide to join Chaka's regiments so that they might live. Chaka mingled them with the Zulus, especially so that they might become Zulus in their hearts; and he then chose some of his headmen to keep watch over Zwide's country. Chaka, right from his childhood, did not have many wishes; his desire was for one thing only: kingship and fame. Now he is very famous, and he is a great king. Is it possible that he will be satisfied? Never! Now his greed has been aroused, and he is in search of something which even he himself does not know (Kunene 2013:66).

Analysis

Word Choice

Authoritative and threatening: Chaka's language is commanding and intimidating, reflecting his absolute power. Words like "deserve to be killed," "I will kill you all," and "at this very moment" create a sense of immediate danger. **Conditional and manipulative:** He presents the conquered people with a choice, but it is a false one. The terms are harsh, and the threat of death looms large. Words like "alternatives" and "if you refuse" mask the lack of genuine options. **Deceptive benevolence:** Chaka claims that Dingiswayo treated them with "compassion," yet he uses Dingiswayo's death as justification for subjugation. This highlights Chaka's manipulative nature. **Assimilationist language:** Terms like "give up your national name," "join my regiments," and "become Zulus" reveal Chaka's intention to assimilate and absorb conquered peoples into his own, erasing their identities.

Sentence Structure

Complex and conditional sentences: Mofolo uses complex sentences with conditional clauses ("if you give up…then you shall live") to outline the terms of Chaka's ultimatum. This structure emphasises the consequences of the conquered people's decision. **Direct and imperative sentences:** Short, direct sentences ("Today you have no king") are scattered with imperative statements ("join my regiments") to assert his dominance and demand obedience.

Literary Devices

Irony: Chaka offers a choice that is an order, creating dramatic irony. The audience knows that the people have no real freedom to choose. **Pathos:** Chaka evokes a sense of pity by mentioning the death of Dingiswayo, attempting to manipulate the conquered people's emotions. **Rhetorical Question:** The implied question of whether they deserve to die aims to shame them into submission.

Observations

The extract uses word choice, sentence structure, and literary devices to depict Chaka as a powerful, manipulative, and ambitious leader. His address to the conquered people reveals his ruthlessness and his desire for assimilation. The subsequent description of his ambitions highlights his insatiable hunger for power and his vision of a vast, unified kingdom under his rule. The contrast between Chaka's warlike intentions and the peaceful existence of other nations foreshadows future conflict and the potential consequences of his ambition.

> Extract 5: The killing of the cowards
>
> *Chaka a boela a phahamisa lerumo la hae la qetello, a re: "Bana bao le ba bonang jwale ke ba kganyang ka leleme; le ba utlwile, ba tla ntshenyetsa bahlabani ka hore ba tla ba rapella." A kgutsa, yaba o re: "Maleme ana a bona a qeqetjhang haholo, le a motsule ka metso, le se ke la a poma, a tla a hlomela; ke hona ba tla lebala ho ikenya ditabeng tsa marena ha a kgalemela batho ba ona." Ka ho panya ha leihlo batho ha motsulwa maleme, mme ba eshwa* (Mofolo 1981:130).
>
> Chaka lifted his spear one more time and said: "These ones you see here now are those who give free rein to their tongues. You heard them for yourselves. They will spoil my warriors by making them believe that there will always be someone to plead for them." He paused, and then he said: "You must pull out by their very roots these tongues of theirs which babble so much; you must not cut them for fear they might start sprouting again. Only that way will they stop meddling in the affairs of kings when they chastise their subjects." In the twinkling of an eye, those people's tongues were pulled out, and they died (Kunene 2013:83).

Analysis

Word Choice

Dehumanising language: Chaka refers to the condemned as "these ones," stripping them of their individuality and reducing them to objects of his power. **Authoritarian tone**: Chaka's language is forceful and commanding, reflecting his absolute authority. Words like "must" emphasise the imperative nature of his orders. **Justification**: Chaka attempts to legitimise his actions by claiming that the condemned "will spoil my warriors" and "meddle in the affairs of kings." This justification reveals his paranoia and his desire to maintain absolute control.

Sentence Structure

Long, complex sentences: Chaka's initial speech is delivered in long, complex sentences that mirror his complicated reasoning and his desire to appear reasonable. **Short, declarative sentences**: The description of the execution ("In the twinkling of an eye, those people's tongues were pulled out, and they died") is conveyed in short, declarative sentences, creating a sense of swift and brutal efficiency. **Repetition**: The repetition of "they" and "their" emphasises the collective nature of the punishment and reinforces the idea that these individuals are being targeted as a group.

Literary Devices

Metaphor: The "tongue" serves as a metaphor for speech, dissent, and the power of language. **Imagery**: The vivid descriptions of the violence create a disturbing image that lingers in the reader's mind. **Irony**: The fact that Chaka silences those who "give free rein to their tongues" is ironic, as he himself is using language to justify his actions. **Symbolism**: The act of pulling out the tongues can be interpreted as a symbol of censorship, repression, and the suppression of dissent. **Hyperbole**: The statement about the tongues potentially (*a tla a hlomela*) sprouting again is hyperbolic, exaggerating the threat posed by the condemned and justifying the extreme nature of the punishment.

Observations

This extract reveals Chaka's ruthless and authoritarian nature. His word choice, sentence structure, and use of literary devices all contribute to a sense of brutality and injustice. The scene highlights the themes of power, control, and the suppression of dissent. Chaka's actions are not merely acts of violence, but also carefully calculated displays of power designed to intimidate and silence any potential opposition.

Extract 6: The unquenchable thirst

Chaka ka lerumo leo a le etseditsweng ke Isanusi a bolaya a se na mohau; a tuma hang, a ba a fumana borena bo boholo ka lona. Ka makgotla a borena boo bo boholo a futuhela borwa, a ripitla a sa qenehele letho, empa ba mo balehelang ba mo feta hole ka polao; mme le leboya le hohle dintweng tsa hae ha eba jwalo. Ha re bala batho ba bolauweng ke Matiwane ha a balehela Chaka, re bala ba bolauweng ke Batlokwa ba ha Sekonyela, re bala ba bolauweng ke Moselekatse, re bala ba bolauweng ke Chaka hae ha Zulu, hammoho le masea a bolauweng ka taelo ya hae, re fumana hore palo eo e kgolo ruri. Mme ha re eketsa ho yona lefu la Noliwa, la Nongogo le Mnyamana, la Nandi le basadi ba Chaka, re fumana hore boholo ba palo eo jwale bo a tshosa. Ha re tla utlwisisa ke ha re re, palo ya ba bolauweng ke yena, ka mokgwa ona re tswang ho o bolela, e lekana le palo ya Basotho ha ba ka bokellwa hammoho makgetlo a mararo kapa a mane, ho balwa monna, mosadi le ngwana, yaba ba bolawa kaofela! (Mofolo 1981:150).

With the spear made for him by Isanusi Chaka killed without mercy, thus winning himself instant fame as well as great kingship. With the armies of his great empire, he invaded the south, and he laid everything to waste without pity or compunction, yet those who fled from him far surpassed him in the numbers they killed. And so it was too with his invasion of the north and in all the wars that he fought. When we count the people killed by Matiwane when he was fleeing from Chaka, those killed by the Batlokwa of Sekonyela, those killed by Moselekatse, as well as those killed by Chaka at home in Zululand, together

> with the infants who were killed at his bidding, we find that the number is overwhelming indeed. And when we add to it the deaths of Noliwa, Nongogo and Mnyamana, and of Nandi and Chaka's women, we find that the greatness of that number is now frightening. To comprehend this fully, we should use the example that the number of people killed by him in the ways we have described, is equal to the number of the Basotho, counting every man, woman and child, multiplied three or four-fold. Imagine them all being killed! (Kunene 2013:93).

Analysis

Word Choice

Emphasis on agency and instrumentality: The extract begins by emphasising Chaka's active role in violence ("Chaka killed without mercy/*a bolaya a se na mohau*") and the instrument through which he acts ("With the spear made for him by Isanusi/*ka lerumo leo a le etseditsweng ke Isanusi*"). This highlights the deliberate and calculated nature of his actions. **Words denoting scale**: The repeated use of words like "great/*bo boholo*," "overwhelming/*e kgolo*," and "frightening/*tshosa*" emphasises the sheer scale of the violence perpetrated by and associated with Chaka. **Emotional impact**: Words like "pity/compunction/*a sa qenehele*," and "mercy/*a se na mohau*" are negated to emphasise the absence of these qualities in Chaka's actions, heightening the emotional impact of the violence.

Sentence Structure

Cumulative sentences: The passage relies heavily on cumulative sentences that build upon one another to create a sense of overwhelming scale. The use of phrases like "together with/*hammoho le*," and "and when we add to it/*Mme ha re eketsa ho yona"* adds to the cumulative effect. **Parallel structure**: The repetition of "those killed by/*ba bolauweng ke"* emphasises the widespread nature of the violence and the many different groups involved. **Exclamatory statement**: The final statement ("Imagine them all being killed! /*yaba ba bolawa kaofela!*") is an exclamatory statement that aims to shock the reader and drive home the full horror of the violence.

Literary Devices

Hyperbole: The comparison of the number of deaths to "the number of the Basotho, counting every man, woman and child, multiplied three or four-fold/*palo ya Basotho ha ba ka bokellwa hammoho makgetlo a mararo kapa a mane, ho balwa monna, mosadi le ngwana*" is an example of hyperbole, exaggerating the scale of the violence to make it more comprehensible. **Imagery**: The phrase "laid everything to waste/*a ripitla*" creates a vivid image of destruction and devastation. **Irony**: There is an element of irony in the fact that Chaka, who sought to create a unified and powerful kingdom, ultimately caused so much death and destruction. **Pathos**: The mention of "infants/*masea*" and "Noliwa, Nongogo and Mnyamana, and of Nandi and Chaka's women" evokes a sense of pity and sorrow, highlighting the human cost of Chaka's ambition.

Observations

This extract engages with the immense scale of violence associated with Chaka's reign. Mofolo employs a range of literary devices, including hyperbole, and imagery to convey the full horror of the situation. The extract raises questions about the nature of power, the consequences of unchecked ambition, and the human cost of war. It also challenges the reader to confront the uncomfortable reality of violence and its lasting impact on society.

Conclusion

This chapter embarked on a comprehensive syntactic evaluation and interpretation of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, which aimed to brighten the intricate relationship between language, meaning, and historical context within the novel. By so doing, the chapter provided a fresh perspective on *Chaka*, revealing the subtle yet powerful ways in which syntax contributes to the novel's enduring appeal and its status as a seminal work of African literature.

It is observed that Mofolo's syntactic choices play a crucial role in shaping the reader's understanding of Chaka's character. As Chaka's ambition grows, Mofolo uses increasingly complex and assertive sentence structures to reflect his protagonist's evolving mindset. The language used to describe Chaka's actions becomes

more forceful and decisive, mirroring his ruthless pursuit of power. Mofolo's skilful use of syntax not only reveals Chaka's inner turmoil but also emphasises the broader themes of moral corruption and the destructive nature of unchecked ambition. Also, Mofolo's syntactic choices contribute to the overall tone and atmosphere of the novel, influencing the reader's emotional response and shaping their interpretation of events.

Through a careful analysis of word choice, sentence structure, and literary devices, it becomes clear that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* employs syntax as a powerful tool for shaping meaning and conveying the complexities of its narrative. The cumulative sentence structures and striking imagery contribute to the overwhelming sense of scale, particularly in depicting the violence associated with Chaka's reign. Mofolo's strategic use of syntax is intrinsically linked to character development, portraying Chaka's conquest to power through increasingly assertive language, while those who oppose him are depicted with hesitant and fragmented syntax. These choices are not merely stylistic; they are deeply embedded in the cultural and historical context of early 20th-century South Africa, reflecting a desire to assert the value of African languages and traditions, while navigating the complex interplay between tradition and modernity. Ultimately, Mofolo's syntactic artistry allows him to explore profound themes of power, ambition, and moral corruption, solidifying Chaka's place as a seminal work of African literature that identifies with both historical and ideological significance.

That brings us to the conclusion that Mofolo's choice of language was intended for the Basotho community within a typical isiZulu environment, a setting and history that are remote from those of the Basotho.

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Chapter 8

Hlohlodingwane Ya Moetlo WA Bonna Ka Hara Basotho: Nyebekollo Ya Dipina TSA Barwetsana Le Basadi Bukeng Ya Chaka

Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi
Lefapha la Dipuo tsa Afrika, Universithing ya Freisitata
Bloemfontein, Afrika Borwa:
khanyetsimmt@ufs.ac.za

Kakaretso

Phuputso ena e thokotswe ke dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara buka ya Mofolo, Chaka (1991) le maikutlo a bafuputsi ba bang ba shebang dipina tsena e le botjhotjholotsi le bophepheletsane. Hang ho ba Chaka a bolaye tau, tebello e ne e ka ba hore banna ba tla bina mokorotlo, ba mo phafe. Empa, ho etsahala se fapaneng, ka hore banna ba hlaba ntwa ka direthe, ba ikwalla ka matlung, ba feta bana le basadi ka ntle.Barwetsana le basadi ba shebella Chaka, a yang ho tau a matha, e ntse e rora, e utlwahala hore e tla qhaqha phofu ya yona mahanana. Ho tlola pina ka hara barwetsana le basadi e pepesang bohale, bonatla, boqhetseke le sebete sa Chaka. Ka ho fapana le bafuputsi ba shebang dipina tsena ka hore ke bophepheletsane, phuputso e nyebekollotse dipina tsena ho fumana hore na dipina tsee ha di nnetefatse bonna bo teng ka hara barwetsana le basadi hore ha ho le makgenefa e be barwetsana le basadi ba phatlalatsa maikutlo a bona a tebileng ka dipina. Phuputso ena e itshetleha ka lewa la bonna ho olosa, ho sila le ho thumisa kutlwisiso ya dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara buka ya Chaka. Mofuputsi o badile Chaka ya Mofolo

(1991) ho hlwaya dipina tseo phuputso e nang le thahasello ho tsona. Mofuputsi o qotsutse, a hlophisa dikateng tsa dipina ho ya ka meokotaba mme a di nyebekolla ka ho hlalosa dikateng tsa tsona.Mofuputsi o etsa qeto ya hore dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara Chaka ya Mofolo (1991) di nnetefatsa hore bonna bo teng ka hare ho barwetsana le basadi mme ha ho le mahleke, barwetsana le basadi ba tshwara melamu ka bosesanyaneng, ba ikakgela sebaeng, e be ba lwana ya sedula matswapong. Boithuto bona bo etsa kgothaletso ya hore barwetsana le basadi ba be le sebete dintweng tse molemo tse pholosang setjhaba jwalo ka barwetsana le basadi ba binang ka sebete ho lwantsha diqholotso ka hara Chaka. Boithuto bona bo na le seabo ditabeng tsa boithuto ba bonna le bosadi, ho bontsha bohlokwa ba mawa a fapaneng ditabeng tsa bong ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho.

Mantshwe a mantlha: bonna, borwetsana, bosadi, kemedi ya basadi, kemedi ya moetlo, matla

Subverting Patriarchal Norms Amongst the Basotho: Exploring Female Songs in Thomas Mofolo's Chaka (1991)

Abstract

This study is inspired by the key role of female songs in Thomas Mofolo's text, *Chaka* (1991), which, alongside scholarly opinions, highlights how these songs significantly influence the male characters' behaviour, often nudging them towards detrimental paths. Contrary to expectations, the lion slaying by Chaka does not elicit the customary masculine expressions of triumph, such as war songs and praise poetry. Instead, girls and women assume the public sphere, offering spontaneous songs, whereas men withdraw indoors. This unexpected role reversal merits attention, as it challenges prevailing notions of cultural protocol. In a notable departure from traditional gender dynamics, females in this narrative assume agency by actively observing Chaka's confrontation with the lion, rather than retreating to safety alongside men. Witnessing Chaka's fearless attack and slaying of the lion, women and girls spontaneously erupt into song, extemporaneously composing and performing praise songs that celebrate Chaka's exceptional bravery. This key moment emphasises the subversion of conventional gender roles and highlights female agency in shaping cultural narratives through creative expression. This study seeks to challenge interpretations that posit the songs of girls and women in *Chaka* as catalysts for negative behaviour, instead adopting a nuanced perspective to examine whether these songs serve to affirm female masculinity. This study employed literary masculinity theory as its theoretical framework to examine the representation of female agency in *Chaka*. Through a close reading of this text, this research aimed to identify and analyse songs sung by female characters, with

a focus on their lyrical content. A thematic analysis of these songs revealed how women and girls in *Chaka* express masculine attributes, challenging traditional notions of femininity. This study argues that the portrayal of female masculinity in *Chaka* serves as a powerful paradigm for contemporary women and girls, highlighting the importance of embracing masculine attributes in females. The findings of this study contribute to feminist and masculinity studies, emphasising the significance of intersectional approaches to understanding gender identity.

Keywords: cultural representations, girlhood, manhood, power dynamics, womanhood, women's agency

Boitshetleho

Dipina le mmino ke mantswe a sebediswang ho bolela ntho e le nngwe ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho, (Khotso 2017). Ka hoo ka hara phuputso ena dipina le mmino e tla ba mantswe a sebediswang ho bolela ntho e le nngwe. Dipina ke karolo ya bohlokwa ya neanotaba. Jwalo ka mefuta e meng ya neanotaba, dipina di fetiswa ka molomo ho tloha molokong o mong ho ya ho molokong o mong. Dipina di sebediswa ka mekgwa e mmedi ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. E ka ba ka mokgwa wa bophepheletsane e leng mokgwa wa ho tjhotjholotsa hore ha eba mokunkela wa ntwa o teng, ohle o tuke, ho hle ho tjhe. Madi a tlole mme ya batuweng a je mobu. E be ho tla tlola modidietsane o mona o itswapang ka mokokotlo, o nto lahlisa banna dihlooho e be ba tla pshwatlana le ho patsolana mahata ka mafatsa. Mofuta ona wa dipina o tsebahala ka basadi. Mosadi ya etellang mofuta ona wa dipina o bitswa mmatlhakedi. Matlhakedi o bina a bile a didietsa e le hore monna le ha e ne e ba o boi, a kgwe boing boo ba hae, a kene ntwa ka sehlotho e bang e mo lematsa a lemale. Ho ya ka Khotso (2017) basadi ba Mehahlaula (Mehahlaula ke basadi ba sehlopha se seng sa mmino wa koriano sa basadi ba Basotho) ba thabela ho bona madi a tsholoha. Puseletso Seema ka hara Post (2017) o hlalosa ha bophelong ba hae, mminong wa koriana, a ne a susumetsa hore banna ba lwane.

Le ha ho le jwalo, ho na le moo basadi ba binang ka sepheo sa bomphepheletsane, sehloba se nkotong, mosebetsi ona ha o bone dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara Chaka e le

bomphepheletsane empa mosebetsi ona o tiisa hore barwetsana le basadi ba na le bonna. Khotso (2017) o tiisa hore bonna ha se botshehadi kapa botona empa ke diketso tseo setjhaba ka seng se di hlalosang e le bonna. E leng hore ha ho makatse hore ha ho buuwa ka mosadi ka tlholeho e be ho ka thwe ho latela diketso tsa hae ke monna. Ka tsela e tshwanang le monna ya diketso e kang tsa basadi ha ho makatse hore e be ho thwe ke mosadi ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho.

Kgaolo ena e sekametse lehlakoreng la hore dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara Chaka di bohlokwa. Dipina di na le melemo e kenyeletsang ho thabisa. Ka hodimo ho ho thabisa, dipina di fupere melaetsa le thuto. Khotso (2017) o hlalosa ha dipina di sebediswa e le mokgwa o mong wa ho fetisa melaetsa ya boitlotlo ba setjhaba, dipolotiki, moruo le tumelo. Phafoli (2009) le Finnegan (1976) ba dumellana ka hore dipina di ka sebediswa ho tlaleha le ho fana ka maikutlo hodima diketsahalo tsa letsatsi le letsatsi molemong wa ho natefisa dipolotiki, ho hlahloba le ho hodisa maikutlo a setjhaba. Ba tswelapele ka hore dipina di fupere tumelo ya setjhaba. Khotso (2017) o tlatsetsa maikutlo a Phafoli (2009) le a Finnegan (1976) ka hore ho bonolo ho setjhaba ho fetisa melaetsa e neng e ka nkwa e sa amohelehe ka puo ya mehla ho ka e fetisa ka pina. Mohlala: pina ya basadi ba Basotho ya ditolobonya e reng: "Basadi thunya tsa lona di kae, sa ka ke sena ke sekhokhile." Sethunya pineng ena ke setho sa botshehadi. Mosotho a ke ke a bua ka ditho tsa botshehadi ka puo ya mehla empa ka pina a ka beha feela. Makgabane ana a dipina a teng le ka hara dipina tsa setjhaba sa Basotho. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ho na le dipina tsa mekgahlelo yohle ya setjhaba: dipina tsa bana, dipina tsa banana, dipina tsa bashanyana, dipina tsa barwetsana, dipina tsa bahlankana, dipina tsa basadi le dipina tsa banna. Mohlala: bana ba binelwa dipina tsa koiyetso, ha banana ba bina dipina tsa mokopu. Dipina tsa banana le bashanyana ke dipina tsa serobolela. Dipina tsa barwetsana le bahlankana tsona ebile e le dipina tsa lefereho le makgethe, ke dipina tsa sediadia, sona se ya kgetha molekane le dipina tsa sephumula. Ha dipina tsa basadi e le dipina tsa pitiki le dipina tsa mokgibo. Dipina tsa banna tsona ke dipina tsa ha ho kgwaswa ditadi, mohobelo le dipina tsa mokorotlo. Kaofela dipina tsena di fupere melaetsa.

Ha se ntho e tlwaelehileng ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho hore batho ba batshehadi ba bine dipina tsa batho ba ba tona kapa ba ba tona ba bine dipina tsa batho ba ba tshehadi. Hape dipina tsa batho ba ba tona jwalo ka mokorotlo ke dipina tsa ntwa. Mokorotlo o binwa ke banna ha ho le hobe, setjhaba se tobane le maqakabetsi a ho tojwa ke dintwa kapa ditlhaselo mme banna ba bina mokorotlo ho ipha sebete le matla a ho sireletsa bana, basadi le thepa. Ka hara pina ena, mokorotlo, ho hlakile hore banna ba lokela ho ba le boitelo ka hara setjhaba mme ha ba ka shwa ba lwanela setjhaba sa habo bona ke tlotla. Le ha ho le jwalo moetlo ona o tsetetsweng ka hara banna ba Basotho ka pina ya mokorotlo o tobane le diqholotso tsa ho bona banna ba hlaba ntwa ka direthe, ba e siela bana le basadi. Sena se tla tjhabiswa ka dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara sengolwa sa Thomas Mofolo-Chaka (1991).

Selelekela

Ho bohlokwa hore mmadi a tle a elellwe hore phuputsong ena mofuputsi o ngola ka mongolo wa Sesotho wa Afrika Borwa. Le ha ho le jwalo mmadi a hlokomele hore puo ya Sesotho e mengolo e mengata mme mofuputsi o sebedisitse mongolo wa Sesotho wa Afrika Borwa le ngolo ya puo ya Sesotho Lesotho hobane tse ding tsa dingolwa tseo mofuputsi a qotsitseng ho tsona ho ntlafatsa mosebetsi ona, di ngotswe ka ngolo ya Sesotho ya Lesotho. Maemong a jwalo, a moo mofuputsi a entseng qotso ngolong ya Sesotho ya Lesotho, mofuputsi o fetoleletse ngolo ya Lesotho ho mongolo wa Afrika Borwa hore mmadi a tle a be le tatelo e ntle ya se ngotsweng. Sena se hlalosa hore mmadi moo a tla fumana ngolo ya Sesotho ya Lesotho, o tla fumana ditaba tse tshwanang di latelwa ke mongolo wa Sesotho Afrika Borwa.

E re ka ha kgaolo ena e itshetlehile ka buka ya Chaka, e leng sengolwa sa Thomas Mokopu Mofolo, kgaolo ena e fumana ho le bohlokwa ho hlalosa hore na Thomas Mokopu Mofolo ke mang e le ho batalatsa mabala a ho thusa mmadi ho utlwisisa tse tlang ho latela. Thomas Mokopu Mofolo ke Mosotho ya hlahetseng le ho holela naheng ya Lesotho. Ho ya ka Moleleki (1993), Mofolo o hlahetse Kgojane, seterekeng sa Mafeteng. Mofolo o ithutile

dikolong Lesotho. Dingolwa tsa hae di bontsha tsa kgolo ya hae ekasitana le tikoloho eo a phetseng ho yona. Ho tiisa tshusumetso ya Mofolo bongoding ba hae, Moleleki (1993:99) o re:

> Ha re sheba kgolo ya Mofolo, re hlokomela hore o hotse ka bokreste ho tloha ka lapeng, ho fetela sekolong se tlase, ho ya fihla ho se phahameng. Ebile Bebele o e tswela le sekolong sa yona. Mosebetsing le teng, batho bao a sebeditseng le bona ha lelele ke baruti.

Moleleki (1993:99) o tswelapele ka ho bontsha hore kgolo ena ya Mofolo e na le tshusumetso e kgolo bongoding ba hae. Bongoding ba Mofolo ho na le tshusumetso ya ditaba tsa sekreste. Tshusumetso eo Mofolo a nang le yona bongoding ba hae ha se ya sekreste feela empa le tshusumetso ya bosotho ba hae e teng. Swanepoel (2019:1) o tiisa tshusumetso ya bosotho ba Mofolo ka hara bongodi ba Mofolo, ka hore bokgabi ba Mofolo, ba ho aha mohale wa hae bo tsetelehile ka hara neanotaba le meetlo ya moo mongodi, e leng Mofolo, a holetseng teng e leng ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Swanepoel (2019) o tswelapele ka ho hlalosa hore Mofolo o bitsitse buka ena ya hae tshomo. Ho bitsa buka ena tshomo ho ka bolela hore e na le tshusumetso ya ditshomo tsa Basotho. E le hore bongodi ba hae bo boetse bo supa hore Mofolo ke Mosotho sebele. Sena ha se makatse hore le ka hara buka ya hae, Chaka, le ha a e ngotse ka setjhaba sa Mazulu tjena, e na le tshusumetso ya bosotho ba hae. Mohlala, Mofolo (1991:6), ha a hlalosa Chaka kgolong ya hae o re:

> Chaka ha e le lesea e ne e le poropotlwana e ratehang, e maramarama, e sa lleng leha e wela fatshe, e sita leha a otlwa o ne a sa atise ho lla, ...

Mona Mofolo o bua ka kgolo ya ngwana wa moshemane ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Maele a Basotho a re monna ke nku ha a lle. Seo maele ana a se bolelang ke hore monna o lokela ho tiha pelo, a mamelle bohloko a tle a be boemong ba ho tobana le diqholotso tse boima tsa bophelo. O tswelapele Mofolo o re Chaka o ne a re ho baleha ke bokwala, motho ha a otlwa a sitilwe o lokela ho mamella

kotlo ya molato wa hae. Mofolo o bontsha ha setjhaba se bonang Chaka se mo roka:

> Ke ledinyane la tau; ke mootlwana wa sebata; ke tawana e ntjha" (Mofolo 1991:7).

Dithoko ke lelomolo ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Ho tloha ha ngwana a fihla lefatsheng, basadi ba mo amohela ka dithoko tsa seboko sa hae. Ha a ntse a thuthuwa, o rutwa seboko sa hae mme o thuswa ho se rokela a sa lobe letho ka hlooho. Ha a e ya mophatong ho ya bolla, o ya felehetswa, mme o memelwa moetlong wa lebollo ka dithoko ke monna ya mathisang thebe. Sekese (1985:12) o re mohla (bashemane) ba bollang, ho kgethwa mohlabani, a rongwe ho mathisa thebe;

> ...ebeetlare ha a kena hae, moreneng, a ithoke, a be a fihle khotla a ntse a ithoka.

Mohlang a felehetswang ho ya bolla, basadi ba mo hlaba ka medidietsane ha banna ba mo felehetsa ka mokorotlo. Ho ya ka Martins (2020), mokorotlo ka theko hore ke pina ya ntwa, e boetse ke pina ya ho keteka kapa ya ho kgumama ha bashemane ba phatswa le ha ba nyolohela thabeng (ha ba kena) le ha batswa. Le mohlang ba theohang thabeng, ba a rokwa mme le bona ba a ithoka.

Dithokong tsena tsa Chaka, Mofolo o re Chaka ke ledinyane la tau, mme ke tawana. Ho ya ka Khotso (2010) le Khotso (2017), dithoriso tsa dithoko tsa Basotho di tiisa bonna. Ke tshebediso ya mekgabiso ya puo, mme ke puo ya banna e nnetefatsang bonna. Khotso (2017) o re ho ya ka bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho, makgabane a diphoofolo a lokela ho bonwa ho banna. Makgabane a jwalo e ka ba boswele, lonya, ho hloka mohau le makgabane a mang ohle ao a ka behang bophelo (ba sera) tlokotsing. Khotso (2017) o tlatsa Kunene (1971) ka hore ka hara dithoko, bahale ba ikgetha le ho itsheka ka ho itshwantshwa le diphoofolo le dihlodilweng. Kunene (1971) o tswelapele ka hore bahale ka ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ba fuwa mabitso a diphoofolo: tsa hae le tse hlaha le a dihahabi tse kotsi haholo. Dithokong tsa Morena Moshweshwe, mothehi wa setjhaba sa Basotho, Mangoaela (2003)

ho thwe Moshweshwe ke tau-tshehla ya Matlama. Nkwebe Letsie ka ho Mangwaela (2003), ho thwe ke lengau. Khotso (2017) o re le jwale ya bokajeno boholo ba dibini tsa mmino wa Basotho wa koriana di ntse di ithoka mme di ithehella ka tau le nkwe. Khotso (2017) o re dibini tsena di itheha tau le nkwe ho fetisa molaetsa wa hore di bohale ntweng le ho lwana ka maqiti a tshwanang le a diphoofolo tsena.Ha se taba ya bohale le maqiti feela empa le molaetsa wa botle o teng. Nkwe le tau ke diphoofolo tsa leloko la katse mme ke diphoofolo tse ntle. Mofolo ka ho bitsa Chaka ledinyane la tau, jwalo ka dibini tsena tsa mmino wa Basotho wa koriana, o fetisa molaetsa wa hore Chaka o bohale jwalo ka tau le maqiti a ho lwana o na le ona a tau. Hape jwalo ka ha tau e tsebahala ka hore ke morena wa diphoofolo tsohle, ka ho reha Chaka tau, Mofolo o se a ntse a lepa borena ba Chaka bo boholo ka ho fetisa, ba ho busa ditjhabatjhaba. Hape Mofolo o fetisa molaetsa wa hore Chaka ke motho e motle ditshobotsi hobane tau e ntle. Empa ka hodimo ho tseo, o fetisa molaetsa wa hore Chaka ke monna ka ho phethahala hobane o na le makgabane a bonna: matla, sebete le bolaodi, jwalo feela ka tau.

Mofolo o boetse o bontsha ha mosadi a bitswa ho tla lomola Chaka. Lelomolo ke o mong wa meetlo ya Basotho o phethwang ho tloha ha ngwana a hlahile le ha a ntse a thuthuwa ho sireletsa ngwana le ho mo futsisa mekgwa e amohelehang ka hara setjhaba. Mefuta ya lelomolo e mene: lelomolo ka kgwedi, lelomolo ka mohami, lelomolo ka motoho kapa ka nama le lelomolo ka pula. Ho ya ka Sekese (1985) ke lelomolo ka nama le etswang le ho phethwa ke mosadi ya makgabane a hlokwang ke setjhaba. Mokgwa ona wa Mofolo wa ho pheta ditaba le tsela ya ho kgaba di totobatsa Bosotho. Mohlala, ka hara ditshomo tsa Basotho, ho na le pina. Mopheti wa tshomo o e pheta a ntse a lohella pina ka hare ho ditaba. Ka hara buka ya Chaka, Mofolo o kgaba ka meetlo le dipina ha a ntse a pheta ditaba tsa Chaka. Ka hona mmadi a tle a utlwisise lebaka leo mofuputsi a shebang ditaba tsa buka ya Chaka ka leihlo la bosotho.

Kgaolo ena e ngotswe ka sepheo sa ho hlahloba moetlo wa bonna. Ho hlahloba meetlo ya bathobatsho ke ntlha ya bohlokwa ka hara ditjhaba tsa Maafrika ho kenyelletsa le setjhaba sa Basotho haholoholo mehleng ena eo ho totobetseng hore setjhaba sa Rantsho se furalla meetlo ya sona mme se kgahlwa ke meetlo ya

baditjhaba. E meng ya meetlo e se e shwele ha e meng e ya e tobile ho shwa. Ho a hlokahala hore ho etswe malebaleba a ho pholosa meetlo e ntseng e phela hore e se ke ya timela. Sekwele!

Tekolo botjha ya dingolwa ka dipina ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho

Ditsebi tse ngotseng ka ditaba tsa buka ya Mofolo, Chaka, ke boiyane. Ditsebi di shebile dintlha tse ngata haholo di sebedisa makgalo ka ho fapana mme di tlile ka ditshibollo tsa bohlokwa. Le ha ho le jwalo kgaolo ena e tla sekamela ho etsa tekolo botjha ya mesebetsi ya ditsebi hodima dipina ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho hobane mosebetsi ona o tsepame hodima dipina ka hara buka ya Mofolo, monna wa Mosotho mme eo bongodi ba hae bo totobetseng hore o na le tshusumetso ya mekgwa le meetlo ya Basotho.

Ho na le ditsebi tsa puo le neanotaba ya Basotho tse nang le seabo ka dipina tsa Basotho. Hara tsona ke qoolla Bereng (1987), Moleleki (1993) le Matšela (1987).

Bereng (1987) o ngotse ka mefuta e mmalwa ya dipina tsa Basotho: dipina tsa matsema, dipina tsa mokopu, dipina tse hlalosang maemo a fapaneng ka hara setjhaba, dipina tsa lefereho le makgethe, dipina tsa mokorotlo, mangae, dipina tsa ho koiyetsa ngwana le dipina tsa ho kgwasa ditadi. Bereng (1987) o bontsha bohlokwa ba dipina tsena le maemo ao di binwang ho ona. Mofuputsi o unne molemo bongoding ba Bereng (1987) ka ha a ithutile maemo ao dipina tsa Basotho ka kakaretso di binwang ho ona bongoding bona ba Bereng. Le ha ho le jwalo, Bereng (1987) ha a ngola ka dipina tse hlahang ka hara buka ya Mofolo, Chaka, e leng seo e leng thathasello ya phuputso ena ho kwala sekgeo seo.

Moleleki (1993) o hlalositse dipina tsa mefuta e fapaneng ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho: dipina tsa mosebetsi, dipina tsa lenyalo, dipina tsa motjeko, dipina tsa mokorotlo, dipina tsa borapedi a shebile haholo sebopeho sa tsona le bohlokwa ba tsona. Mosebetsi wa Moleleki (1993) o bohlokwa hobane o fa mofuputsi phuputsong ena lesedi la sebopeho le bohlokwa ba dipina tsa Basotho. Mofuputsi o unne molemo mosebetsing wa Moleleki (1993) ka ho fumana sebopeho le bohlokwa ba dipina ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Le ha ho le jwalo, mosebetsi ona o fapana le

wa Moleleki (1993) ka ha ona o sekaseka dipina ka hara buka ya Thomas Mofolo-Chaka ka sepheo sa ho sibolla hore na dipina tsena di bontsha le ho susumetsa bonna jwang.

Matšela (1987) o ngotse ka dipapadi tsa Basotho. Dipapadi tsa Basotho di lohelletswe le dipina. Mohlala: papadi ya sediadia le papadi ya sephumula di na le dipina tsa tsona. Ka ho tshwana papadi ya mokgibo le papadi ya mohobelo di na le dipina. Matšela (1987) o bontshitse bohlokwa ba dipapadi tsena ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Boithuto ba Matšela (1987) bo bohlokwa hobane bo beha boithuto bona leseding ka dipapadi le dipina tsa Basotho le bohlokwa ba tsona. Le ha ho le jwalo mosebetsi wa Matšela (1987) o fapana le mosebetsi ona ka ha mosebetsi ona o na le thahasello ya ho hlahloba dipina ka hara buka ya Mofolo, Chaka, ka sepheo sa ho fumana hore na di hlahisa bonna jwang.

Ditsebi tse hlahlobileng dipina ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho

Boithutong ba dipina ho na le ditsebi tse bileng le seabo sa ho ithuta dipina ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Boithuto bona bo qolla Phafoli (2009), Khotso (2017), Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020), Mokala, Matee le Khanyetsi (2023) le Khanyetsi (2025).

Phafoli (2009) o hlahlobile dipina tsa mmino wa koriana ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ka sepheo sa ho fumana hore na dibini di kgabile ka dinthla dife. Phafoli (2009) o fumane hore dibini di kgabile ka tshebediso ya Sesotho se kgwelethaneng: tshebediso ya maele, maelana (dikapolelo) le ho kenyelletsa diketsahalo tsa moraorao ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Boithuto ba Phafoli (2009) bo thusa boithuto bona ka ho pepesa hore na dipina tsa Basotho di kgaba ka eng. Boithuto bona bo unne molemo boithutong ba Phafoli (2009) ka ho utlwisisa dintho tseo dibini tsa mmino wa koriana di kgabileng ka tsona. Le ha ho le jwalo boithuto ba Phafoli (1987) bo fapana le boithuto bona ka ha bona bo ithuta dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara buka ya Thomas Mofolo, Chaka, ho fumana hore na di pepesa phetoho ya moetlo wa bonna jwang.

Khotso (2017) o sekasekile mmino wa koriana wa setjhaba sa Basotho ka sepheo sa ho fumana hore na o aha bonna bo jwang. Khotso (2017) o ne a hlahloba dipina tsena a itshetlehile moo dibini tsa mmino wa koriana di tswang teng ka dikarolo tse nne

tsa naha ya Lesotho: Botjhabela, Borwa, Leboa le Bophirima. Khotso (2017) o sibollotse hore dipina tsa mmino wa koriana tsa dibini tse hlahang ka Borwa ho naha ya Lesotho, di sebetsa ho aha bonna bo lenyokonyane, lehlofu mme boo ha bo ke keng ba thijwa bo tlang ho beha naha ya Lesotho le naha ya Afrika Borwa (e leng moo dibini tsena di phelang teng) tsietsing. Boithuto ba Khotso (2017) bo bohlokwa ka ha bo beha boithuto ba kajeno leseding la mefuta ya bonna. Le ha ho le jwalo boithuto ba kajeno bo fapana le boithuto ba Khotso (2017) ka ha bona bo nyebekolla dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara Chaka ya Thomas Mofolo ho fumana hore na di bontsha phetoho ya moetlo wa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho jwang.

Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020) ba hlahlobile dipina tsa mmino wa ditolobonya ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ka sepheo sa ho fumana hore na di aha bonna jwang. Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020) ba fumane hore dipina tsa mmino wa ditolobonya e le sethala seo basadi ba Basotho ba hlahisang maikutlo a bona ka ditaba tsa thobalano. Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020) ba sibollotse hore dipina tsa ditolobonya di fupere melaetsa ya bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho jwalo ka ho lakatsa thobalano, ho robala hohle le ho bontsha kgotsofalo nakong ya thobalano. Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020) ba bontsha hore ha ho mosadi feela wa Mosotho ya ka emang lepatlelong le bulehileng la setjhaba yaba ka phatla e phahameng o phatlalatsa ditaba tsa thobalano le boikaloso ba ho robala hohle moo a ratang ka ntle le mosadi ya seng a hlometse kapa a metse makgabane a bonna. Boithuto bona bo unne molemo wa dithlaloso tsa hore na bonna ke eng ka hara boithuto bona ba Possa, Khotso le Phafoli (2020). Le ha hole jwalo bona ha bo tshwane le bona ka hore bo shebane le dipina tsa basadi le barwetsana ka hara buka ya Thomas Mofolo- Chaka ho fumana phetoho ya moetlo wa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho.

Mokala, Matee le Khanyetsi (2023) ba ithutile bohlokwa ba mmino wa koriana ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ba tsepamisitse maikutlo ho sebini sa mmino wa koriana-Puseletso Seema. Mokala, Matee le Khanyetsi (2023) ba fumane hore dipina tsa Seema tsa mmino wa koriana di kgothaletsa basadi ba Basotho ho itshebeletsa ka thata hore ba tle ba iphedise ha mmoho le ho phedisa ba malapa a bona. Hape dipina tsa Seema di kgothaletsa

basadi ho ba le phedisano e ntle, ho eletsana le ho tshepela ho mofumahadi Motlotlehi Masenate Mohato Bereng Seeiso, moo ba thulanang le mathata a bophelo ka ho ya ho yena ho ya kopa boeletsi. Boithuto bona ba Mokala, Matee le Khanyetsi (2023) bo bohlokwa hobane bo hlahisa phuputso ena leseding la hore na basadi ba Basotho ba ka fenya bofuma jwang le hore na ba ka kopa dikeletso tse molemo ho mang. Le ha ho le jwalo boithuto bona bo fapana le ba Mokala, Matee le Khanyetsi (2023) ka ha bona bo hlahloba dipina tsa banana le basadi ka hara buka ya Thomas Mofolo- Chaka, ho fumana hore na moetlo wa Basotho wa bonna o retsitse jwang.

Khanyetsi (2025) o ithutile mmino wa koriana a tsepamisitse maikutlo a hae hodima mmino wa Sannere (Lebohang Monaphathi). Khanyetsi (2025) o fumane hore mmino wa Sannere, ka ho fapana le mmino wa koriana wa Basotho ka kakaretso, o hlahisang basadi ba Basotho hampe, o re ke matekatse, ke ba bolai, ke disatane le meleko,Sannere o hlahisa basadi ba Basotho hantle ka hlompho, lerato le ho ba fa mabitso a monate. Sannere pineng ya hae, Lerato, o bitsa basadi ba Basotho bo-Silatsatsi. O ba hlalosa ba le batle ka mahlo a maphatshwa a mmala wa lehodi. Khanyetsi (2025) o sibollotse hore Sannere o sebedisa ditshomo tsa Basotho ho kgetha mabitso a monate ho reha mosadi. Hape Sannere o sebedisa tsebo ya hae ka tsa tlholeho ho hlalosa ditshobotsi tse kgahlang tsa mosadi ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Boithuto ba Khanyetsi (2025) bo bohlokwa phuputsong ena hobane bo hlahisa bohlokwa ba basadi ba Basotho e le basadi ba Maafrika ka hara setjhaba. Le ha hole jwalo boithuto bona bo fapana le boithuto ba Khanyetsi (2025) hobane bona bo shebane le dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara Chaka ya Thomas Mofolo hore na bo bontsha ho ritsa ha moetlo wa bonna jwang.

Swanepoel (2019) o ithutile mokgwa wa Mofolo wa ho kgaba ka hara buka ya Chaka mme o fumane hore Mofolo o sebedisitse dithoko le dipina e leng se tiisang hore Mofolo ke Mosotho sebele. Swanepoel (2019) o sibolotse hore ka dipina tsa banana le basadi Mofolo o pepesitse diketsahalo tse swele tsa tlhaho le kgolo ya Chaka le ho senola mahlomola a hae ho tloha tlhahong ya hae, kgolong ho isa lefung la hae. Boithuto bona ba Swanepoel (2019) bo bohlokwa hobane bo beha boithuto bona leseding la bohlokwa

ba dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara buka ya Chaka. Le ha ho le jwalo boithuto ba Swanepoel (2019) bo fapana le boithuto bona ka ha bona thahasello ya bona e le ho fumana hore na dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi di totobatsa bohlanaphetho ditabeng tsa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho jwang.

Mekgwa ya diphuputso

Mofuputsi phuputsong ena ke Mosotho ya nang le tsebo e batsi ya puo le meetlo ya Basotho mme o sebedisitse tsebo ya hae ho etsa tlatsetso kgaolong ena. Ho ya ka Coia le Taylor (2009), mofuputsi a ka ba le seabo boemong boo e leng setsebi a bile a ena le boiphihlelo ka seo a fuputsang ka sona. Ka hona mofuputsi kgaolong ena o kentse letsoho ka ho tjhabisa mekgwa le meetlo ya setjhaba sa Basotho le ka ho hlalosisisa mefuta ya dipina kahara setjhaba sa Basotho kaha e le karolo ya botsebi ba hae.

Mofuputsi kgaolong ena o sebedisitse mokgwa wa ho hlahloba ditokomane. Mokgwa ona o bohlokwa haholo hobane o boloka nako ya mofuputsi. Mofuputsi ha a sebedisa mokgwa wa dipotso tsa dipatlisiso kapa ho botsa batho ho bokella ditaba. Empa, mofuputsi o sebedisa buka ya Mofolo, Chaka (1991) eo a e nkileng pokellong yahae ya dibuka ka ofising. Mofuputsi o badile buka ya Chaka ho tloha leqepheng la pele hoya leqepheng la ho qetela makgetlo a mmalwa a ntse a nokola seo e leng thahasello ya phuputso yahae. Ho nokola ho bile bo bebe hobane mofuputse ha a ntse a bala o ne a ntse a tshwaya maqephe a moo dipina tseo a nang le thahasello yaho tla disekaseka di hlahang teng. Mofuputsi o sebedisetsi buka ya Chaka e le mohlodi wa mantlha wa ditaba. Le ha ho le jwalo mofuputsi o sebedisitse mehlodi e meng ya tlatsetso ho totobatsa ntlha ya hae ya kemo ya mosebetsi ona.

Mofuputsi o sebedisitse mehlodi e meng ho etsa noka e tlatswa ke dinokana kgaolong ena. Hara dingolwa o sebedisitse dingolwa tsa dipina, mekgwa le meetlo ya Basotho. Ho ya ka Sekhukhune (1988) motho ya batlang ho utlwisisa mekgwa le meetlo ya setjhaba se itseng, o ikatela ka hobala dingolwa tsa sona. Ka hona kgaolong ena mofuputsi o badile dingolwa tsa Basotho ho ikatela ka mekgwa le meetlo ya Basotho. Hape mofuputsi o badile masedinyana a ditaba tsa Basotho le mesebetsi ya ditsebi e nyebekolotseng ditaba tse amanang le tsa kgaolo ena.

Mofuputsi o sebedisitse lewa la bonna ho qhaqholla le ho toloka dipina. Lewa lena le thusitse mofuputsi ho utlwisisa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho le ho utlwisisa bonna ka hara dipina tseo a di nyekollotseng.Mofuputsi o ne a itshetlehile ka ho nyakurela ditshelwa tsa dipina hobane dipina di fupere mantswe le meelelo. Ke ka ho nyebekolla ditshelwa tsa dipina mofuputsi a utullotseng hore na dipina tsena di pepesa bokwala le bonna jwang.Dipina di ngotswe ho latela tlhahlamano ya tsona ka hara buka ya Mofolo- Chaka. Mofuputsi o ngotse pina ya barwetsana pele ha morao ha latela pina ya basadi ho latela tlhahlamano ya tsona ka hara buka ya Chaka. Mokgwa wa ho di qhaqholla le ona o latellane jwalo.Tlhophiso ya ditaba e entswe ho ya ka meokotaba. Tlhophiso ho ya ka meekotaba e bohlokwa hobane e etsa hore ditaba di hlake mme le mmadi a di latele ha bonolo.

Lewa la phuputso

Phuputso ena e sebedisitse lewa la bonna ka hara dingolwa (Literary Masculinity Theory). Lewa la bonna ka hara dingolwa le thusa mofuputsi ho utlwisisa bonna ka ho nyebekolla dipuo le diketso tsa monna le bao dipuo le diketso tsa bona di amahanngwang le bonna ka hara ditjhaba ka ho fapana. E re ka ha kgaolong ena, mofuputsi thahasello ya hae e le ho utlwisisa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho, ho bile bohlokwa hore mofuputsi a fane ka lesedi la hore na bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho bo hlaloseha jwang. Bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ke sebete, bohale, bonatla, boitelo, boiphano le bohlabani. Bereng (1987:10) o tlatsa maikutlo a hlalosang bonna kahara Basotho ka hore:

"Ngoana moshemane pholoana ea tlaka o abetswe mathata ke kabeloa manong."

"Ngwana moshemane pholwana ya tlaka o abetswe mathata ke kabelwamanong."

Seo Bereng a se hlakisang ka polelo ena ke hore ngwana e motona kahara setjhaba sa Basotho o tshepelwa hothula mathata ka phatla, hoya dintweng tse molemo le hore setopo sa hae se jeweke matlaka ha a ka shwela ntweng. Setopo sa motho wa marumo ha se tliswe hae hobane ka ho etsa jwalo ho tshwana le ho tlisa ntwa moo basadi le banaba leng hona teng. Setopo sa

motho wa marumo se tshwana le setopo sa motho ya bolauweng ke letolo. Setopo sa motho ya bolailweng ke letolo ha se tliswe hae hobane hoya ka setjhaba sa Basotho, ho tlisa motho ya bolailweng ke letolo hae, ke ho bitsetsa letolo hae mme e ka ba kotsi ho etsa jwalo.

Ho ya ka Filipowicz (2009), bonna bo bopuwa ke dipota tsa motho jwalo ka tikoloho, phihlelo, ditebello tsa setjhaba le kopano eo motho a bang le yona le batho bao a phelang le bona. Kutlwisiso ya mofuputso a ipapisitse le Filipowicz (2009) ke hore tlhaloso ya bonna e itshetlehile hodima ditjhaba ka ho fapana hobane setjhaba ka seng se na le tseo se di kgethollang ho ditjhaba tse ding. Ka thoko ho diketso, dipuo di bohlokwa tlhalosong ya bonna. Ho ya ka Borisoff le Merrill (1992:6)

> *"The masculine model is that of a speaker who is direct, confrontational, forceful and logical."*

Kutlwisiso ka seo Borisoff le Merril (1992:6) ba se hlalosang ke hore monna o tsebahala ka ho bua ka ho toba, sefahlamahlo, ka matla le ka ho hlahlamanya dintlha hantle. Dintlha tsena tse tekwang ke Borrisof le Merrill (1992) di bohlokwa hobane di ntse di supa hore monna o lokela ho ba sebete. Sena se hlaloswang ke Borrisoff le Merrill (1992) se teng kahara setjhaba sa Basotho. Mohlala e ka ba puo e tlwaelehileng kahara setjhaba sa Basotho e reng monna ya buang haholo ho feta tekano o tla ba leshano jwalo ka basadi. E leng se bolelang hore monna ha a lebellwa ho ba le dimelo tse tsejwang ka basadi jwalo ka ho buela ruri.

Lewa lena la bonna le kgohlela hantle phuputsong ena ka ha le tla thusa mofuputsi ho hlahloba dipina ka hara buka ya Chaka hore na di qhololotsa le ho pepesa bonna jwang. Teng mofuputsi o tla sebedisa ditshia tse latelang tsa lewa la bonna: sebete, bophatlantjhotjho, boitelo, bopetswa mafolokohlong, ho rola hlompho, kapola leshano le ho hlobolela motho dikobo.

Tlhophollo ya ditaba

Dipina tse sekasekilweng kgaolong ena ke dipina tse pedi tsa barwetsana le basadi tse qotsitsweng ka hara buka ya Chaka, Mofolo (1991:17–18).

Barwetsana ba qapa pina mohlang oo, ba re:

Hae ha Ncube ha ho bahlankana,
Mohlankana o mong feela,
Hae ha Ncube ha ho banna,
Banna ke makwala kaofela;
Ba balehile, ba siya wa mophato wa bona naheng,
Ba siya thaka bona a tshwarane le sebata,
A betile tau ka ditlena!
Senzangakhona, lata ngwana wa hao a orohe
Ke ngwana e motona, letsholathebe.
O tla o lwanela, a o hlolele dira (Mofolo 1991:17)

Sebete

Sebete kapa ho ba sebete ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ke ho hloka letswalo. Ke ho etsa dintho motho a sa tshoha se bohloko se ka mo hlahelang ha fela e ba ditholwana tsa diketso tsa hae, e ka ba tse hlabosehang ho yena le ba mo potileng. Pineng ena ya barwetsana, taba ya hore barwetsana bana ba sebete ha e ya dikella. Mohlala: moleng wa pele le wa bobedi pina e re: "Hae ha Ncube ha ho bahlankana, mohlankana o mong feela," Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho hore motho ya teng o siyo a ntse a le teng ke tlhapa. Motho ya ka tjhong jwalo lepatlelong la setjhaba a ka tojwa ke ho hoboswa kapa a fumana phafa. Ke motho ya sebete feela ya ka buang phatlalatsa hore motho ya teng e ka hoja a le siyo. Karolo ena e mema lewa la bonna ho hlahloba bonna. Ho ya ka lewa la bonna, bonna bo bonahala ka sebete. Sena se tiisa hore barwetsana bana ba na le makgabane a bonna hobane ba sebete sa ho beha maikutlo a bona ka pina ba sa tshabe mang kapa mang hobane pina ena ba ne ba e bina moo mang le mang a utlwang.

Bophatlantjhotjho

Phatlantjhotjho ke ho bua taba ka moo e leng ka teng, motho a sa potapote kapa ho swabela eo a lokelang ho mo jwetsa nnete e le ka moo e leng ka teng. Mohlala: moleng wa boraro le wa bone pina e re: "Hae ha Ncube ha ho banna, banna ke makwala kaofela". Mela

ena e boetse e tiisa mela e mmedi ya pele hore ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho boteng ke sebete, matla, boitelo le bohlabani. Mela ena jwalo ka mola wa pele le wa bobedi, e re banna ha bayo, ba le teng empa e le hore ba balehile tau,e totobatsa hore ba teng ka ditedu feela empa ho ya ka makgabane a lebeletsweng ba nkwa ba le siyo hobane ha ba na makgabane ao. Ka Sesotho lekwala ha le ratwe ho hang. Ho ya ka dithoko tsa Mopeli Mokhachane ka hara Mangoaela (2003:28), makwala ha se batho ba hlokwang ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ba bile ba fuwa mabitso a hobosang. Ka mantswe a Mopeli Mokhachane:

> ...mapsheha a ikhetha a iponts'a,
> A ngoaparela lithaba, a hasa thaba ka masepa,
> Mapsheha a ipshehela mesifa!
>
> ...mapsheha a ikgetha, a ipontsha,
> A ngwaparela dithaba, a hasa thaba ka masepa,
> Mapsheha a ipshehela mesifa

Ho bontsha hore Basotho ha ba rate makwala, ho ya ka Mopeli Mokhachane, ba bitswa mapsheha (masepa). Mapsheha ke masepa a metsi, a itshang hobane monga ona o lahlehelwa ke taolo. Sena se ka etsahala ha motho a kula kapa a tshohile ho feta tekano. Ke ka hona Mopeli Mokhachane a hlalosang hore beng ba mapsheha ba hasa thaba ka masepa ha ba baleha hape makwala a itshela mesifa ka ona masepa ka lebaka la letswalo le tlotseng moedi. Tlhaloso ena ya Mopeli Mokhachane e pepesa hore Basotho ke setjhaba se nyonyang le ho nena bokwala. Ka ho tshwana ka hara pina ya barwetsana, ka hara buka ya Chaka ya Mofolo, barwetsana ba totobatsa hore bokwala ke ntho e mpe. Karolo ena e bitsa lewa la bonna hotla hlaloba phatlantjhotjho. Phatlantjhotjho ke ho thula ditaba ka ho se pate letho mme motho yanang le bokgabane ba bophatlantjhotjho ke motho eo ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho a nkwang a na le bonna. Ka hothula ka phatla ditaba tsa bokwala ba banna ka pina ena, barwetsana ha ho tikatiko ba na le makgabane a bonna.

Boitelo

Boitelo ke ho etsa ka matla ohle seo e bang se boima ho etsa hore se atlehe. Boitelo bo tsamaellana le boitebalo. Boitelo bo re le haeba

kotsi e ka hlaha, ya itelang a keke a ikwahlaha ka yona hobane a tla be a labalabela ho fumana seo a ipatlelang sona kapa seo a se batlelang e mong kapa ba bang. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho boitelo bo ka akaretso ka hore ke "koko ntje, ha o sa ntje o kgotshe." Kathoko hoho pepesa bokwala ba dithaka mmoho tsa Chaka le banna ba ha Senzakakhona, pina e na e phafa Chaka ka bonatla le bohale. E re: "Ba siya thaka bona a tshwarane le Sebata, A betile tau ka ditlena!". Sena ke sona seo Basotho ba se ratang ka monna, ho ba sebete le matla a ho lwanela setjhaba sa habo. Chaka o ne a betile tau e neng e puruma e se e bile e dihile monna fatshe ha banna ba bang batla menola tlhabela. Semelo sena sa Chaka, ke sona semelo sa bonna ho yaho ya ka Basotho. Maele a Basotho a kang ana: ngwana wa moshemane ke kabelwa manong, monna ke tshepe e ntsho, poho e tsejwa ka mengwapo le poho ya motho ha e behwe ya ipea a tiisa seo bonna bo lokelang ho ba sona. Ho ya ka Mokitimi (1997) monna o lokela ho itswa sehlabelo a lwane mme a shwele setjhaba sa habo. Khotso (2011) o hlalosa ha maele ana a banna a na le tshusumetso e kgolo ho etsa banna ba sebete bao bonna ba bona bo ke keng ba belaetsa hore na e fela e le banna. Boitelo ba barwetsana banaba ho pepesa makgabane a Chaka a bonna kgahlanong le bokwala ba banna ba motse bo bitsa lewa la bonna. Ka ho itela, ho beha feelaba sa tshabe ditholwana tsa ho pepesa makgabane a Chaka, lewa lena le tiisa hore barwetsana banaba na le makgabane a bonna, boitelo hobane ha ba ne ba sena boitelo ba ka be ba sa behe powaneng makgabane a Chaka hobane ba ne ba ka tshoha ho ipitsetsa tshwene kamora thaba. Empa ho latela boitelo ba bona bo susumetswang ke bonna ka hare ho bona, ke banaba bina feela moo mang le mang a utlwang mme ho se ho le ho yaho ya utlwang ho iketsetsa qeto.

Taba yaho tjhabisa le ho tiisa bonna ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ka dipina ehlile ke ntho e teng. Khotso (2017:266–267), o tiisa hore basadi ba bontsha tabatabelo tsa bona tsa bonna ka dipina. Khotso o etsa mohlala ka pina ya dingwale e reng:

He ke chele oe!
He u chele joang monna?
He ke chele bo!
He o chele joang monna?
He ke chele hle....

He ke tjhele we!
He o tjhele jwang monna?
He ke tjhele bo!
He o tjhele jwang monna?
He ke tjhele hle....

Pineng ena, bale ba bina jwalo ka ha e ka ba a buisana mme ba buisana jwalo ka ha e ka ke banna. "He o tjhele jwang monna?" Tshebediso ya lentswe monna e bontsha hore ba itakaletsa bonna kapa ba ikutlwa bonna hobane bonna hase ditho tsa botshehadi kapa botona empa ke diketso tseo setjhaba ka seng se di bonang le ho ditoloka e le bonna (Khotso 2017). Pina e phetapheta ha ngata hore "He ke tjhele ...." Hore ke tjhele ho ya ka Khotso (2017: 266–267), ho meelelo e fetang bonngwe ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Moelelo o tlwaelehileng e ka bahore mollo o ntshitswe motho leqeba. Ha moelelo o mong o tebileng e le hore motho o ikutlwa a lakatsa thobalano haholo, ka mokgwa o phahameng o ka bang wa mo ntsha taolong. Ka mantswe a mang o palesitse. Khotso (2017) o re ho totobatsa ditaba tsa takatso ya thobalano ke bonna hobane thobalano ke ntlha ya bohlokwa e bontshang hore monna o ntse a le matla a hlokehang. E le hore ka mohlala ona o ka hodimo wa pina ya dingwale le ditlhaloso, ha ho potang pina ya barwetsana ka bukeng ya Mofolo- Chaka e tiisa bonna ba barwetsana bao.

Bopetswa mafolokohlong

Bopetswa mafolokohlong ke batho ba sebediswang ditabeng tse thata. Nkoka (2020) o hlalosa petswa mafolokohlong e le motho ya sebediswang ditabeng tse thata tseo ba bang ba di tshabang. Pinengena barwetsana ba bonahala ka ho babo petswa mafolokohlong kaha ba fetisa molaetsa o lekunutu wa hore Chaka ke ngwana wa Senzangakhona mme ba laelaSenzangakhona basa moqekise hore a ilo lata ngwana wa hae. Ho laela ke ho bolaella mothoho etsa ketso eoho thweng a e etse ntle le ho mo qekisa. Mohlala: pina ena e qetella ka ho laela Senzangakakhona ho lata ngwana wa hae. "Senzangakhona, lata ngwana wa hao a orohe." Lentswe "lata" le laela Senzangakhona ho etsa ketso ya ho ya ha habo Nandi ho ya nka ngwana wa hae. Ha le mo kope empa le

a mo laela. Ho laela ho bitsa lewa la bonna. Ho ya ka Basotho, banna ke dihlooho tsa malapa. Ka hona boemo ba bona bo ba dumella ho laela mme ha ba buile ba buile ha ho na ya lokelang ho ba hloma dipotso. Barwetsana ka ho laela Senzangakhonaho ho lata ngwana wa hae, ba bontsha hantle hore ba na le bonna bo bopelletsweng ka ho bona. Barwetsana ba bua taba e thata e tshajwang ke setjhaba, ya hore Senzangakhona a late ngwana wa hae, mme sena se paka e le ka nnete hore ba na le bonna mme ke bopetswa mafolokohlong. Ka ketso ena, bonna ba barwetsana bana ha bo a dikella.

Ho rola hlompho

Ho rola hlompho ho ka hlaloseha ha ngata empa kgaolo ena e ikamahanya le tlhaloso e reng ho rola motho hlompho e ka ba ho mo hlokela hlompho. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho le ho bitsa motho ka lebitso la hae o siya boemo ba hae boo a tsebahalang le ho hlompheha ka bona kapa ho mo bitsollaka hara setjhaba ke letshwao le pepenene la ho se mo hlomphe.Pina ena ha e re morema Senzangakakhona. Empa e amo bitsolla ka ho bitsa lebitso feela le sa etellwepele ke boemo ba hae. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho ho rola hlompho ke bonna. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho, morena o hlomphuwa ke setjhaba sohle: bana le batho ba baholo ka ho tshwana. Ha ba bua le ha ba ho binwa ka yena ba ntse ba beha lentswe morena ka sehlohong. Taba ya hore barwetsana ba bitsolla Senzangakhona, ba sa re morena ke sesupo se phethahetseng sa ho ikutlwa bonna.

Basadi, thaka tsa Nandi,le bona ha ba ka ba itheka morwalo, ba qapa ya bona pina, ba qetella ka ho re:

Batho ba ile, ra sala le basele,
Ra sala le dikabatho, e se bona!
Chaka re tla mo reng e le ngwana?
Basadi ba Ncube, hlollwang;
Basadi ba Senzangakhona ha ba na thuso,
Mosadi ke Nandi a le mong to,
Hobane o tswetse ngwana e motona kahohle.

Pina ena ya basadi e qala ka hore "Batho ba ile, ra sala le basele." Qalong mona ha ho moo e fapaneng le ha basadi ba Basotho ba bina kodiyamalla. Mohlala;

> Jonna, 'na mosali oa batho!
> Ka le bona la moepa-molelle
> Monyolosa-thaba!
> Jo! Re siiloe mahlomoleng... (Matšela 1990:19).

> Jonna, nna mosadi wa batho!
> Ka le bona la moepamolelle
> Monyolosathaba!
> Jo! Re siilwe mahlomoleng.

Sebete

Pineng ena ya kodiyamalla, mosadi wa Mosotho o llela molekane ya hlokahetseng Lesitsi (1990, p.145), le Segoete (1998, p.51). Basadi bana ba binang le bona ba llela bokwala ba banna jwalo ka ha e ka ha ba sa phela. Ba re: 'ba ile". Ka Sesotho ha ho thwe motho o shwele, empa ho ka behwa ka tse ding tsa dipolelwana tsena: o se a ile, o orohile, o fetile, o phomotse jwalo jwalo, Matšela (1990, p.93–94). Pineng ena basadi ba re ba ile, re setse le basele. Ka mantswe a tobang ha ba re ba ile, ho tshwana le ha ba re ba shwele mme ke ka nepo ha baba binela kodiyamalla. Ke ka hona mofuputsi a ba tshwantshang hantle le mosadi ya binang kodiyamalla mme Mofolo jwalo ka Mosotho, ka pina ena o bontsha hantle hore na basadi ba llelang banna ha ba shwele na ba reng. Swanepoel (2019) le yena o hlalosa ha pina ena ya basadi e tshwana le kodiyamalla le ha a bontsha e fapane ka mokgwa wa ho e bina ha mmoho le lebaka la ho e bina. Swanepoel (2019) o hlalosa ha kodiyamalla e na le sephoko le ba dumelang pina hape kodiyamalla e binwa hobane mohale a hlokahetse empa ka hara buka ena ya Chaka ho se jwalo. Seo kgaolo ena e se utlwisisang ke hore ho sa natsehe hore na e binwa jwang, e tla dula e le kodiyamalla hobane maemong a mang ha mosadi ya shwetsweng a sitwa ho e bina mohlomong ka lebaka la ho sithabela, mosadi kapa basadi ba

bang ba ka bina sebakeng sa hae. Ho baleha ha banna ha tau e lwana mme e harola e mong, basadi bana ba ho hlalosa e le bosiyo kapa ho shwa ha banna hobane ha ba ne ba le teng, ba phela, ba ne ba lokela ho shwa ba lwanna senna e seng ba phaphatheha ba ba ba ilo ikwalla ka matlong. Boteng ba bona ha bo na phapano le bosiyo kapa ho shwa ha bona. Ba itshwanela hantle le ba shweleng. Ka ho pepesa bolehe ba banna bana, basadi bana ba bontsha sebete. Sebete ke bonna ho latela ditlhaloso tse seng di entswe kgaolong ena.

Ho feta mona, ka nepo jwalo ka ha Swanepoel (2019) a hlalositse, kodiyamalla e binwa ha mohale a hlokahetse kapa mosadi a hlokahelletswe ke monna. Basadi bana ba qapa le ho bina sena seo mofuputsi ka tlatsetso ya Swanepoel (2019) ba se bonang e le kodiyamalla. Ka ho bina kodiyamalla ba e binela batho ba phelang, ho ne ho ntse ho ka thwe ba a loya, ke baloi. Motho ya phelang a ke ke a binelwa dipina tsa bafu. Ho ya ka Matšela (1990) dipapadi le dipina tsa Basotho di ikamahanya le melaetsa le maemo ao di binwang ho oona. Empa ka ha basadi bana ba sebete ha ba tsotelle ditlamorao tsa pina ya bona, ba bina ka bolokolohi moo mang le mang a utlwang. Ke bona bonna boo.

Kapola leshano

Ho apola ke ho siya feela hore tse ka hare di hlahelle ka ntle. Ho ya ka Nkoka (2020) polelo ena kapola leshano e bolela ya pepesang nnete. Ka pina ena, basadi ba pepesa nnete. Basadi ba re: "Chaka re tla mo reng e le ngwana?". Ka polelo ena basadi ba makalletse banna ba hlolwang ke boikarabello mme boikarabello ba bona bo etswa ke Chaka eo ho ya ka pina ena e leng ngwana. Ka Sesotho ngwana o na le tsa hae ha ntatae le yena a ena le tsa hae. Sena se ribolla bofokodi ba banna bana hore ba bokwala hoo ba seng ba bile ba sireletswa ke bana empa e le bona ba lokelang ho sireletsa bana. Karolo ena e pepesa nnete ya hore Chaka ke monna wa ka moso ya matla ebile ke mohale. Bonna bo jwalo. Bonna ha bo na letswalo. Ka polelo ena basadi ba pepesa nnete. Sebete sa ho bua ditaba tsa nnete motho a sa tsotelle ditholwana tse bohla tseo a ka dikgolang, di tiisa hore o na le bonna. Basadi bana le bona ha ho potang sebete sa bona sa ho pepesa hore Chaka ke monna ya feteng banna bohle ha Ncube, se etsa hore bonna bo ka hare ho bona bo hloke dipotso.

Ho hlobolela motho dikobo

Ho hlobolela motho ke hore a bone tseo a sa lokelang ho di bona. Ka ketso e jwalo ke ho mo hlokela hlompho. Se na se tjhabiswa ke Nkoka (2020) ha a re ho aparela motho dikobo ke ho mo hlompha. E le hore ho mo hlobolela dikobo ke ho etsa se fapaneng. Pina e tswelapele e re: "Basadi ba Senzangakhona ha ba na thuso," Ka hore basadi ba ha Senzangakhona ha bana thuso ke ho ba seholla le ho ba theola seriti. Ho ba theola seriti, ke ho etsa hore setjhaba se se hlole se ba hlompha. Ka ho etsa jwalo ke ho ba rola hlompho mme ketso ena ha se feela ho hlompholla mafumahadi a morena Senzangakhona, empa ke ho hlompholla morena ka sebele. Pineng ena basadi ba tentsha morena moduopo, tsheya e lehwehwe. Ka Sesotho mafumahadi a morena a hlomphuwa jwalo ka ha morena a hlomphuwa. Ho hlokela mafumahadi a morena hlompho ho bitsa lewa la bonna. Bonna ho ya ka lewa la bonna, bo ka bontsha ho hloka hlompho e le ho totobatsa bonna ba bona. Mona basadi ba rolelang basadi ba morena hlompho ba totobatsa bonna bo ka ho bona hobane ha ho mosadi ya ntseng a ena le bosadi a ka rolelang mafumahadi a morena ha mmoho le morena hlompho. Ke ha feela a se a tjebetse bosadi ba hae matjoing a ka e tsang sena seo basadi ba se etsang ka mafumahadi a morena Senzangakhona.Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho mosadi ya tswalang bashanyana o rokwa ka tsela ena "Mme Mabashanyana, mosadi ya tswalang bashanyana, e ka re a ka pheta a eketsa." Se na ke sona se bolelwang ke basadi ka pina ena hore mosadi ya tswetseng moshanyana wa mohale o lokela ke ho bolediswa. Ha basadi ba sa tswalang bahale bona ba lokelwa ke ho sonngwa. Ke ka hona basadi bana ba binang ba reng basadi ba Senzangakhona ha bana thuso.

Phethelo le dikgothaletso

Dipineng tsena tse pedi tsa barwetsana le basadi, kgaolo ena e phethela ka hore ke dipina tsa ntwa. Ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho dipina di ngata, le pina ya ntwa e teng mme e binwa ke banna kapa ba ikutlwang bonna. Dipina tsena tsa barwetsana le basadi di totobatsa hlanapheto e teng ka hara setjhaba sa Basotho. Basadi ba se ba etsa tseo ka ho ya ka setjhaba sena e neng e le dietswa ke banna jwalo ka ho sireletsa bana le basadi. Kgaolo ena e etsa qeto ya hore diphetoho tse bonahalang tsa dietswa ke banna ha di

a qala mehleng ena, kgale di qadile dilemo tse lekgolo tse fetileng hobane mohlala ona wa phetoho o totobaditswe ka dipina tsa barwetsana le basadi ka hara buka ya Mofolo-Chaka e nang le dilemo tse lekgolo e phatlaladitswe. Phetoho ke hore barwetsana le basadi ba bonahala ka sebete le matla a ho boledisa Chaka ha banna bona ba hlaba ntwa ka direthe. Qeto ya kgaolo ena ke hore sebete, matla, bonatla le bohale ke ka nepo di ka bonahalang ho mefuta yohle ya batho mehleng ena ho sa natswe botona kapa botshehadi. Seo phuputso ena e se kgothaletsang ke hore banna, basadi, banana le bashanyana, bahlankana le barwetsana ba sebetse mmoho ho aha bonna bo hlokehang ka hara setjhaba. Taba ya hore ho lebellwe bonna ho banna feela e siuwe ke nako mehleng ena. Empa seo ha se bolele hore banna ba lahle bonna ba bona e be bo nkwa ke bana le basadi.

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Chapter 9

Chaka: Pulamadiboho Dingolweng

Rethabile M. Possa
Sekolo sa Dipuo le Dingolwa,
Univesithi ya Kapa
Cape Town, Afrika Borwa:
rethabile.possa@uct.ac.za

Kakaretso

Buka ya *Chaka* e ngotswe ke Thomas Mofolo mme ke pulamadiboho dingolweng tsa tsa Afrika. Mofolo o fana ka karaburetso ya pono e tebileng ka boitsebahatso ba Maafrika, boetapele, le kamano e rarahaneng pakeng tsa boitshwaro le matla. Kgaolo ena e hlahloba ka moo padi ena e bileng sesosa sa tokoloho dingolweng tsa Afrika ka ho phephetsa meetlo le ditlwaelo tsa bongodi tse tlisitsweng ke bokolone le ho hlophisa botjha dipale tse buang ka nalane le setso sa Maafrika. Mofolo bukeng ena ya hae ya *Chaka* o hanyetsa mehopolo ya Mayoropa e hobosang le ho qhelela ka thoko setso, meetlo, botjhaba le puo ya Maafrika mme o kgutlisetsa tsena tikolohong ya nnete ya Maafrika.

Phuputso ena e boetse e totobatsa bohlokwa ba *Chaka* e le pulamadiboho dingolweng tsa Maafrika kaha e toboketsa le ho kgothaletsa kananelo ya dingolwa tsa Maafrika e le tse ikemetseng mme di na le matla. Qetellong, kgaolo ena e totobatsa karolo ya Mofolo matlafatsong ya bangodi ba Maafrika ka ho kgutlisetsa neanotaba, meetlo le ho aha moetlo wa dingolwa tse shebanang le diphihlelo tsa Maafrika le ho kgothaletsa kutlwisiso e ntjha ya boitsebahatso ba Maafrika dipuisanong tsa bongodi ba lefatshe ka bophara.

Ho sekaseka mosebetsi ona wa *Chaka* le ho hlalosa ka moo a ileng a hlola dithibelo le dipehelo tsa bokolone, ke tlo sebedisa

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lewa la Kamorabokolone *(Postcolonialism)*. Lewa lena le bua ka ditlamorao tsa bokolone maikutlong, meetlong, le dikgopolong tsa batho ba neng ba le tlasa puso ya bokolone. Le tla thusa ho hlahloba ka moo bokolone bo ileng ba ama tsela eo dingolwa tsa Afrika di ngotsweng le ho ananelwa ka teng, le ka moo Mofolo a ileng a tsosolosa puo le ditaba tsa Maafrika ho lwantsha tshusumetso eo.

Mantswe a mantlha: Bokolone, Bongodi, Chaka, Kamorabokolone *(Postcolonialism)*, Meetlo le ditlwaelo, Neanotaba

Chaka: Pioneer in Work in Literature

Abstract

The book *Chaka* by Thomas Mofolo holds significant importance in African literature. Mofolo offers a profound exploration of African identity, leadership, and the complex relationship between morality and power. This study examines how this novel became a catalyst for freedom in African literature by challenging colonial literary traditions and reimagining narratives rooted in African history and culture. In *Chaka,* Mofolo rejects European notions that marginalise and devalue African traditions, customs, heritage, and language, instead restoring these elements to their rightful place within an authentic African context.

This study further highlights the pioneering role of *Chaka* in African literature, emphasising its contribution to the recognition and empowerment of African literary works as autonomous and impactful. Ultimately, this research emphasises Mofolo's significant contribution to inspiring African writers by reclaiming African narratives, customs, and cultural heritage, fostering a literary tradition that reflects African experiences, and encouraging a renewed understanding of African identity in global literary discourse.

To analyse *Chaka* and explore how it overcame colonial restrictions and limitations, this study employed the framework of postcolonialism. This approach examined the psychological, cultural, and ideological effects of colonialism on colonised people. It provides a lens through which to investigate the impact of colonialism on the production and reception of African literature, as well as Mofolo's efforts to revive African language and themes to counteract colonial influences.

Keywords: Chaka, colonialism, culture, literature, narrative, postcolonialism, traditions

Selelekela

Chaka ke buka ya boraro e ngotsweng ke Mofolo, mme e hatisitswe ke *Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS)* Morija, Lesotho, jwalo ka dibuka tsa hae tse ding tse pedi. Chaka e phatlaladitsweng ka 1925 mme ke e nngwe ya dibuka tsa bongodi tse nang le tshusumetso e kgolo dingolweng tsa Afrika. Ke sengolwa sa bohlokwa haholo dingolweng tsa Afrika. Mofolo o fana ka karaburetso ya pono e tebileng ka boitsebahatso ba Maafrika, puso, bongaka le kamano e rarahaneng pakeng tsa boitshwaro le matla. Boithuto bona bo hlahloba ka moo padi ena e bileng sesosa sa tokoloho dingolweng tsa Afrika ka ho phephetsa meetlo ya bongodi e tlisitsweng ke bokolone le ho hlophisa botjha dipale tse buang ka nalane le setso sa Maafrika. Mofolo bukeng ena ya hae ya Chaka o hanyetsa mehopolo ya Mayoropa e hobosang le ho qhelela ka thoko setso, meetlo, botjhaba le puo ya Maafrika mme o kgutlisetsa tsena tikolohong ya nnete ya Maafrika.

Leha padi ena e se e fumaneha puong ya Senyesemane, sethathong e ngotswe ka Sesotho mme ho latela nako eo e phatlaladitsweng ka yona, e na le seabo se ikgethang nalaneng ya dingolwa tsa Maafrika, tse ikamahanyang le meetlo le neanotaba mme e phephetsa bolaodi ba mefuta ya dingolwa tsa bokolone. Padi ena e pheta bophelo le puso ya mmusi wa MaZulu Shaka, e sa mo hlahise e le motho nalaneng feela, empa e le sebetsa se seholo sa ho lekola mathata a matla, bokamoso, boitsebahatso ba setso, le boitshwaro ka hara Maafrika.

Nakong eo puo ya dingolwa tsa Maafrika e neng e hatellwa haholo ke bokolone le kgatello ya thuto, Mofolo o ile a hlaha a le sebete haholo boipusong ba mahlale le bonono ba Maafrika. Ka ho sebedisa neanotaba ya Afrika, le mekgwa ya dipuo tsa lehae, Mofolo o ngola a hanana le pokello ya nalane ya makolone e entseng hore Afrika e shejwe e le naha ya bohetene e se nang lentswe le nalane ya bohlokwa.

Phatlalatso ya buka ena ya Chaka e bile teng pele ho hlaha ha dipale tse iqapetsweng tsa Afrika tsa kamora bokolone, jwalo ka Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958), leha ho le jwalo e se e ntse e lwantshana le ditaba tse bohareng tsa boitsebahatso,

khanyetso, le matla a ho pheta pale. Ka hona, Chaka hase feela buka ya pele ya Afrika empa hape ke tshiya e kgolo ya dipolotiki, boipuso ba puo le setso kgahlanong le puso ya bokolone.

Ho feta moo, Chaka e na le boemo bo phahameng lelokong la dingolwa tsa Afrika. Ditsebi tse kang Lazarus (2004) le Gikandi (2011) di hatella bohlokwa ba ho kgutlisa dingolwa tsa pele tsa Afrika eseng jwalo ka ditokomane tsa botjhaba ba mehleng (proto-nationalist), empa e le dipuisano tse rarahaneng tsa bongodi tse amanang le sejwalejwale, mohopolo, le boitsebahatso.

Ka hona, phuputso ena e tla sekaseka Chaka e le mosebetsi wa bopulamadiboho o sa lebelleng feela empa o bopa ka mafolofolo letoto la dingolwa tsa Afrika ka mora bokolone. Kgaolo ena e sekaseka mosebetsi ona wa Mofolo le ho hlalosa ka moo a ileng a hlola dithibelo le dipehelo tsa bokolone. Ka ho sebedisa lewa la Kamorabokolone (Postcolonialism) le buang ka ditlamorao tsa bokolone maikutlong, meetlong, le dikgopolong tsa batho ba neng ba le tlasa puso ya bokolone ke tla fihlela sepheo sa boithuto bona. Lewa lena le tla nthusa ho hlahloba ka moo bokolone bo ileng ba ama tsela eo dingolwa tsa Afrika di ngotsweng le ho ananelwa ka teng, le ka moo Mofolo a ileng a tsosolosa puo le ditaba tsa Maafrika ho lwantsha tshusumetso eo.

Qaka

Leha Chaka ya Mofolo e nkuwa e le e nngwe ya dipale tsa motheo bongoding ba Afrika, hangata e nnile ya hlaloswa hampe kapa ya hlokomolohuwa ka lebaka la moralo wa yona o rarahaneng wa poloto, baphetwa ba yona ba sa hlakang hantle, le kopanyo ya neanotaba le tshusumetso ya bokreste le bokolone. Ditlhahlobo tsa bongodi ba bophirimela hangata di e kentse hara mekgahlelo e rarahaneng ya nalane kapa setso, di sa ele hloko bohlokwa ba yona ba dipolotiki, setso le kgopolo. Ho na le tlhokahalo e matla ya ho hlahloba Chaka ka leihlo la kamorabokolone le kenyang maikutlo a Maafrika pele, le hlahlobang matla a bokolone le ho ananela karolo eo buka ena e e phethang ho tsosolosa boitsebahatso, puo le matla a nalane ya Maafrika. Phuputso ena e sekaseka qaka ena ka ho sheba Chaka e se feela padi ya bonono, empa hape e le polelo e matla ya bohanyetsi le nnetefatso ya setso sa Maafrika. Chaka e ngotswe

Nakong eo ho neng ho le thata haholo ka ha Makolone a ne a tsamaisa molaetsa wa bona wa bokreste le mekgwa le ditlwalo tsa bona tseo ba neng ba batla Maafrika a di tlwaele le ho phela ka tsona. Ngũgĩ (1986) o re nakong eo, Senyesemane, jwalo ka Sefora le Sepotoketsi, di ne di nkwa e le puo ya mantlha ya bongodi, esita le dipuisano tsa dipolotiki pakeng tsa batho ba Afrika morabeng o le mong le pakeng tsa ditjhaba tsa Afrika le dikhonthinente tse ding. Maemong a mang dipuo tsena tsa Yurope di ne di nkwa e le tse nang le bokgoni ba ho kopanya batho ba Afrika kgahlanong le ditshekamelo tsa bona.

Sepheo sa phuputso

Sepheo sa phuputso ena ke ho sekaseka ka botebo padi ya Chaka ya Mofolo ho ipapisitswe le lewa la Kamorabokolone, e le ho hlahloba ka moo buka ena e phepetsang mekgwa ya bongodi ba bokolone, e tsosolosang boitsebahatso ba Maafrika, le ho kgutlisetsa puo, setso le nalane ya Maafrika boemong bo hlomphehang. Kgaolo ena e hlahloba ka moo padi ena e bileng sesosa sa tokoloho dingolweng tsa Afrika ka ho phephetsa meetlo ya bongodi e tlisitsweng ke bokolone le ho hlophisa botjha dipale tse buang ka nalane le setso sa Maafrika. Mofolo bukeng ena ya hae ya Chaka o hanyetsa mehopolo ya Mayoropa e hobosang le ho qhelela ka thoko setso, meetlo, botjhaba le puo ya Maafrika mme o kgutlisetsa tsena tikolohong ya nnete ya Maafrika. Phuputso ena e boetse e totobatsa bohlokwa ba Chaka e le pulamadiboho dingolweng tsa Maafrika ka ha e toboketsa le ho kgothaletsa kananelo ya dingolwa tsa Maafrika e le tse ikemetseng mme di na le matla. Qetellong, kgaolo ena e totobatsa karolo ya Mofolo matlafatsong ya bangodi ba Maafrika ka ho kgutlisetsa neanotaba, meetlo le ho aha moetlo wa dingolwa tse shebanang le diphihlelo tsa Maafrika le ho kgothaletsa kutlwisiso e ntjha ya boitsebahatso ba Maafrika dipuisanong tsa bongodi ba lefatshe ka bophara.

Mokgwaphuputso

Phuputso ena e sebedisa mokgwaphuputsotlhalosi e leng mokgwa o loketseng haholo bakeng sa ho sekaseka dingolwa tsa bongodi ho latela maemo a tsona a setso le a nalane. Ho ya ka Tenny le ba bang (2025) Mokgwaphuputsotlhalosi o hlalosa ditsela le mekgwa

ya boitshwaro ba motho eo ho ka bang thata ho e bala. Mokgwa ona o boetse o botsa dipotso tse bulehileng tseo dikarabo tsa tsona di sa kenngweng ha bonolo dipalong, tse kang 'jwang' le 'hobaneng.' Dintho tse kang diphihlelo, maikutlo le boitshwaro di ka ba thata ho di tshwara ka nepo le ka bongata. Ka lehlakoreng le leng, mokgwa ona o dumella bafuputsi ka bobona ho hlalosa ka moo, hobaneng, kapa seo ba neng ba se nahana, maikutlo le ho ba le phihlelo ka nako e itseng kapa ketsahalong e thahasellisang. Ka hoo mekgwa ona o tlo nthusa ho:

- Ho bala ka hloko buka ya Chaka: Sena se kenyelletsa tlhahlobo e tebileng ya puo ya buka, matshwao a tshwantshetsang, poloto, kgolo ya baphetwa, hammoho le dihlooho tse kang matla, boitsebahatso le bohanyetsi.
- Hlaloba maemo a nalane le setso: Buka ena e behilwe ka hara maemo a nalane le setso sa Maafrika nakong ya kgale kgale. Sena se kenyelletsa tshusumetso ya baromuwa ba baruti, boteng ba bokolone, le neanotaba e ileng ya susumetsa Mofolo ho pheta dipale.
- Hlahloba neanotaba: Chaka e na le tshusumetso e kgolo ya neanotaba, tsela eo Mofolo a ngotseng sengolwa sena ka teng se na le botshomo, dipina, dilotho, maele le maelana. Eleng se etsang hore ebe pulamadiboho dingolweng tsa Afrika kaha e le boloka le ho ntshetsapele neanotaba le puo ya Sesotho.

Mokgwaphuputsotlhalosi o sebedisitswe phuputsong ena mme o nthusitse hore ke hlahlobe dingolwa tse ding tse ngotseng ka Chaka ya Mofolo le ho nyakurela Chaka ho bona hore ke di fe dintlha tsa bohlokwa tse arabang sepheo sa phuputso ena. Mokgwa ona o bile bohlokwa haholo phuputsong ena.

Lewa la phuputso

Lewa ke motheo oo phuputso e ipapisang le oona ho hlahloba tjhadimo ya ditaba. Ke leihlwana leo mofuputsi a le sebedisang ho etsa phuputso mme le thusa hore mofuputsi a tsebe ho tsepamisa dintlha tsa hae a sa ferekane. Ke ka hoo le leng bohlokwa diphuputsong tsohle. Phuputso ena e sebedisa lewa la Kamorabokolone. Le ipapisitse le ditsebi tse kang Edward Said,

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, le Homi Bhabha, mme le lekola ka moo bokoloniale bo thehileng tlhahiso ya dingolwa le ka moo dingodi tsa Maafrika di ileng tsa latola ditshusumetso tsena. Phuputso ena e tla itshetleha ditabeng tsa Ngũgĩ. Ho tsitlallela ha Ngũgĩ mabapi le bohlokwa ba puo dipolotiking ho Decolonising the Mind (1986) ho fana ka lesedi la bohlokwa leo ka lona ho ka utlwisiswang qeto ya Mofolo ya ho ngola ka Sesotho. Dintlha tsa lewa lena di thusa ho bala ka botebo ka moo Chaka e latolang tsa bokolone le ho kenya tshebetsong matla a puo le meetlo Afrika.

Lewa la Ngũgĩ la Decolonizing the Mind (1986) le bohlokwa haholo tlhahlobong, haholo ha ho hlaloswa kgetho ya Mofolo ya ho ngola ka Sesotho. Ha a pheha kgang ka bohlokwa ba dipuo, Ngũgĩ o botsa dipotso tse latelang; ke hobaneng ha mongodi wa MoAfrika, kapa mongodi leha e le o fe, a lokela ho ameha haholo ka ho nka puo ya habo hore e ruise maleme a mang? Ke hobaneng ha a lokela ho nka e le mosebetsi wa hae o kgethehileng? Ha ho mohla re kileng ra ipotsa: re ka ruisa dipuo tsa rona jwang? Re fihletse jwang kamohelong ee ya tlhaloso e makatsang ya boemo bo ke keng ba hanyetswa ba Senyesemane dibukeng tsa rona, moetlong ya rona le dipolotiking tsa rona? Karabo ya Ngũgĩ ka boyena dipotsong tse botswang ka puo ya Maafrika dingolweng, ke ho ngola ka puo ya habo rona e seng Senyesemane.

Dipotso tsena tsa Ngũgĩ ke tsona tse etsang hore ebe buka ena ya Mofolo e ipabole kaha e fapana hole le dipehelo le maemo ba bokolone. Ke lona lebaka leo ke kgethileng lewa lena e le ho pepesa le ho pakahatsa hore efela Mofolo e le sengodi se hlwahlwa mme se sebete ka hore o ile a ema le puo, meetlo le puso ya ha habo ntle le tshekamelo.

Tse badilweng

Mofolo o ngotse buka ena nakong ya mathata a maholo a dipolotiki Afrika Borwa. Mofuputsi Attwell (1987) o totobatsa bohlokwa ba ho utlwisisa buka ena ka ho e beha maemong a nalane ya nako eo. Sena se amana le diketsahalo tsa borabele ba Bambatha ka 1906, se ileng sa tsosa mohopolo wa boitsebahatso ba setjhaba sa MaZulu, haholoholo ka lefa la borena ba Chaka. Ka hona, *Chaka* ke sengolwa se rarahaneng sa bongodi, ya nalane, neanotaba le puso.

Dingodi tse mmalwa di ngotse le ho hlahloba buka ena ya Mofolo. Boholo ba tsona ba pakahatsa sebete, boqhetseke le bokgoni ba Mofolo ba ho lwanela puo ya habo e leng Sesotho. Dingodi tsena di bontsha ha Mofolo a ile a iketsa sehlabelo ka ho hanana le mehopolo ya makolone a neng a batla hore dingolwa tsa nako eno ya bomakgolo a robong di ngolwe ka tsela ya bona ya ho nena setso le ho phahamisa bokreste. Sengolwa sena sa Chaka se nkile nako ho ka phatlalatswa ka lebeka la ditaba tse amanang le neanotaba, puso le matla a Maafrika. Chaka ho ya ka Attwell (1987:53) e phethetswe ka 1910 empa ya phatlalatswa ka 1925. Leha ho le jwalo, Kunene (1985:113) o bontsha hore pejana maikutlo a hore tieho ya ho phatlalatsa Chaka e bakilwe ke mamishinari ho fumanehile hore ha se nnete. Empa dilemo tse fetang tse leshome di ile tsa feta pele sengolwa sena se sa phatlalatswa.

Attwell (1993) o bolela hore ha Mofolo a ngola Chaka, o ne a etsa mosebetsi wa ho hlahloba nalane le setso. Se etsahetseng ka Chaka nalaneng ya bongodi ba Afrika Borwa se tshwantshetswa ka ditaba tsa nnete. Ka ho sebedisa diketsahalo tsa nalane le setso, Mofolo o ile a leka ho senola nnete e tebileng ka botjhaba ba Maafrika haholoholo boitsebahatso ba MaZulu le ka moo ba ileng ba hatellwa ke bokolone (Attwell 1993:59). Sena se bontsha hore Mofolo o ne a se a qadile ho hlwaya maikutlo a boipelaetso le ho hanyetsa bokolone Afrika Borwa. Attwell (1987:51) o qotsa (Gérard 1981:118) moo a reng Chaka ya Mofolo e tolokwa haholo ka mokgwa o tshwanang. Ditlhahlobong le dithutong tsa pele, ho tloha dilemong tsa bo1930 ho ya ho dilemong tsa bo1960, thahasello e ne e lebisitswe ditshobotsing tse kang ditshusumetso tse phahametseng tlhaho ka Chaka, kgohlano pakeng tsa qetello le tokoloho, le hore na ke ho fihlela kae Chaka e fuwang ditshwanelo tsa botho tse haellang setshwantshong sa setso sa morena e le mohatelli ya nyoretsweng madi. Phuputsong e nngwe ya hae Attwell (2005) o tsepamisa maikutlo ho rarahaneng ha Chaka e le sehlahiswa sa tshusumetso ya mamishinari le bohanyetsi. Leano la pale la Mofolo, jwalo ka ha le bontshitswe ke Chapman (1996), le kenyelletsa ditekanyo tsa boitshwaro le tsa ditshomo tsa boholoholo tse qholotsang ho bala ka mokgwa o bonolo wa baetapele ba Maafrika ka bokgabane.

Dingodi tse kang Lindfors (2002) o hlahloba qaleho ya dingolwa tsa Afrika le bohlokwa ba lentswe la Mofolo mehleng e neng e laolwa ke dipale tsa bokolone. Ka ho le leng, Lindfors o totobatsa hore Chaka e emetse phetoho ho boikemelo ba dingolwa tsa Afrika. Malaba (1986:61) ha a tshwaela o bona Chaka, e le padi e qapuweng ka boqhetseke ka ho fetesisa ya bophelo le puso ya Chaka, e ngotsweng ke mongodi wa motho e motsho wa Afrika Borwa ho fihlela jwale. Malaba o bontsha hore botle ba yona bo itshetlehile haholoholo matleng a tjhebelopele ya Mofolo. O bontsha hore temana e hlalosang kopano ya Chaka le thokolosi e beuwe ka boqhetseke haholo. O hlalosa ketsahalo ena mme o bona e le boqhetseke bo hlollang ba bongodi ba Mofolo. Ke lona lebaka le entseng hore Senghor a rate Mofolo, a mo bohe e le sengodi se hlwahlwa le ka lebaka la hore o thehile mohale ya nang le dibopeho tse ngata jwalo ka Chaka.

Chaka ha se feela pale ya nalane, empa e boetse e le pitso ya hore Maafrika a boye sekwele. Jeyifo (1990) le yena o bua ka Chaka e le mosebetsi wa bohlokwa wa ho bopa dingolwa tsa kganyetso, haholoholo phephetsong ya wona ya bonnete ba molao wa bolaodi ba bokolone. Sena se tsamaellana le Negritude, e neng e totobatsa ho kgutlela metsong ya Afrika ho fumana boitsebahatso bo sentsweng ke bokolone. Ka ho hopola Afrika pele ho bokolone, Mofolo o kgothalletsa Maafrika ho phephetsa bokamosong ba bona. Bangodi ba Maafrika ba buang Sefora ba ile ba utlwa hore Mofolo o na le maikutlo a tshwanang le a bona, leha e ne e le nakong tse fapaneng.

Burness (1976) o re pono ya sejwalejwale ya Mofolo e bonahala ho Dingiswayo, moetapele ya nahanang le ya ratang setjhaba sa hae. Leha ho le jwalo, Dingiswayo o hlotswe ke matla a nalane le mefokolo ya batho, mme sena se hlahisa phapang e matla dipakeng tsa hae le Chaka, e leng sehlooho se seholo sa pale (Burness 1976:leq. 14). Sehlooho sena se ka be se susumeditse bangodi ba buang Sefora ho hlophisa diphetolelo tsa bona tsa Chaka ka motheo wa ditaba tse tshwanang.

Chaka e boetse ya sekasekwa ke dingodi tse ding mme ba e hlalosa e le sengolwa sa motheo sa Afrika. Killam le Rowe (2000) ba hlokomela tlhahiso ya yona e ikgethang ya meetlo le neanotaba le pale e ngotsweng, e totobatsang tlatsetso ya yona dingolweng

tsa jwale tsa Afrika. Ho ya ka Gikandi (2003), Chaka e eme e le padi ya pele e lokollang nalane ya Afrika ketselletsong ya bokolone.

Chinua Achebe (1975) o ile a thoholetsa dingodi tsa Maafrika tse ngotseng ka maleme a ha habo bona, mme ba toboketsa hore ele ho kgutlisa boitsebiso ka ho pheta dipale ho ne ho le bphlokwa ho fenyeng dithuto tsa bokoloni. Ka tsela e tshwanang, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) yena o tsitlalletse ka bohlokwa ba dipuo dingolweng mme o qotsa sengolwa sa Mofolo e le sengolwa se matla.

Ha Appiah (1992) a nyakurela sengolwa sa Chaka a ipapisitse le boitsebiso le sejwalejwale o re mosebetsi wa Mofolo o bontsha nako ya phetoho monahanong wa Maafrika e tobane le mathata a ho hokahanya moetlo le maikutlo a botjhaba a ntseng a hlaha.

Dingodi tsena di thusitse phuputso ena haholo kaha di tiisa le ho pakahatsa hore Mofolo ke sengodi se hlwahlwa dingoding tsa Afrika. Leha ho le jwalo, dingodi tsena ha di hlahlobe buka ya Chaka e le ho pakahatso bopulamadiboho dingolweng tsa Maafrika e leng sepheo sa kgaolo ena.

Kakaretso ya Chaka

Buka ya Chaka e pheta pale ya leeto la Chaka le kenyeletsa phetoho ya hae ya kelello le ho wa ha hae qetellong. Pale e qala ka tswalo ya hae ka thoko ho lenyalo mme e qetella Chaka a lahlehelwa ke kelello le ho bolawa ke bana babo. Ntatae, Senzangakhona, o ile a susumetswa hore a mo lahle, ka lebaka la mabaka a bolaodi, mme Chaka a hola a le tlokotsing a lokela ho itshematlela bophelong.

Ketsahalo ya bohlokwa e etsahala ha Chaka a etelwa ke morena wa matsha torong. Sebata sena seo e leng noha e tshabehang se tadima Chaka ka matla ka hara thaka tsa mahlo mme se noha bokamoso ba hae.

Mophetwa e mong wa bohlokwa ka hara Chaka ke Isanusi, moprofeta, ya fanang ka kutlwisiso ya bohlokwa ya tsela eo Chaka a nyolohileng ka yona le ho wa ha hae hamorao ka lebaka la bofokodi ba hae ba boitshwaro. Isanusi ke mophetwa ya rarahaneng mme ya sa hlakang hantle, empa o bonahala eka ke kgale a tseba Chaka, empa e le hona ba kopanang. Batho ba bang

ba bona Isanusi e le moemedi wa bobe ka hare ho Chaka, ba bang ba mo nka e le moya wa hae o matla kapa moemedi wa diabolose. Empa kutlwisiso e jwalo e nyenyefatsa botebo ba semelo sa Isanusi, bo hlahisitsweng ke Mofolo ka bokgabane.

Chaka o dumela ho latela tataiso ya Isanusi ka boinehelo bo felletseng, mme bophelo ba hae bo fetoha ka ho sa feleng. Ha ntatae a hlokahala, Chaka o bitswa mojalefa; mme ha Dingiswayo a bolawa, o nka puso ya hae.

Empa matla a qala ho mathela Chaka hloohong. Chaka o etsa ditlolo tsa molao tse ngata, ho kenyeletsa le polao ya setjhaba sa habo. Mofolo o hlalosa tshusumetso e kgolo ya Mfecane nakong ena ya pefo le dikgohlano.

Qetellong, Chaka o qala ho hlahelwa ke mathata a kelello. O tshwenyeha ke ditoro tse bohloko le diketsahalo tse mo mathelang kelellong ka bohloko bo boholo. Boemo ba Chaka bo mpefala hofihlela e se eka o lahlehelwa ke kelello.

Ha a le lekgatheng, o bona ditshwantsho tse fetang kelellong ho kenyeletsa le pono ya Isanusi le balekane ba hae ba hole. Mantswe a hae a ho qetela ke seprofeto se bohloko: "Le mpolaya ka tshepo ya hore le tla ba marena ha ke se ke shwele; athe le lahlehile, ha ho jwalo, hobane umlungu o a tla, mme ke yena ya tla le busa, lona le be bahlanka ba hae."(leq 163).

Buka e phethelwa ka mokgwa o moholo, ka maele a rorisang lefa la Chaka le setjhaba sa MaZulu. Ho fela ha buka ho bontsha thuto ya setso: hore bobe bo tla fuwa kotlo.

Tlhahlobo le tshekatsheko

Karolo ena e tla teka le ho hlahloba dikarolo tse hlahang ka hara buka ya Chaka tse ipapisitseng le bopulamadiboho dingolweng tsa Afrika. Tsena di kenyeletsa bohlokwa ba puo, neanotaba, setso le puso.

Bohlokwa ba dipuo tsa Maafrika

Tshebediso ya Mofolo ya Sesotho e hanyetsana le tjhebo ya makolone ya hore dipuo tsa Afrika ha di a ntlafala le ho se be boemong ba ho sebediswa ho ngolweng le ho sebediswa

dipolotiking, kgwebong le thutong. Sena se pakahatswa ke Ngũgĩ (1981) o re puo jwalo ka setso le yona e na le dintlha tse tharo tsa bohlokwa. Setso ke sehlahiswa sa nalane seo le sona se bontshang nalane. Setso ka mantswe a mang ke mokgwa dipuisano boitsekong le taolong ya moruo.

Qaleho ya ho ngolwa ha puo ya Sesotho

Ho ngolwa ha puo ya Sesotho ho qadile nakong ya ho fihla ha baruti ba tumelo ya Bokreste tikolohong e Borwa ya Afrika dilemong tsa bo 1800. Baruti ba ne ba haha mekhatlong, kapa dikerekeng, tsa Prosetanta tse kang Dutch Reformed Church, London Missionary Society, Lutherans, Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), Wesleyans jwalojwalo. Ba ile ba qala tshebetso ya bona ya ho sokollela batho ba tikoloho ena tumelong ya bona ya bokreste. Tsela ya bona ya tshebetso mosebetsing ona, e ne e le hore ba fihlele boemo ba hore motho e mong le e mong a ipalle bebele mme a e utlwisise a sa hloke hore a e tolokelwe. Ka lebaka lena, ba ile ba akofela ho ithuta dipuo tsa batho ba tikoloho ena ka sepheo sa hore ba bone hore na ba ka ba le mokgwa wa ho di ngola e le hore bebele e tle e tsebe ho fetolela dipuong tse jwalo, le ho ruta batho ho bala le ho ngola e le hore ba tle ba tsebe ho ipalla Bebele (Rakotsoana le Thabane 2024:9).

Ka dilemo tsa bo1816, baruti ba dikereke, kapa mekgatlo e mmalwa ya dikereke, ba ile ba qala ho fumana tsela eo ba ka ngolang dipuo tsa Setswana le ho fetolela bebele hona dipuong tseo e le hore diphutheho tsa bona tsa batho ba buang Setswana di tsebe ho ipalla bebele ka puo ya tsona. Ho utlwahala ha motho ya ileng a ba le seabo sa bohlokwahadi tshebetsong ena ebile moruti Robert Moffat, ya hlaloswang a ile a fetolela bebele puong ya Setswana kapele kamora hore a fihle Kuruman, ka 1817. Ho utlwahala hore, ka lebaka la tshebetso ena ya hae, Setswana ebile puo ya pele ya hore ho be le bebele e ngotsweng ka yona dipuong tsa batho ba batso Afrika Borwa (Bible Society of South Africa).

Ha baruti ba mokgatlo wa PEMS ba fihla Lesotho ka 1833, ba ile ba latela mohlala wa bomphato ba bona hara Batswana ka tshebetso. Ka dilemo tse tharo fela ba fihlile naheng ya Basotho,

ba ne ba se ba tseba puo ya Sesotho hoo ba neng ba se ba kgona ho fetolela bebele Sesothong. Ntho e bonahalang e ile ya ba thusa ke ho latela maele a Sesotho a reng, nonyana e ahela ka tshiba tsa e nngwe, kapa thebe e sehellwa hodima e nngwe (Rakotsoana le Thabane 2024:9). Hona ho bolela hore ha ba ka ba qala qalong, empa ba ile ba etsa qeto ea ho ahella hodima mosebetsi o neng o se o entswe ke Moffat le bomphato wa hae hara Batswana ha ba hlokomela hore dipuo tseo tse pedi (Setswana le Sesotho) ha di a fapana haholo. Ho etsa jwalo ho ile ha ba nolofaletsa tshebetso, mme boithuto ba bona ba ho bua Sesotho le ho se ngola ha tsamaya kapele ke hona. Tshebetso e sekgahla ya baruti hara Basotho e ile ya etsa hore ebe ka 1839 ho se ho hatisitswe bukana ya ABC ka puo ya Sesotho eo ka yona ba neng ba ruta Basotho ditlhaku tsa puo ya Senyesemane ele hona ho ba thusa hore ba tsebe ditlhaku tseo ba ka di sebedisang ho ngola ka puo ya Sesotho.

Ka 1840, e mong wa baruti bana ba PEMS, Eugene Casalis, o ile a ngola le ho hatisa buka ya pele ya ho tsepamisa maikutlo boithutong ba ho bua le ho ngola puo ya Sesotho. Buka eo e ile ya bitswa Etudes sur langue sechuana précédéés d'une introduction sur l'origine et les progréss de la mission chez les Bassoutos. Dilemong tsona tseo tsa bo1830, baruti ba ile ba qala ho fetolela bebele Sesothong, ba itataisa ka mokgwa le ditsela tse neng di sebedisitswe ke bomphato ba bona tumelong ha ba sebetsana le ho ngolwa le ho balwa ha Setswana hara Batswana. Ho feta mona ba ne ba itataisa ka sengolwa se seng se neng se ile sa ngolwa ke Casalis boithutong ba hae ba ho ngola le ho bala Sesotho hona ka bo1830 se bitswang Etudes sur langue sechuana (Rakotsoana le Thabane 2024).

Dingolwa tse ding tsa Sesotho di ile tsa latela, le tsona, ka bo 1840. Tsona di akga mosebetsi wa Emille Rolland wa ho fetolela Sesothong difela tsa kereke le dikarolwana tse itseng tsa bebele, tse ileng tsa hatiswa ka 1843 (Elphick & Davenport 1997:118). Mosebetsi ona wa phetolelo ya bebele o ne o kenyeletsa ho nyahlatswa ha mantswe a sa tsejweng ke Basotho phetolelong tse neng di se di le teng tsa Setswana, ho kenngwa a tsejwang a Sesotho sebakeng sa ona. (Arbousset 1991:180). Ka tlase ke mohlala wa pampiri ya ditaba, Leselinyana la Lesotho e neng e kopantse Setswana le Sesotho.

Ke leselinyana le bontshang medumo ya Setswana e kopaneng le Sesotho.



Selemo sa XIII. EA BOTLALE O ITHUTA KA METLA. Theko: 4s.

LESELINYANA LA LESOTHO,

Lekephe 3. 1879. Tlakubele.

LESELINYANA LA LESOTHO.

LITLOGO: — Merapelo e etsoang Kerekeng. — Na Molimo o re, go bolemo na? — Lengolo la Harônoua ba Lekereke. — Go zimela oa bo-Elsabare. — Tsa Lefu. — Matsekane mafa Mafakane. — Mosebetsi oa Molimo. — Lifeti. — Tsa Moshoeshi. — Ntoa ea England le Afghanistan. — Ntoa ea Mazulu. — Litaba. — Litefo. — Motlalo o mothle — Lithebiso. — Theko ea Libuka tsa Sesôthô. — Potso.

Merapelo e etsoang Kerekeng.

Go thata go rapela kerekeng. E séng ka gore, mohô o tsaba go phagamisa lentsue gar'a phuthego ka go re, o thla bua hampe, kapa o thla tloka litaba, empa e le ka gobane ba bang ba fosa e sa le go kaleng ka go re, ga ba tsebe seo thapelo e etsoang kerekeng e tsuanetseng go ba sona.

Go rapela, ke go bua le Molimo.

Ha re rapela, re re, re bôlella Molimo litaba tsee re ka bang le tsona ka 'nepelông tsa rôna, tsa tebôgo, tsa go inyatsa, go kôpela meéa le 'mele ea rôna tsee e phelang ka tsona. Morèna o itse: " Meo ba babeli kapa ba bararô ba phuthegileng teng ka lebitso lâ ka, ke teng gar'a bona. " 'Me re bua le éena ka baka la go tšêpa go ba teng ga gae gar'a phuthego, leha re sa 'mone ka matlo.

Merapelong ea phuthego, kereke eotle e re, ea rapela. Empa botle ba ke ke ba athomisa melomo ea bona go bua. Go thla rapela ba babeli kapa ba bararô, ba iketsa melomo ea phuthego, ba buela botle ba khumamileng, ba bôlela litaba tsee ba ka beng ba li bôlela.

Ha go le yualo, uèna, morapeli, gôpôla litaba tsena tse peli, ha u rapela kerekeng:

U bua le Molimo.

U buela phuthego.

Ke rialo ka baka la merapelo ea ba bang, e nang le molatô ka go re, ga e tsuanele go bôleloa kerekeng.

E mong, ha a rapela, o nka litaba tsa Bibele, kapa tsa Iseraele, kapa tsa baapostola, a li bôlele ka mokhoa o mothle, go bonagale gore ke mothô ea rutegileng Mangolong a Galalelang. Empa go etsa yualo, ke phoso. Mothô eo o bua le phuthego, o ruta phuthego, *ga a bue le Molimo*, ga a buele phuthego, o mpa o phetela bathô tse seng li etsagetse khale, tse tsuanetseng go bôleloa ka khôthatso, e séng ka thapelo.

E mong, ha a rapela kerekeng, o gôpôtse ba leng teng, le litaba tsa bona; o tseba ea shuetsoeng ke moratuoa oa gae, o tseba ea tepeletseng tumelong ea gae, o tseba le ea bathlang tsela ea tsôkôlôgo. Morapeli eo hè, o nka sebaka sa thapelo gore a khôthatse ba yualo, a ba tšelise, a ba tsôse. Ke ntho e nthle, baena ha ba khôthatsana kerekeng ea Morèna. Empa, *go rapela ke go bua le Morèna*, e séng go bua le bathô. Phoso, ke ha re re, re buela phuthego go Molimo ka thapelo, athe re khôthatsa ba bang ka mantsue a rôna.

Ba bang ba se ba tlagile ba khethileng sebaka sa merapelo ea phuthego gore ba tlagise lipelaelo tsa bona ka cona, ba nyatse e mong eo ba nang le litaba le éena, ba mo ntšetse liphoso. Thapelong ea bona, ba rapella moganyetsi oa bona ka mathla a bona 'otle, ba mo kôpela pako, ponesetso le tsokôlôgo. Gasé gore ba 'nathlela tse yualo ka lipelôgo tsa bona; ba mpa ba rata go mo tsebisa lipelaelo tsa bona gar'a phuthego, ba iphetetse yualo, ba kokobetse matšuafo a bona.

Thapelo e yualo re ka re'ng ka cona? Morapeli eo ke monyefôli. *Ga a bue le Molimo* thapelong ea gae, ga a buele phuthego. O talimile nguan'abo ea mo sitetsoeng, 'me o 'netsa ka litaba tsa thapelo.

Ba bang ba ipathlela thoriso ea bathô ka baka la merapelo e methle ea bona; ba bang ba bua-bua fêèla, ba sé na taba ee ba e bôlellang Molimo. 'Me liphoso li sa le teng tse ngata tse ka bôleloang mona.

Ke mpa ke re: Go ruta, le go khôthatsa, le go ntša liphoso tsa ba bang, ke tšuanelo ea bakreste. Go mpe go sé ke ga khôthoa sebaka sa merapelo ea phuthego gore go rutoe, go khôthatsoe, go nyatsuoe. " Ntho e ngue le e ngue e na le sebaka sa eona "

Merapelong ea phuthego, re gôpôleng Molimo fêèla, re bue le oona; re bone gore, ea rapelang a bôlele

Ka tsela e jwalo, baruti ba ile ba atleha hore e be maqalong a bo1840 ho se ho na le tsela e batlang e tsitsitse ya ho ngolwa le ho balwa ha Sesotho e latelang dingolweng tsa sedumedi tsa Sesotho le dingolweng tse ding tsa Sesotho tseo e seng tsa sedumedi.

Nakong eo Sesotho se qetang ho ngolwa, papisong le ntatae, Mokhachane ya neng a sa bonahale a dumela tabeng ya ho ngolwa le ho balwa ha Sesotho, Morena Moshoeshoe o ile a bonahala a nkehile haholo ke kgonahalo ya ho ngolwa le ho balwa ha Sesotho. Sena se pakahatswa ke polelo eo a neng a e entse puisanong ya hae le e mong wa baruti ba PEMS, Thomas Arbousset, leetong la bona la the Blue Mountains ka 1840.

Moshoeshoe o tlalehwa a ne a bontshe thabo le ho hlollwa ha hae ka ho ngolwa le ho balwa ha Sesotho ka mantswe a reng:

> Ke leboha libukana tsena tse ngotsoeng ke baruti hobane, ka tsona, Sesotho se tla lula se bolokehile ho sa kena-kenoane le sona: Ke seo le sona se ngotsoe! A mosebetsi o babatsehang o entsoeng pampiring ea lona! Puo ea ka e tlo sala e le puo ea ka pampering (Arbousset 1991:102).

Mona Moshoeshoe yena o ne a thabetse hore puo e leng neanotaba, meetlo, ditaba tsa puso, le tse ding tsa setjhaba sa hae di tla ngolwa mme di ke ke tsa lebaleha. O ne a sa hlokomele hore ho ngolwa hona ho ne ho laolwa ho latela dipehelo tsa baruti bana. Ke moo Mofolo yena a ileng a latela teboho ena ya Moshoeshoe ka ho boloka Sesotho hore se se ke sa kenakenwa jwale ka ha Moshoeshoe a tjholo. Mofolo o kenyeleditse dithoko, dipina, neanotaba le puso ya Basotho ka hara Chaka e leng seo Ngũgĩ a reng ke kananelo ya rona e matla e nang le tshusumetso ya puo e ileng ya matlafatswa ke dipapadi tseo re neng re di bapala ka mantswe ka dilotho, maele, mekgabopuo kapa ka mantswe a neng a sa utlwisisehe empa a hlophisitswe ka mmino. Ngũgĩ o tswelapele ho bontsha hore re ithutile mmino wa puo ya rona re sa tsepamisa maikutlo haholo molaetseng. Ke ka hoo Chaka e nang le maemo lethathamong la dingolwa tsa Afrika ka lebaka la ho beha ditaba ka tsela e bokgabane. Mofolo ka buka ena ya hae o butse ditsela bakeng sa bangodi ba kang Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, le Wole Soyinka, ba ileng ba tswelapele ho hlahloba mathata a boitsebiso ba Maafrika kgahlanong le tshetiso ya bokolone. Ka ho sebedisa nalane ya Afrika, ditshomo le puo, Mofolo o ile a theha moralo wa kganyetso ya bongodi o ntseng o tswela pele ho ama bongodi ba kajeno. Ke ka hoo re nang le bolokolohi kajeno ba ho ngola ka dipuo tsa rona le ho ruta ka tsona.

Bolaodi ba bongodi ba Maafrika

Buka ena ya *Chaka* e hanana le dipehelo tsa bokolone ka ho theha padi ya yona ho ditheho tsa Afrika le nalane ya bopolotiki. Pale ya bophelo ba Chaka e dumella Mofolo ho nyatsa le ho keteka boetapele ba Afrika. Ho e na le ho hlahisa Chaka e le motho wa

mohatelli feela, Mofolo o thatafatsa botho ba hae, a bontsha mohale ya kotsi ya matla eo takatso ya hae le boitshwaro bo sa hlakang bo siyang dipotso tse tebileng ka yena. Ha re sheba kgolong ya hae, Mofolo o bontsha Chaka e le mohale ya sebete le matla mme re bona a bolaya tau e neng e tshajwa ke banna. O re;

> ... ba utlwa e se e rora hona haufiufi le bona mona, e rora jwalo ho utlwahala hore e se e tlola. Ya re feela, "ham-m-m-!"
>
> ya be e se e le ka hare:
>
> Ao! ba qhalana ba re swaa, ba baleha patlaka; bongata ba balehela hae, le ho e bona ba sa e bona, ba utlwile mororo feela; mong a theosa, mong a nyolosa, mong a rapamisa, mong a leba hae feela; le yena elwa ya neng a ntse a kgothatsa ba bang, ya hla ya eba yena ya tloseletsang pele,... Chaka a tla a matha a etswa thekong e hole; a re o sa thiba e mong hore ba phalle, empa ha bonahala hore eo ha a sa na puo, le sebaka ha se sa le eo, taba e se e le paleho feela. bobedi ya be e le ho yena.
>
> Chaka, ka ho hloka letswalo a e emela; ya tla, ya tlola; yare ha e le hodimo sebakeng, a re thee hanyenyane feela, ea tla tseparela moo a neng a le teng, ka ha e ne e ke ke ya thinya sebakeng e se nonyana; empa yare e sa le hodimo, e eso fihle fatshe, feela ha e qala ho atamela, a e nyafa ka le lephatshwa mohlabetsaneng; yare ha e fihla fatshe, e ewa, ya wela ruri.
>
> Moo, ha e qetedisa ho shwa, meroro ya yona ya eba ntho esele;
>
> Chaka a e tadima, a e tadima a sa tshoha, esake o tadimile sebata se bolayang, le hona se neng se tlolella yena. Ha Chaka a e hlaba, sehlopha sa banna se se se kena hae; mme mororo wa yona o tshabehang wa qetello wa etsa hore bao ba balehang ba be ba kene matlung, le ho hetla ba sa ka ba hetla. Lerata la basadi kantle, ho bona ka matlung, ya ka seboko sa bao e ba bolayang, mme ba nna ba tiisa menyako! (leq17).

Re bona ka moo Mofolo a behang pepeneneng bokwala ba banna ha ba baleha tau empa o bontsha bonatla le sebete ka Chaka. O bontsha Chaka a hloka letswalo mme a ile a emela tau hore e tle ho yena. Ka lehlakoreng le leng o re banna ba ile ba tutumolotseha ho leba hae, ya re le ha e se e rora la ho qetela ba tjhobela ka matlung mme ba kwadisa mamati ba sa hetle le morao. Kamora ho bolaya tau, Chaka e ile ya eba mohale motseng mme banna le bahlankana ba tlalwa ke mona o tshabehang kaha ba ne ba tsheuwa ke basadi hore ba ile ba baleha mme Chaka a sala a bolaya tau.

Mofolo o boetse o hlahisa bohale ba Chaka moo a pholosang morwetsana mme a bolaya phiri e neng e se e ile ka yena.

> Morwetsana yare ha a ntsha seboko seo se bohloko, a ba a polana fatshe ke ho tshoha. Chaka a mo tshwara ka letsoho, a mo emisa, a mo kgothatsa, a re: "O se o phetse, kgutsa o thabe; phiri ke yona e shweleng; tsoha o e bone. Ke nna Chaka." (Leq 29).
>
> Morwetsana a utlwa lentswe a sa le utlwe hantle; Chaka a boela a pheta, mme ka kgetlo lena a le utlwa, a ba a tseba le-ntswe; a tadima Chaka mahlong, a fihlela hore ke yena Chaka ka sebele; a tadima phiri, a fihlela e putlame fatshe; a qamaka kwana le kwana, mahlo a edile jwale, a bona matlo a motse wa habo le masaka e ntse e le ona; a boela a tadima phiri, a fihlela hore ha e a putlama feela, e shwele, e shweletse ruri; mme Chaka a boela a mo kgothatsa hape hore a kgobe sebete, o se a phetse (Leq 30).

Re bona pelo e ntle ya Chaka le lerato la setjhaba sa habo. Le boemong bona batho ba ne ba ipatile ka hara matlo a bona mme ba sa batle ho hlaha le ho pholosa e mong wa bona. Empa lekgetlong lena batho ha ba mo rorise jwalo ka pele ha a ne a bolaile tau. Mofolo o bontsha hore;

> Batho ba ferekana mehopolo ke thabo, empa thabo e kopaneng le dihlong; ba ipotsa ba hloletswe hore na ditaba tsa Chaka di tla fella kae ka botle, bokgabane, le ho rorischa ha tsona; ba batjha le bona ba ipotsa ka maswabi, ka dihlong hore na Chaka o tla ba theola ho fella kae, ha dihlong tsa bona di ntse di kallana hodimo jwalo; maoba

> a tswa bolaya tau ba balehile, mme e le mona kajeno a bolaile phiri e nkile motho hara bona, mme ho hlokahetse ya phallang (Leq 30).

Boemo bona bo habedi bo nonya maikutlo a bokolone ka baetapele ba Maafrika e le bahale le batho ba matla pusong, ho fapana le tshusumetso ya bona e bontshang baetapele ba Maafrika ba le soto ebile e le ba bolai.

Dipina

Mofolo o sebedisa dipina e le karolo ya setso le dipapadi tsa Basotho ha ba rorisa, ba bontsha lerato kapa ho reneketsa le ho roka marena. Re bona moo kamora hore Chaka a bolaye tau, barwetsana ba qapa pina mohlang oo, ba re:

> Hae ha Ncube ha ho bahlankana, Mohlankana o mong feela;
> Hae ha Ncube ha ho banna, Banna ke makwala kaofela;
> Ba balehile, ba siya wa mophato wa bona naheng,
> Ba siya thaka bona a tshwarane le sebata, A betile tau ka ditlena!
> Senzangakhona ha a na batho, o tla bolawa ba ile;
> Senzangakhona, lata ngwana wa hao a orohe;
> Ke ngwana e motona, letsholathebe,
> O tla o lwanela, a o hlolele dira (Leq 17).

Pina eo ba e bina moo batho ba leng bangata, ka boomo, ka morero. Basadi, thaka tsa Nandi, ba qapa ya bona, le bona, ba qetella ka ho re:

> Batho ba ile, ra sala le basele,
> Ra sala le dikabatho, e se bona!
> Chaka re tla mo reng e le ngwana?
> Basadi ba ha Ncube, hlollwang;
> Basadi ba ha Senzangakhona ha ba na thuso;
> Mosadi ke Nandi a le mong to,
> Hobane o tswetse ngwana e motona ka hohle (Leq 18).

Mofolo mona o bontsha hore ha se feela banana ba ileng ba tlotla, ho rosisa le ho phahamisa Chaka, empa le basadi ba ile ba roka Nandi motswala Chaka ke ketso ena ya Chaka. O toboketsa taba ena ka ho hlakisa hore

> Mmadi a bale a ntse a hopola hore ha ho ntho e dihlong ho feta ha motho a binwa ke basadi ka sesomo, ka nyediso, mme le teng ha ho ntho e monate jwale ka ha ba mmina ba mo rorisa; re bolela mehleng eo ya kgale ya bontate, e seng mehleng ena (Leq 33).

Neanotaba

E nngwe ya dintho tse ikgethang bukeng ya Chaka ke ho tshebediso ya **maele** le **ditshomo,** tse thehilweng ditlwaelong tsa Basotho tsa neanotaba. Dintlha tsena di phetha karolo ya bohlokwa pading, mme di matlafatsa botle ba bongodi ba buka le nnete ya setso. Motsei le Mansele (2024:201) ba hlalosa neanotaba e le lereo le akaretsang bokgabo le bonono bohle bo phuthelehileng ho tse neng di phetwa ka molomo mehleng ya boholoholo. Ka bokgabo bona ho ne ho neheletsanwa pale ya botjhaba, tjhadimo ya bophelo esita le kelohloko ya tikoloho. Neanotaba ke mokokotlo wa thuto ya boholoholo, ke mokgwa o ikgethileng o momahanyang setjhaba le ho se etsa ngatana nngwe. Guma (1980) o re neanotaba ke botjhaba ba setihaba ka boyona, e bopelletswe le motho ka mong setjhabeng seo e sebediswang ho sona. Ka hona e lokela ho baballwa ka hloko e kgolo ka dinako tsohle. Ke yona e hokelang le ho momahanya setjhaba. Guma (1980) o tswela pele ho hlakisa hore ntle le neanotaba setjhaba se jwalo ka sefate se hlokang metso, se ka nnang sa pheulwa le ho fefolwa ha bobebe ke meya le difefo tse pukang.

Mantswe ana a totobatsa le ho tiisa se hlaloswang ke bangodi ba kang Moleleki (1992), Finnegan (1970, 1976, 2012), Chinyowa (2005) mabapi le seo neanotaba e leng sona. Finnegan (1976, 2012) o re kaha ditaba tse ngata tsa neanotaba di sa ngolwa ebile di sa rekotwa, ke ka hoo ho leng bobebe ho se di natse kapa ho se di tsotelle. Basotho jwalo ka ditjhaba tse ding, ba na le neanotaba ya bona ya Sesotho e fupereng tsohle tsa botjhaba ba bona, tumelo le tlhadimo ya bona ya bophelo. Neanotoba e fetiswa

ka dibopeho le mefuta e fapaneng mme sebopeho ka seng se fetisa bosetjhaba ba Basotho le ditumelo tsa setjhaba (Motsei le Mensele 2024).

Neanotaba e kenyeletsa maele le maelana, ditshomo, ditshomotshomo, dilotho le dipina. Ke tla qolla feela maele le dipina tsa ditshomo tseo Mofolo a di sebedisitseng ka hara Chaka.

Maele

Possa (2013, 2014) o re maele ke dipolelwana tse qapuweng tse kgutshwane empa di jere moelelo mme ke tsa setjhaba sohle. Maele a na le matla mme a laya le ho kgalema. Maele a bohlokwa haholo bophelong ba Maafrika kaha e le ona a tataisang setjhaba bophelong ba letsatsi le letsatsi. Maele a sebediswa ditabeng tsa makgotla, dipolotiki le ho ruteng puo le nalane. Maele a sebedisitsweng bukeng ya Chaka a sebetsa e le ditlhaloso tsa boitshwaro le tjhebelopele ya botjhaba. Maele a akaretsa bohlale ba setjhaba sa Basotho mme a fana ka lesedi ka maikutlo, sepheo le ditumelo tsa batho ba pale. Ana ke karolwana ya maele le maelana ao Mofolo a a sebedisitseng ka hara Chaka.

1. Phiri e jewa moreneng
2. Tsaeng la mokoptjwane
3. Ho busetsa molamu sefateng
4. Ha di tlwaela makgulo
5. A lwana e mahlo mafubedu
6. Ho boya sekwele
7. Mmutla-kotlwa-tsebe o tshoha difotle
8. Ya seema noosi (Mofolo 2011)

Maele le maelana ana a bontsha manoni a puo le hore meetlo le botjhaba ba Basotho bo itshetlehile ka ona.

Ditshomo

Ditshomo di hlaha ka mokgwa wa dipale tse kentsweng kapa dipapiso tse bontshang nnete e tebileng ka boitshwaro ba motho le matla a dipolotiki. Dipale tsena hangata di sebedisa diphoofolo kapa maemo a tshwantshetsang a tshwanang le leeto la Chaka

(Gikandi 2003). Di sebetsa e le disebediswa tsa tshwantshetso tse nyatsang borena bo sehloho, bokgopo kapa polao ya batho. Ho kenyelletswa ha ditshomo ke Mofolo ho matlafatsa lefa la Basotho la neanotaba le tsebo ya setso. Ha a tshwaela, Ngũgĩ o re ditshomo, tseo boholo ba tsona baphetwa e leng diphoofolo kaofela di ile tsa phetwa ka SeGikuyu. Tshomo ya mmutla, kaha e ne e le nyane, e fokola empa e tletse boqhetseke ba boqitolo, e ne e le mohale wa rona. Re ile ra ikamahanya le yena ha a ne a lwantshana le dibatana tse kang tau, lengau, phiri.

Ngũgĩ o boetse ho tokoketsa hore ditlholo tsa mmutla e bile ditlholo tsa rona mme re ile ra ithuta hore ba bonahalang ba fokola ba ka hlola ba matla. Re ile ra latela diphoofolo ntweng ya tsona kgahlanong le komello e mpe ya tlhaho, pula, letsatsi, moya kgohlano e atisang ho ba qobella ho batla mefuta ya tshebedisano. Empa re ne re boetse re thahasella dintwa tsa bona hara bona, haholoholo pakeng tsa dibata le bahlaseduwa ba diphofu. Dintwa tsena tse pedi, kgahlanong le tlhaho le diphoofolo tse ding, di ne di bontsha dintwa tsa sebele tsa bophelo lefatsheng la batho. Ngũgĩ o pakahatsa hore ditshomo tsa Maafrika di ne di jere moelelo le thuto mme hangata di ne di bontsha seo batho ba leng sona kapa ba phelang ka hara sona. Ho jwalo feela le ka tsela eo Mofolo a ngotseng Chaka. Kopano ya hae le Sebata sa metsing o e tekile ka boqhetseke mme ka sebopeho sa tshomo. Pina e hlahileng ka hara lehlaka e binwa ke lentswe le leholo le boima leo ho sa bonweng monga lona e boetse e pakahatsa botshomo ba padi ya Chaka. Mofolo o re;

..mme hara lehlaka mane ntho ya tjho ka lentswe le leholo, le boima:

> Mphumphu aheee,
> Kalamajweng, Kalamajweng!
> Mphumphu aheee,
> Tshomo
> Kalamajweng, Kalamajweng!
> Selo-setona metsi-i-ing,
> Kalamajweng, Kalamajweng!
> Se bonwa ke ba hlwahlwa feela,
> Kalamajweng, Kalamajweng!

> Se bonwa ke ba tla busa merorobe-la,
> Kalamajweng, Kalamajweng! (Leq 23)

Ya pheta mantswe ao habedi, ya ba e a kgutsa; ya re ha e kgutsa ha bua lentswe le lesesanyane haholo, la re (Leq:23).

Re boetse re bona moo phiri e nka morwetsana. Re hotse re phetelwa ditshomo tsa moo phiri e neng e nka batho mme ba bina nakong eo e ntseng e tsamaya ka motho e le hore ho tle ho utlwahale moo a leng teng ka baka la lefifi. Mofolo o re;

> Phiri ha e fihla ka ntle ho ntlo, morwetsana eo a bokolla ka lentswe le phahameng, le bohlo-o-ko, le ileng la ba la tsosa batho ba bangata ba kgalehileng hara motse; mme a qala ho bina pina ya ba nkilweng ke phiri: "Ya nkuka! Ya mpea!" (Leq 27).

Mofolo o tswelapele ho pheta pale ena ka sebopeho sa tshomo o re;

> A bokolla jwalo ngwana wa batho, ho kgutsitse nyelelee, modumo wa lentswe la hae o harolang matswalo o utlwahala hohle hara motse, o phaphatheha le lefifi la bosiu, o ya kena merung le metseng e mathoko; mme ba metse eo ba ba ba tseba hore thamahane e patetse, yaba ba ikatela haholo ka dikobo, jwale ka hoja e itse e rata ho ja batho ba bangata ka bosiu bo le bong (Leq 28).

Mofolo o phethela buka ena ka hore "Ka mathetho" e leng tsela eo re phethelang tshomo ka yona. Taba ena e bontsha tshusumetso ya neanotaba eo ke seng ke buile ka yona kgaolong ena. Ha o le mmadi, o ba le karaburetso ya kutlo le ya pono e matla mme o utlwa seboko se mahlonoko sa morwetsana, modumo wa sebata le ho fokola ha Chaka. Tshebediso ya karaburetso ya pono le kutlo ke e nngwe ya ditshobotsi tsa tshomo tseo Mofolo a atlehileng ho re bopela tsona.

Pheletso ya Chaka

Kamora ho re bontsha tse ntle tseo Chaka a di entseng, Mofolo o beotse o re bontsha lehlakore le leng la Chaka kamora ho fumana matla. Mohlomong ke yona karolo e ileng ya thapisa mamishinari hore ba qetelle ba phatlaladitse buka ena ya Chaka kaha ba bona

hore kahlolo e bile teng kamora dihloho tseo a di entseng. Mofolo o hlahisa Chaka ya kgopo. O qalella ho bolaya mme o qetella ka ho bolaya mosadi le mmae. Mofolo o bile bohlale kaha a sa phethela padi ena a sa bontsha hore Maafrika ke setjhaba se nang le molao le boitshwaro. O bontsha hore moputso o teng ho motho e mong le e mong mme motho e mong le e mong o kotula seo a se jetseng. O re bontsha hore ya bolaileng ka lerumo o tla shwa ka lerumo. Mofolo o re bontsha pheletso ya Chaka e se e monate ka lebaka la tsohle tseo a di entseng setjhabeng sa habo. O re;

> Ho tloha mohlang ao, Chaka ha a ka a hlola a tseba ho thaba le ho nyakalla hantle jwale ka pele; a atisa ho lora ditoro tse bohloko, tse mo tshosang, tse mo hlobaetsang boroko, tseo hangata a neng a tsoha di se di mo hakile, a di lebetse. Ha feta matsatsi a seng makae ho tloha ho leo la mokete, yaba o lora toro ena: a lora a ipona ho tloha bongwaneng ba hae ho tla fihla letsatsing leo a teaneng le Isanusi ka lona; yare ha a fihla teng a phaphama ke bohloko ba toro ya hae. A boela a robala, mme yare ha boroko bo loela, a boela a lora yona eo hape, yare ha a fihla teanong ya hae le Isanusi a boela a phaphama; hararo ka bosiu bo le bong a ntse a lora toro e le ungwe, ho qala bakeng se itseng ho ya fihla ho se itseng; mme ho makatsang a nna a phaphama, ha a fihla teanong ya hae le Isanusi, leha re sa tsebe hore na kajeno o tshaba tsa hae le Isanusi jwang, e le motswalle wa hae wa hloho ya kgomo (Leq 153).

Mona o bona boqapi ba Mofolo bo hlollang ka ha mmadi a tseba hore tshenyeho ya Chaka e qadile mohla a kopanang le Isanusi. Kamorao ho mono o ile a lora dihloho tsohle tseo a di entseng mme tsona tsa mo ferekanya ka bokong. A hlolwa ho robala, a theoha mmeleng, a hloka kgotso hofihlela lefu la hae moo a bolauweng ke Dingana le Mhlangana. Mofolo o re bopela karaburetso ya pono moo ka hara ho fokola le dihlabi tse neng di se di totetse Chaka, empa ha a bona Dingana le Mhlangana a bososela jwalo ka ha eka ba tla nka bohloko ba hae. Athe ba tlile jwalo ho tla nka bophelo ba hae. Ha ba hlokomela hore ha a sa na matla;

> Chaka ha a utlwa marumo a kena mmeleng wa hae, bakeng sa ho itwanela senna jwale ka Chaka, a reteleha butle,

> a tsoha borokong ba motsheare, ditorong tsa motsheare a ntse a tadimile. Ha a qala ho reteleha, mahloko a hae a kgutsa, sefahleho sa hae sa boela ya eba sona, mme Dingana le Mhlangana ka ho mo tseba ba pepetlolotsa, ba baleha. Yaba Chaka o re: "Le mpolaya ka tshepo ya hore le tla ba marena ha ke se ke shwele; athe le lahlehile, ha ho jwalo, hobane umlungu o a tla, mme ke yena ya tla le busa, lona le be bahlanka ba hae. Chaka a shwa a le maqebaqeba, a le hole le lehae la hae. Letsatsi ha le dikela, setopo sa hae sa hulelwa thotaneng, hore se tle se jewe ke dibatana tsa naha. Ka le hlahlamang batho ba tsohela ho sona e sa le hosasa, ho ya bona ho siilweng ke diba-tana. Ba fumana setopo sa Chaka se ntse se le kaofela ha sona, feela se le setala jwale ka bolele. Ba fumana maoto a le mangata fatshe ho pota setopo sa Chaka, mme ba makala ho qeta ha thamahane, phoofolo e meharo ho feta kolobe, e sa ka ya se ja bosiu. Ba ya bolella Dingana, yaba o ya le bona setopong. Ha ba atamela, makgwaba a tloha ho sona, ba ba ba hopola hore ba tla fumana a mo hontse mahlo. Empa ba a fumana a ntse a le teng a mabedi. Tshabo e kgolo ya ba wela hodimo kaofela, ba thothomela; yaba Dingana o laela hore se epelwe kapele, se tle se se ke sa tshoha se tsoha. Ho bile jalo ho fela ha Chaka, mora wa Senzangakhona (Leq 163).

Chaka o shwa ka lerumo leo le yena a qetileng batho ka lona. Yena o hlajwa ke banna ba babedi mme ba etsa bonnete ba hore ba mo qetile ka tshabo ya hore a ka tshoha a tsoha.

Bonohe ba Chaka

Ha re tadima tsa mohla lefu la Chaka, re bona bohone kapa seprofeto sa Chaka. Mofolo mona o sebeditse ka boqhetseke bo hlollang hore ebe o atlehile ho lemosa Maafrika ka se neng se tlo ba hlahela. Leha Mofolo a qetelletse a hlahisa bokgopo ba Chaka ka ho bolaya batho ba neng ba sena molato, ho kenyeletsa le lesea leo e neng e le la hae, mosadi wa hae le mmae, o elellwisa babolai ba hae ka seaduma se ba tlelang. Mofolo o re;

> Ha a qala ho reteleha, mahloko a hae a kgutsa, sefahleho sa hae sa boela ya eba sona, mme Dingana le Mhlangana

> ka ho mo tseba ba pepetlolotsa, ba baleha. Yaba Chaka o re: "Le mpolaya ka tshepo ya hore le tla ba marena ha ke se ke shwele; athe le lahlehile, ha ho jwalo, hobane umlungu o a tla, mme ke yena ya tla le busa, lona le be bahlanka ba hae." (Leg 163)

Ho ya ka Attwell (1993:55) polelo ya Chaka e ile ya phethahala ho ya ka nalane. Makolone a ile a fihla Afrika a ruta ka bodumedi mme ba le kgahlanong le seo Maafrika a neng a le sona, ka tumelo, meetlo, nalane le filosofi ya bona. Ba ne ba ena le dipehelo tsa bona tsa bophatlalatsi. Ke bona ba neng ba ena le taolo ditsing tsa phatlalatso ke ka hoo ba neng ba laola se ngolwang. Dingolwa tsa bokolone hangata di ile tsa etsa eka Afrika ke sebaka se le seng, se nang le puo e le nngwe, moetlo o le mong, mme se sa ntlafalang, se senang nalane e manoni le puso e matla. Ke moo Ngũgĩ a bontshang hore ba ile ba re Senyesemane e be sona se sebediswang dingolweng tsa Afrika mme ba fetola tsela ya Maafrika ya ho ngola hore ebe e latelang filosofi ya bona. Leha hole jwalo, re bona Chaka e phephetsa sena ka ho tsitlallela setshwantshong se hlakileng sa bophelo ba Maafrika ba pele ho bokolone. Bophelo bo nang le meetlo, ditlwaelo, neanotaba e nonneng e neng e laola le boitshwaro ba setjhaba, dipolotiki, bodumedi. Tjhadimo ya Mofolo ka ho phahamisa Chaka, ho bontsha pherekano e ka hara Chaka, ho putlama ha hae boreneng ho bontsha maemo a fapaneng a boleng ba motho, puso le pheletso ya motho e leng se pakahatsang bophetheho ba botho le diphihlelo tsa Maafrika.

Ka ho sebedisa neanotaba, mekgabopuo le karaburetso Mofolo o nyatsa ho itshunyatshunya ha bokolone le bobodu ba ka hare ho setjhaba sa Afrika. Boleng ba Chaka bo fetoha seipone se bontshang eseng feela dikgatello tsa ka ntle tsa puso ya bokolone empa hape le matla a Maafrika pusong. Jwalo ka ha Bhabha (1994) a tiisa, kganyetso ya postcolonial e ama bohanyetsi le tlhaloso e ntjha. Tlaleho ya Mofolo e kgutlisa nalane ya Afrika.

Phethelo

Kgaolo ena e ne e lekola Chaka e le pulamadiboho bongoding le dingolweng tsa dipuo tsa Afrika. Mme phuputso ena e pakahatsa hore Chaka ke mosebetsi wa bopulamadiboho o thusitseng ho hlalosa botjha dingolwa tsa Afrika. Ka ho amohela puo ya

Maafrika, setso le filosofi ya yona, e fane ka tlhaloso e kgahlanong le dingolwa tsa bokolone le ho susumetsa leqhubu le letjha la bangodi ba Maafrika. Ka ho sebedisa lewa la kamorabokolone, phuputso ena e bontshitse ka moo Chaka e sebetsang e seng feela katleho ya bongodi empa hape e le morero wa ho hanyetsa le ho tiisa setso le dipuo tsa Mafrika. Ka Chaka, Mofolo ha a fana ka lentswe ka boiphihlelo ba Maafrika feela empa hape o radile motheo bakeng sa moetlo o ikemetseng wa bongodi ba Maafrika o hanang le ho hlaloswa ka maikutlo a bokolone.

Borutehing ba sejwalejwale, Chaka e ntse e phahame le ho tsejwa e le sengolwa se kenyeleditseng ka bobedi moetlo le sejwalejwale. Tharahano ya buka ena e pakahatsa hore Mofolo o entse mosebetsi o tswileng matsoho ho hlaheng le ho emela dingolwa tsa Maafrika mme o entse mokolokotwane ho bangodi ba dipuo tsa Afrika kaofela.

Dikgothaletso

Ho ipapisitswe le diphetho tsa phuputso ena, ho etswa ditlhahiso tse latelang:

Ho matlafatsa thuto ya bongodi ba moraorao: Ditsi tsa thuto di lokela ho kenyelletsa Chaka le dingolwa tse ding tsa motheo tsa Maafrika mananeong a thuto ya bongodi ba kamora bokolone.

Ho tshepisa bongodi dipuong tsa matswallwa: Mekgatlo ya botjhaba, bonono le bongodi e lokela ho tshehetsa le ho phahamisa dingolwa tsa Maafrika tse ngotsweng ka dipuo tsa matswallwa jwalo ka Sesotho, e le ho sireletsa le ho hodisa dipuo tsena.

Tshehetso bakeng sa phetolelo le phihlello: Ho lokela ho etswa matsapa a eketsehileng ho fetolela dingolwa tsa bohlokwa tsa Afrika ka dipuo tse fapaneng tsa lehae, e le ho atolosa phihlello le tshusumetso ya tsona merabeng e meng.

Ho kgothaletsa phuputso e kopanetsweng: Phuputso e kenyeletsang bongodi, nalane, dipolotiki le meetlo le neanotaba e lokela ho kgothaletswa.

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Chapter 10

Rebellious Obedience and Subversive Subservience: A Machereyean Reading of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925)

Thabo Tšehloane
Department of English,
University of Johannesburg
Johannesburg, South Africa:
thabot@uj.ac.za

Abstract

This chapter undertakes a critical reading of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* as a complex site of disruptive textual tensions and ideological contestations. Drawing on Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production*, (1978, 2006), the chapter examines the novel's inherent ideological contradictions, viewing them as symptomatic of the broader tensions between Christian missionary discourse and African cultural reclamation. Macherey's framework allows for an analysis that attends not only to the explicit narrative but also to the silences, gaps and narrative disjunctions within the text, revealing how Mofolo's *Chaka* enacts what I term "subversive subservience." This concept describes a literary strategy whereby the text appears to accommodate dominant ideology while simultaneously undermining its foundational assumptions through subtle resistance embedded in its narrative form and content.

Contrary to prevailing critical interpretations that tend to polarise *Chaka* either as an endorsement of missionary values or

as a proto-nationalist celebration of African precolonial heroism, this chapter contends that Mofolo's novel embodies a fractured yet nuanced ideological engagement. It resists reductive readings by producing a dialogic tension that reflects the complexities of the evolving African identity under colonial and missionary influence. This approach aligns with readings that recognise *Chaka*'s covert subversion of colonial and biblical notions of sin and salvation, recasting the protagonist as a messianic figure whose narrative trajectory simultaneously engages with and destabilises missionary Christian paradigms. Thus, *Chaka* emerges as a site where conflicting ideological forces are negotiated, producing a layered text that challenges simplistic binaries and invites a more sophisticated reimagination of African precolonial identity and belief systems under the colonial rule.

Keywords: Chaka, Ideological Contradictions, Macherey, Missionary Discourse and African Textual Response, Mofolo, Tensions

Introduction: Ideological Faultlines and Textual Tensions

Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ (2018) has argued that South African literature of the early 20th century is the foundation of African literary consciousness and imagination. Ngũgĩ mentions Thomas Mofolo, AC Jordan, RRR Dhlomo and SEK Mqhayi as writers who are a part of the missing African literary canon: "These writers are not usually discussed within an African literary tradition or read as having set templates of writing in African languages and translation…" (104). Ngũgĩ argues for an inclusive imaginative consciousness of the African literary past which includes and showcases these aforementioned writers and their narratives. Ngũgĩ further laments the state of affairs in African literary criticism by saying: "African literary criticism has failed the African literary tradition by failing to take into account early South African writing…" (2018:10). This chapter is a response to this clarion call, to take seriously the contribution made by these early South African writers. In taking up this challenge, I use Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* as a paradigmatic example of the significance and continuing relevance of these early narratives to our contemporary society and current literary debates.

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, originally written and published in Sesotho in 1925, translated into English in 1931 and later into French in 1940, is a palimpsest of cultural mediations. Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* reveals ideological contradictions primarily through its strategic use of narrative gaps, silences, and disjunctions, which reflect the tensions between African cultural nationalism and Christian missionary discourse embedded in the text. The ideological ambivalence at the heart of *Chaka* can be explained by the position Mofolo and his contemporary Christian converts occupied in a colonial society. Stephen Gill explains this precarious class position as vantage point and an enabling factor for Mofolo's unique creative talent: "Mofolo, as part of an emergent cadre of progressive ones (*bahlalefi* or *matsoelopele*) developed his linguistic skills and eloquence to the point where with the support of colleagues he could dare to attempt something new, a creative synthesis of various forms of storytelling, indigenous and exogenous, in written Sesotho" (2016:1). It was through this vantage point that Mofolo was able to produce a narrative which serves as a site of ideological contestation where conflicting worldviews - traditional African ethos and Christian moralism - coexist and clash without resolution. D.P. Kunene, in his *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* (1989), a foundational study which explores Mofolo's role in shaping written Sesotho literature, situates *Chaka* within the broader transition from oral to written narratives in southern Africa. Kunene draws attention to the difficulties which Mofolo encountered prior to the publication of his book because *Chaka* was seen as a diversion from the missionaries' primary goal of converting Basotho. Indeed, Nhlanhla Maake (1992) concurs with Kunene on this point by saying: "The beginning of creative writing was incidental to the missionary crusade which was to spread the word" (161). Kunene's analysis provides essential context for understanding Mofolo's literary innovations, including his fusion of oral tradition with Western literary forms. This chapter builds on Kunene's work by further examining how *Chaka*'s centennial reception intersects with these literary debates. It is believed and certainly argued by D.P. Kunene in his book *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose* that there was a concerted

attempt to suppress the manuscript which is widely believed to have been written in and finished in 1910 but only published in 1925. Even when it was finally published, two chapters on Zulu customs and military system were excised. Kunene is interested on why these two chapters were removed. "The question of these omitted chapters naturally interested me a great deal..." (xiii), Kunene acknowledges in his introduction to the book. There are various reasons that he explores for the exclusion of the chapters; firstly, costs of publishing the manuscript which dictated that the book must not exceed a certain number of pages and length and secondly, the missionary intervention to remove what they saw as promotion of pagan customs and superstitions which were seen as inimical to their primary mission of converting Basotho. The editorial interventions of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) shaped the novel's structure and content, with the aim to neutralise what could be seen as its more subversive elements. However, the view of this chapter is that the text's internal contradictions persist, validating Pierre Macherey's suggestion that a literary text is inherently dissonant, therefore, defying any attempt to give it a coherent and monolithic meaning. This means that the novel's ideological tensions are not merely editorial artefacts but are intrinsic to its literary form, as Pierre Macherey argues and contends that it is the nature of the literary text to be dissonant, irrespective of any attempts by the author to make it cohere.

Theoretical Framework

The relevance of Pierre Macherey's theory in understanding Mofolo's *Chaka* is based on its assumptions about the nature of literary texts, the role of the author and function of literary criticism. The adoption of a Machereyean critical framework enables a nuanced reading of *Chaka* as a text shaped not by unity and authorial intention, but by contradiction, silences and ideological tension. Pierre Macherey's theory, particularly in *A Theory of Literary Production* (2006), offers a radical reconceptualisation of literature not as the transparent expression of a human subject, but as a site of production shaped by unconscious ideological determinations.

Terry Eagleton, in the preface to the 2006 edition of Macherey's book, describes its pathbreaking originality as follows:

> What is at stake in the book is nothing less than a dramatically new way of approaching literature…The literary text is not to be thought of as an expression of human subject or as a reflection of reality. It is has no depth, centre, unity or singular point of origin. It is the product not of an authorial intention but of a process of production… (Macherey 2006:viii).

According to Pierre Macherey, foundational insight is that the author is not the autonomous origin of meaning but a position within a broader ideological apparatus. Macherey (2006) contends that the author is not in full control of the work that he produces and his writing is a result of an articulation of ideological forces and structures that they are unconscious of. Macherey (2006) is opposed to the privileging of authorial intent and authority as the sole determinant of textual meaning. Macherey says:

> Now art is not man's creation, it is a product (and the producer is not a subject centred in his creation, he is an element in a situation or a system)…the artist produces works, in determinate conditions; he does not work on himself but on that thing which escapes him in so many ways, and never belongs to him until after the event (Macherey 2006:77).

This displaces the romantic notion of authorial sovereignty, situating the writer within the contradictions and pressures of their historical moment. This insight should not be conflated with the position Roland Barthes argues for in his *Death of the Author* (1977). While Barthes advocates for the removal of the author to liberate the plurality of textual meaning, Macherey (2006) repositions the author within an ideological matrix, highlighting the structural conditions under which literary texts are produced. The author, for Macherey, is not silenced but decentred – no longer the sovereign source of meaning but a conduit for

ideological contradiction. Macherey (2006) deconstructs the authority of the author while retaining its function as a conduit of ideological tensions. According to Macherey (2006), the role of the author as a conduit of ideological tensions must be read and decoded alongside other multiple determinants of textual meaning when he says:

> The writer is constantly obliged to solve several problems at once, at different levels, and each choice affects all the others...A true explanation always bears on a composite reality where several determinations converge; it fits together the consequences of laws pertaining to different areas of the reality. This is why we always find gaps and contradictions in the fabric of the work...A true reading, one which knows how to read and knows what reading is, ignores none of this multiplicity (Macherey 2006:112–113).

Secondly, he regards textual unity and coherence as an illusion. Macherey (2006) disagrees with the notion of the text as a coherent and unified phenomenon. Terry Eagleton elaborating on this important Machereyean concept of literary analysis says:

> This refusal of the doctrine of aesthetic unity, is a remarkably bold move, denying as it does a set of assumptions about the integral organic nature of the work of art which run all the way from Aristotle to the American New Criticism. For Macherey by contrast, the literary work of art is decentred and internally displaced; it is so to speak, split apart from within by virtue of its relation to what lies outside it, the ideological world upon which it goes to work. It is made up of a whole conflicting set of elements which is the task of criticism to expose and explain rather than harmoniously resolve (Macherey 2006:x).

A text is marked by contradictions, silences, gaps and narrative disjunctures that result from social, historical and ideological forces that the author is often not conscious of. The task of literary criticism is not to celebrate literary coherence or recover authorial intent but to uncover the struggles and silences that

structure the text. Indeed, Macherey (2006) contends that textual coherence and unity is an illusion: "The concealed order of the work is thus less significant than its real determinate disorder (its disarray). The order which it professes is merely an imagined order, projected on to disorder, the fictive resolution of ideological conflicts a resolution so precarious that is obvious in the very letter of the text where incoherence and incompleteness burst forth" (174). One of Macherey's most radical contributions to literary theory is his refusal of aesthetic unity as the governing principle of literary form. He contests the classical and the liberal assumptions about the internal coherence of the literary work, arguing that what appears as unity is, in fact, an imagined resolution projected onto deeper ideological disorder. Macherey (2006) suggests that the critic's role is not to uncover an underlying harmony but to expose the contradictions, ruptures and silences that destabilise the text's surface coherence.

For Macherey (2006), literature does not transparently reflect reality. Rather, it actively participates in constructing a fictional world shaped by the tensions between ideological representation and the material conditions of its production. The contradictions within a text are not failures of craft or clarity, but the inevitable result of the conflict between competing ideologies - between what the text seeks to articulate and what it is structurally unable to express.

Fourthly, he contends that a literary text is not a transparent conveyor of meaning and reality. It actively participates in reconstructing and recreating the fictional world. Most importantly, the contradictions in the text do not occur because of the author's failure of expression but as a consequence of the inherent struggle between the attempt to represent reality and the limitations of the ideological discourse through which this representation occurs.

Machereyean Reading of Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1981) occupies a liminal position between Christian moralism and African cultural nationalism, between colonial pedagogy and indigenous cosmology. This chapter argues that *Chaka* is not a text of ideological coherence,

but rather one marked by contradiction, rupture and silence - what I term "subversive subservience." While the novel appears to endorse missionary values, it simultaneously undermines them through narrative ambivalence, sympathetic representations of indigenous spirituality, depiction of the tragic hero as both a visionary leader and a tyrant and lastly through a refusal of clear moral resolution.

Macherey (2006) asserts that literature is not a neutral reflection of reality but a product of its historical and ideological context. *Chaka* is shaped by both Sesotho oral traditions and the influence of colonial discourse. Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka as a tragic hero who is both revered and feared, as well as an unresolved ideological tension between African spiritual belief systems and colonial Christian morality reflect the tension between African cultural nationalism and missionary modernity. The novel's narrative silences - its omissions, ambiguities and unresolved contradictions - are not accidental but are constitutive of its ideological complexity. Mofolo's selective narration, deliberate variance with actual history and leaving narrative gaps resist both missionary didacticism and nationalist recuperation. These absences function through a mode by which the text outwardly conforms to the expectations of its missionary patrons while covertly preserving the possibility of alternative meanings. These tensions index a broader dialectic between missionary modernity and precolonial African epistemologies and offer a window into the fractured cultural consciousness of early 20th-century African literary modernity.

Dialectics of Missionary Modernity and African Cultural Nationalism

In light of Machereyean reading and insights, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* must be understood not as a seamless epic of African heroism nor as a missionary parable, but as a fractured and overdetermined narrative shaped by the ideological contradictions of its time. Through a Machereyean lens, the novel's silences, contradictions and formal dissonances become central to its meaning. These features mark it as a text produced at the intersection of contesting worldviews, in which cultural memory

and colonial discourse clash, overlap and evade resolution. By theorising the text's incompleteness as a sign of its ideological density, we apprehend *Chaka* not simply as literary text, but as a site of historical and political contestation of ideas.

Macherey's (2006) theory disrupts the notion of a unified text. For him, literature is not a transparent vehicle for ideology but a site of ideological contradiction. *Chaka* exemplifies this thesis: it is a text both complicit in and resistant to missionary values. Mofolo's Christianity does not cancel out his cultural nationalism; rather, the novel is the terrain upon which these forces collide.

Chaka's contradictions - his greatness and his cruelty, the legitimacy of African spirituality and its marginalisation, the narrator's authority and his doubt - are not accidents but the very points at which ideology becomes visible. A Machereyean reading of Mofolo's *Chaka* reveals the novel not as a unified ideological artifact, but as a site of unresolved tension between contradictory epistemologies of missionary modernity and African cosmology. Its narrative silences and disjunctures are not accidental or peripheral but central to its meaning. The text oscillates between affirmation and critique, between reverence and anxiety, between submission to and subversion of colonial modernity. In this regard, Mofolo's *Chaka* exemplifies the ideological fault lines of its historical moment - a fractured modernity negotiating the competing claims of African cultural nationalism and Christian ethos.

By emphasising the text's internal ruptures, a Machereyean approach allows us to theorise *Chaka* as a constitutively incomplete, ideologically overdetermined narrative - one that speaks most eloquently through what it cannot say. Within these silences, the novel stages a dialectical struggle between African traditions and missionary modernity. Chaka himself is rendered as both a tragic hero, shaped by ancestral forces and oral tradition, and a cautionary figure whose rise and fall conform to the tragic heroism derived from European classical literature. The tension between Chaka's heroic stature and his descent into violence and isolation is never fully resolved; instead, it is registered in the text's "eloquent absences" and narrative disjunctions.

This ambivalence mirrors the historical compression experienced by colonised African subjects, for whom the reconciliation of precolonial grandeur and Christian moral imperatives is ultimately impossible.

Such contradictions are not failures of literary craft and authorial expression but symptomatic of the text's ideological structure. They signal the unresolved conflict between the novel's impulse to affirm African agency and its simultaneous submission to Christian moral frameworks. Mofolo's *Chaka* is, thus, both an emblem of African precolonial greatness and a cautionary figure whose excesses reflect the missionary anxiety about African precolonial universe.

Ultimately, a Machereyean reading of *Chaka* emphasises its ideological contradictions not as flaws but as constitutive features. The text resists closure. It is not a unified vision of precolonial Africa nor a straightforward endorsement of Christian morality. Rather, it is a site of ideological struggle - between missionary modernity and African cosmology, between colonial pedagogy and indigenous epistemologies, between affirmation and critique.

This struggle is most evident in the text's refusal to resolve the tension between Chaka's grandeur and his monstrosity. Mofolo's ambivalent depiction of the tragic hero signals the novel's epistemological uncertainty and the impossibility of reconciling the competing ideologies that shape this iconic narrative. Mofolo's *Chaka* exemplifies a dual allegiance to missionary modernity and African cultural nationalism. It submits to colonial literary expectations while actively undermining them; it speaks most eloquently through what it cannot fully articulate.

The novel's ideological contradictions and formal dissonances are central to its essence and constitution. Rather than treating *Chaka* as a unified ideological artefact, the chapter argues that its significance lies precisely in its internal ruptures, narrative silences and unresolved tensions. The key ideological faultlines and textual tensions evident in Mofolo's representation of the African precolonial universe, fractured depiction of Chaka as a tragic hero, ambivalent representation of indigenous spirituality, strategic divergence from history and mythic imagination, as well as shifting narrative perspective from

omniscience to fallibility, all exemplify what Macherey (2006) terms the "constitutive incompleteness" of the literary text. In this sense, *Chaka* does not merely reflect ideological struggle and contradictions - it is, itself, an enactment of it.

Chaka as Tragic Subject: Sympathy and Alienation

The novel's ideological faultlines and textual tensions are most eloquent and aptly demonstrated in the characterisation of its protagonist, Chaka, who embodies qualities of African heroism and qualities of destructive despotism. Mofolo's narrator simultaneously admires Chaka's political and military genius and condemns the human cost of his violent reforms, creating a dialectical tension that is never fully reconciled in the narrative. This tension resists a straightforward moral judgement and, instead, exposes the fractured ideological landscape in which the narrator of the novel operates.

The novel opens with a richly detailed account of Chaka's birth and early life, shaped by familial rejection and emotional trauma. Rather than depicting Chaka as inherently evil or predisposed to tyranny, Mofolo's narrator offers a portrait of a sensitive and intelligent youth driven by an unrequited desire for belonging and recognition. The language used in these passages is often lyrical and empathetic, inviting readers to identify with Chaka's alienation and resilience. These narrative gaps highlight the ambivalence of the protagonist Chaka's figure, who embodies both the heroic ideals rooted in African tradition and the tragic consequences of political and spiritual upheaval influenced by modern, Christian-inflected moral frameworks. The silences around his motivations, inner conflicts and certain historical or mythic details create space for readers to sense the ideological dissonance between the idealisation of African precolonial universe and the new ethical paradigms introduced by missionary Christianity. Macherey (2006) urges critics to attend to a text's silences and omissions, where ideology reveals itself most starkly. In *Chaka*, such absences abound. Mofolo's narrator, ostensibly Christian, fails to deliver a definitive moral judgement on Chaka's actions. Instead, the narrative vacillates between admiration and horror.

In its early chapters, the novel constructs Chaka as a vulnerable, alienated youth rejected by his father and not welcome in his mother's family. Chaka's early childhood experiences are captured by the narrator as follows: "When Chaka was old enough to herd calves he experienced untold suffering. The other boys harassed him and always beat him up most severely, for no reason whatsoever" (Mofolo 1981:11). However, it is in this unmerited suffering and persecution that propels young Chaka into a formidable warrior as the narrator further elaborates:

> This daily fighting taught Chaka how to fence with his sticks, how to parry many sticks about to land on him all at once, how to fight both in attack and defence. It also helped him build up his running speed in case he had to run away from his attackers. He became fearless in fighting for he had become accustomed to it, and he never became short-winded when running. In fencing he learned how to parry a blow just at the right time, how to crouch, how to stoop to avoid a blow, how to dodge to one side, how to jump and how to land a blow at the right spot at the right time (Mofolo 1981:12).

According to Kwame Ayivor (1997): "The growth of Chaka's pre-eminence conforms to African epic traditions" (1997:53). This pre-eminence that he achieves is witnessed through several incidents in which he distinguishes himself from his peers. Chaka's killing of the lion and killing of the hyena at Ncube's and the killing of the madman soon after his arrival at Dingiswayo's royal palace, are narrated as rites of passage affirming Chaka's heroic potential. These events are in agreement with the structure of oral heroic tradition, where greatness is forged through trial. Elaborating this theme with particular focus on the tragic hero's killing of the lion, Ayivor (1997) says:

> One of Chaka's extraordinary acts of courage and martial skill is his single-handed killing of a lion as a boy after grown men have beaten a hasty retreat. This act falls within the realm of the epic hero's phenomenal endowment with valor and calls for unrestrained praise (Ayivor 1997:56).

Indeed, the narrator recalls this act of extraordinary bravery as consequential and epoch-making by reflecting as follows:

> That lion brought envy into the village. The men and the young men were seized with shame when Chaka was being singled out for praise, and especially when it was said that they ran away and bolted themselves up in their houses... The reader should read these words bearing in mind that there is nothing more humiliating for a man than to be sung about by the women in mockery and contempt, nor, on the other hand, is there anything as pleasing as when they sing about him in praise. We are talking about those days of our fathers, not these modern times (Ayivor 1997:19–20).

The praise or derision that Chaka's actions evoked reflects Mofolo's talent in deploying African oral traditions in the telling of the story of Chaka. Ayivor (1997) reflects as follows:

> The panegyrical songs generated by the lion-killing incident, reveal Mofolo's mastery of the African oral traditions. African praise songs are in consonance with centuries of oral traditions, crafted to achieve antithetical purposes: to glorify the community heroes while vilifying communal enemies and villains. Mofolo remains faithful to this literary tradition in vilifying the cowardly young men of Ncube's village while praising Chaka (Ayivor 1997:57).

Even after his arrival at Dingiswayo's royal palace, Chaka continued to distinguish himself through fearless and daredevil acts of valour, in the killing of the madman and heroic exploits in battle. Ayivor (1997), reflecting on the former incident, says:

> Chaka's awesome bravery and martial superiority is also demonstrated by his killing of the mad giant who ravages Dingiswayo's kingdom...The patterning of these phenomenal acts of valor and service to his community-wondrous feats, that deserve celebration and praise

> singing- sustains the intimation that Chaka and his community are destined for prodigious future (Ayivor 1997:57).

About Chaka;s extraordinary heroic exploits soon after his arrival at Dingiswayo's royal palace, the narrator reflects how his military prowess and skill in battle were regarded and recognised as head and shoulders above that of his peers in the ranks of the Mthethwa army:

> Since he was not in the battle itself, Dingiswayo was the one who saw clearly the way in which that battle was fought, and better than anyone else how Chaka performed. We will not tell how pleased he was with Chaka, nor how the women honoured him with their shrill ululations on that day, nor how songs were composed for him: let the reader imagine these things for himself, how it was on that day. What is surprising, however, is that while Chaka was being thus praised and sung, the other warriors did not grow envious, but instead they were the very ones who spoke highly of Chaka, and even suggested to the king that he be promoted to his senior regiments, consisting only of seasoned braves; and indeed the king did so, and also honoured him by making him commander of one of the top ranking regiments.
>
> That is how Chaka made his arrival known at Dingiswayo's royal village. After only three days he was already known, and counted among the most renowned braves, the king's trusted ones. And now Chaka was happy here at the royal place where a warrior was a highly valued person, and the spear never slumbered (Ayivor 1997:54).

This sympathetic portrayal of Chaka is also accompanied by demonstration that his rise to power is well deserved and attained on merit. According to Lilford Grant (2012):

> Mofolo's asserts throughout the novel that Chaka is destined to be king. He is the first born son of King Senzangakhona, who immediately formally claims him as

> heir in a message to his overlord. He also has the support of the people, even after his father has disowned Chaka, the women's songs demand the king's recognition of the boy... When Senzangakhona and his senior wives thwart Chaka's rightful ascent to power they force him to turn to more sinister means (Grant 2012:388).

Therefore, Chaka's rise to power is depicted with grandeur and reverence, drawing on the trope of the epic warrior complicating the Christian moral didacticism that ostensibly governs the overall narrative. Such sympathetic portrayals subvert missionary didacticism. The narrative cannot wholly condemn Chaka without undermining the emotional and cultural investment that it builds in him. The text, thus, performs an act of "subversive subservience": it appears to preach Christian values, but structurally privileges African heroic codes and cosmologies. From a Machereyan perspective, the tension between form (the pathos of Chaka's youth) and content (the moral lesson about pride and ambition) signals an ideological fault line. The narrative cannot fully sustain the condemnation that it seeks to impose, because its aesthetic structure generates an affective investment in Chaka as a tragic subject rather than a cautionary example.

Chapter 19 (Mofolo 1981:127) reflects a telling contradiction between the depiction of Chaka as a visionary leader and as a ruthless tyrant:

> The regiment which had refused to retreat even when the battle was hot was given the entire loot which had been captured from Qwabe's and Buthelezi's; the cattle were given to them to become their property rather than for immediate feasting by the regiment. Chaka took not a single one of them, even though they were so many. In addition to that, this regiment was promoted immediately to join the senior regiments who were called to active duty only when there was real danger, which meant that the time for them to qualify for marriage was very close...That was how Chaka rewarded his braves (Mofolo 1981:127).

Later on, the narrator reflects as follows in the aftermath of the events:

> On that one day the people who were killed were counted in tens of thousands. That is how cowardice was banished from Zulu's domain, and from that day the Zulu warriors went to war understanding in full saying: 'A boy-child is an ox apportioned to the vultures.'...From that day on one Zulu warrior was equal to ten of the enemy, and could put them to flight...
>
> This was only the beginning of Chaka's numerous massacres. Those who witnessed the events of that day had nightmares throughout that night. They grew thin because it was the first time that the people had ever witnessed such a deed (Mofolo 1981:133–134).

This moral ambivalence undercuts any clear ideological position and instead reveals a space in which the ideological apparatus falters. The narrator's refusal to deliver a definitive moral judgement on Chaka's actions - oscillating between admiration and horror - creates and reveals the ideological faultlines of the text. This is the moment of subversive subservience: a seeming alignment with Christian values undercut by the emotional and narrative logic of the text itself.

In *Chaka*, these contradictions emerge in the protagonist's dual representation: at once a heroic visionary and a brutal tyrant. From a Machereyean perspective, this constitutes a moment where sympathetic characterisation of the tragic hero and content (moral caution) collide, revealing ideological instability. The narrative cannot sustain its condemnation because its structure invites empathy. This is the first instance of "subversive subservience": the affective logic of the narrative undercuts its purported moral lesson.

Yet this heroic arc is disrupted by his descent into paranoia and cruelty. This ideological ambivalence - between celebrating Chaka's greatness and condemning his tyranny - reveals the narrative's internal instability. These silences function as a form of "subversive subservience," where the text appears to

accommodate dominant Christian missionary values but subtly destabilises their core assumptions by leaving certain narrative elements unresolved or unspoken. This narrative strategy opens space for an alternative ethical inquiry rooted in pre-Christian African values, which remain implicit in the gaps and silences.

Missionary Modernity and the African Precolonial Universe

The early missionary outposts at Morija, Lovedale and Mariannhill considered themselves as agents of cultural transformation. These institutions sought to remake African societies by displacing indigenous epistemologies with Western norms. Mofolo, a second-generation convert educated at Morija under the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), ostensibly emerges from this tradition. However, his novel *Chaka* destabilises this inheritance through the depiction of pre-colonial and pre-Christian African universe. By drawing on praise poetry, oral storytelling and epic forms, Mofolo constructs a narrative space that reclaims African epistemologies and historical consciousness. Though Mofolo draws on Christian moral paradigms, the novel's deep engagement with African oral narrative forms - praise poetry, folklore, collective characters and epic repetition - highlights a precolonial universe that is self-sufficient, self-regulating and ethically complex.

Firstly, the novel opens with a description of South Africa devoid of colonial and missionary presence. The description of this precolonial paradise, almost Edenic in its harmonious relationship that is evoked between the inhabitants, their natural environment and their spiritual connection to God. The novel opens as follows:

> South Africa is a large headland situated between two oceans, one to the east and one to the west. The nations that inhabit it are numerous and greatly varied in custom and language. Yet they easily divide themselves into three large groups: the nations settled along western seaboard are of a yellow complexion. They are the San and the Khoi. The ones in the centre are the Batswana and the Basotho.

> Those to the east are the Bakone or the Matebele. The boundaries between them are prominent and visible; they are boundaries created by God, not man, because nations to the west are separated from the ones in the centre by great sandy waterless deserts and those in the centre are separated from those to the east by massive mountain range of towering peaks rising in the Cape Colony and running parallel to the sea, yet far, far away from it (Mofolo 1981:1).

The opening passages of the novel, present a vision of South Africa prior to colonial and missionary intervention. The landscape is depicted as an almost Edenic paradise, characterised by harmonious relationships between its diverse inhabitants, their natural environment, and their spiritual connection to God. The narrative begins with a detailed geographical and ethnographic description, emphasising distinct indigenous groups - namely the San, Khoi, Batswana, Basotho, Bakone/Matebele - who occupy specific territories demarcated by natural boundaries such as the Kalahari separating Khoi and San from Basotho/Batswana and Drakensberg mountains separating Nguni nations from Sotho-Tswana nations. These boundaries are portrayed not as human constructs but as divinely ordained, reinforcing a sense of spiritual and ecological order intrinsic to this precolonial setting.

Central to this opening is the narrator's insistence on historical and temporal distance, reminding readers that the portrayal concerns a distant past before significant transformations altered the land and its peoples. The narrator explicitly frames this knowledge as essential for understanding the ensuing story, highlighting how present generations may have lost touch with this original configuration because of the passage of time and ensuing colonial disruptions. Through repeated assertions - such as the necessity to understand the original settlements of the nations and their early ways of life - the text emphasises a tension between memory and amnesia, continuity and change. The narrator repeatedly highlights this in the following extracts at the beginning of the narrative: "...it is fitting that before we plunge into our story we should describe how

the nations were settled at the beginning so that the reader may understand what will be narrated in the coming chapters"(1981, 1). "In the early days, when people were still settled upon the land....". "The reader must understand that we are describing how the nations were situated long ago, when the people were still settled upon the land" (1981:2).

This framing aligns well with Machereyean literary insights which emphasise literary text's embeddedness within historical and ideological contexts. Macherey (2006) asserts that literature is not a neutral reflection of reality but a product of its historical and ideological context. Macherey (2006) argues that literary texts are not neutral or transparent mirrors of reality but are produced within determinate ideological structures that shape meaning. In this view, the author functions not as an autonomous originator of meaning but as a conduit through which competing cultural and ideological forces are expressed, often unconsciously. The novel's articulation of precolonial South Africa - inflected by Sesotho oral traditions and simultaneously mediated by colonial discourse - illustrates this dynamic. It reveals how the text negotiates and refracts broader cultural contradictions, including tensions between indigenous epistemologies and colonial frameworks.

Thus, the opening of the novel does more than simply set the scene; it actively works to reclaim a particular historical and cultural memory while acknowledging the complex ideological conditions that shape such representation. By situating indigenous communities in a divinely ordered landscape and contrasting this with temporal disruption, the narrative invites readers to reconsider received historical narratives and engage with the ongoing legacies of colonialism in how these communities and their histories are understood.

Therefore, Mofolo's overall portrayal of Chaka as a tragic hero who is both revered and feared reflects this tension between African cultural nationalism and missionary moral frameworks witnessed at the beginning of the novel. For instance, Chaka's rise to power and his eventual reign are both depicted as necessary, progressive change that is attained at a great human and moral cost, suggesting an ideological tension between African spiritual

belief systems and colonial Christian morality. The novel's narrative silences - its omissions, ambiguities, and unresolved contradictions - are not accidental but are constitutive of its ideological complexity. Mofolo's selective narration, for instance, omits or glosses over certain aspects of Zulu history and customs, leaving narrative gaps that resist both missionary didacticism and nationalist recuperation. These absences function as what I term "subversive subservience": a mode by which the text outwardly conforms to the expectations of its missionary patrons while covertly preserving the possibility of alternative, indigenous meanings.

In the case of Mofolo, this means that *Chaka* must not be read as a transparent reflection of the author's intention or moral message, but rather as a text structured by the ideological conflicts of its production context. As a second-generation Christian convert educated at the Morija missionary station, Mofolo is both a product and a critic of missionary pedagogy. His narrative voice bears the imprint of Christian moralism while simultaneously transmitting an epic grounded in African cosmology and oral tradition. This duality positions the author as an ideological site rather than as a sole point of creative origin but as a producer shaped by structural constraints.

In Chapter 17, Dingiswayo, who is the benefactor, mentor and predecessor of Chaka's reign, is described as a transformative ruler. In portraying Dingiswayo's reign as peaceful, enlightened and cosmopolitan, Mofolo constructs an implicit counter-narrative to missionary portrayals of precolonial African societies as primitive, chaotic and anarchic. This depiction of Dingiswayo's reign suggest a precolonial polity that is self-sufficient and majestic - an implicit counter-narrative to missionary portrayals of African societies as primitive and chaotic. For example, the narrative describes in detail Dingiswayo's rule as follows:

> Dingiswayo arrived and became king at the time when his nation was in pitch black darkness, when the men simply sat at home without doing any work...He came and changed all that. Dingiswayo even opened up a trade route leading

> to Delagoa Bay, where trade flourished. He also tried hard to instill in the nation the spirit of human compassion, so that they might refrain from attacking each other for no reason;...The land basked in the warmth of peace and plenty in the days of his reign; and Chaka assumed the kingship when the affairs of the nation were in that state (Mofolo 1981:105–106).

Similarly, later on, Chaka's capital is described in a way that reflects a vision of African statecraft and innovation that challenges colonial stereotypes, the narrator describes the new city that Chaka had built as follows: "It was a city of immense size, unequalled amongst all nations past and present, in sheer bigness and the number of its inhabitants, as well as the power of its owner" (Mofolo 1981:107).

The Dialectic of Indigenous Spirituality and Christian Moralism in *Chaka*

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1981) occupies a uniquely fraught position in the genealogies of early African literature: it is at once a product of the Morija missionary press and a text profoundly shaped by African cosmology, mythic imagination, and indigenous spiritual epistemologies. The novel's ideological architecture is structured by a persistent dialectic between African metaphysical systems and Christian moral doctrine - a tension that reveals not inconsistency, but the novel's deepest literary labour. Through this tension, *Chaka* articulates what may be termed a mode of **subversive subservience**: an outward compliance with missionary expectations that simultaneously preserves, legitimises and even elevates African spiritual knowledge.

Although the text is framed by a Christianised moral worldview, its earliest invocations of spiritual authority emerge not from the Bible but from indigenous cosmology. The novel opens by describing the land through a dual lens; the boundaries of nations are said to have been "created by God," yet the narrator's expansive descriptions of soil, rainfall, and rivers reflect an African epistemology rooted in intimate knowledge of the land. This dual vision establishes the moral and symbolic

terrain on which the tension between African spirituality and Christian moralism unfolds.

It is significant that the text's first spiritual figure is the unnamed woman doctor of Bungane. The narrator introduces her in entirely positive terms:

> There was a woman doctor at Bungane's...She said that the child, Chaka, would... receive great blessings such as had never been received by a human being (Mofolo 1981:8).

The woman doctor's role is neither marginal nor ambiguous; she is the novel's first prophet, and the only character who predicts Chaka's future with absolute accuracy. Her second consultation with Nandi reinforces this spiritual authority: "Even if his attackers should surround him... they will never defeat him... I want to state very firmly again that this child will receive blessings that exceed all expectations" (Mofolo 1981:13–14)

These scenes elevate indigenous healing practices beyond the status afforded to them in missionary discourse. The narrator's Christian moralism - which dominates later sections - is here notably muted, as though the text momentarily suspends missionary expectations in order to affirm the legitimacy and efficacy of African spiritual systems. This early depiction already gestures towards the novel's fundamental ideological fracture: the text reveres African spirituality even as it is written from within an institution that deemed such depictions heretical.

The novel affords legitimacy to African spiritual systems even as it couches them in ambivalent terms. The woman healer who predicts Chaka's rise to greatness is portrayed positively, and Isanusi, though sinister, is also a figure of immense knowledge and transformative power. The ambivalent depiction of Isanusi's character reflects the text's refusal to demonise indigenous cosmologies. While Isanusi is associated with manipulation and violence, he is also the agent of Chaka's destiny, suggesting an unresolved tension between spiritual authority and moral ambiguity.

These portrayals resist the binary logic of Christian good versus African evil. Instead, they stage a metaphysical

ambivalence that challenges missionary doctrine, affirming the complexity and validity of African epistemologies. African spirituality and indigenous knowledge systems are adversely judged through Christian moral ethos yet their validity and efficacy are never questioned or doubted. This is initially reflected in the character depiction of the unnamed traditional doctor who Nandi takes Chaka to at the beginning of the narrative. The unnamed woman doctor is depicted entirely in positive terms and her interventions are not only efficacious but she is the first person in the narrative who predicts the future greatness of Chaka. The nameless woman doctor is depicted as follows:

> There was a woman doctor at Bungane's who was very famous for her knowledge of charms to make one popular charms that brought good fortune, and charms that caused a king to be loved greatly by his people, and by other kings... She said that the child, Chaka, would in the course of his life, receive great blessings such as had never been received by a human being (Mofolo 1981:8).

Later on in the narrative, Nandi and Chaka's consultation with the same traditional healer is described in the following terms:

> When Chaka was getting to be a young lad, Nandi took him to that doctor of hers so that he should be strengthened with potent medicines which would protect him from these people who were intent on killing him. The doctor took some medicinal powder mixed it with other medicines and gave it to them saying... As a result of that even if his attackers should surround him in a large group they will never defeat him, but instead he will scatter them with ease. He will kill rather than be killed. I want to state very firmly again that this child will receive blessings that exceed all expectations (Mofolo 1981:13–14).

African spirituality and belief systems are given credence and credibility that is foreign to missionary discourse. In fact, in this initial depiction of African spirituality, the narrator's Christian moralism is muted, and it is only activated later with the

depiction of Isanusi, because this can be regarded as heresy to depict indigenous spirituality in this way. Besides, the positive influence that she has in saving Chaka from his enemies, she is the only person in the novel's entire universe who predicts correctly Chaka's future greatness. Central to the depiction of indigenous spirituality in *Chaka* is the figure of Isanusi, the diviner who facilitates Chaka's rise to power. Although Isanusi is portrayed as a manipulative and even demonic force, he is also represented with an aura of mystical authority and knowledge. His rituals are described with vivid detail, not as primitive superstition, but as powerful rites that command respect and awe.

> When Chaka heard these things, he nearly went mad with joy, and he said: 'Tell me, is it you who are supposed to complete …', his voice trembled, and he was unable to speak because of the fullness of his heart when he saw that right there, in the wilderness, in the barrenness of the desert, in his state of forlornness, he met the one concerning whose coming he had long abandoned all hope, through whom all promises were to be fulfilled. The doctor was piercing him with his eyes as those thoughts were coursing through his mind, intent on peering right inside Chaka's heart, where all the confidences and the secrets were hidden; and in answer, he simply nodded his head. And then when he saw how Chaka was overcome with emotion, he said: 'Have no more doubts, I have already come.' When he said so it was clear that this was a man full of self-confidence who was talking, a man with the power to accomplish that which he promised. Those words struck Chaka right in the centre of his forehead, and they convinced him, and he entertained no further doubts. He felt the heavy load of a grieving heart loosening and falling to the ground, and he was light and buoyant. He also felt something like a ray of light streaking inside his heart and settling down where that load had been, and he saw clearly that his father's kingship was now his, that he had that day secured it, and it would not any longer slip out of his grasp as long as he was with this man (Mofolo 1981:40).

Here, the text resists the missionary impulse to categorically denounce African spirituality. Macherey (2006) encourages us to ask: what does the text fail to condemn even as it gestures towards disapproval? In *Chaka,* African metaphysics is not expunged but woven into the fabric of the narrative. Its ambivalent portrayal produces a double effect - both critique and preservation - which reveals the author's divided ideological allegiance.

In Chapter 6, when Chaka first meets Isanusi, the narrator describes their encounter as follows:

> When at last he woke up, when the shadows began to lengthen, he found a man doctor standing right there by him, looking at him in a strange way. Chaka's body shivered the moment he set eyes on him and, being always ready for action, he quickly grabbed his little spear, jumped up and stood to one side, afraid that he had nearly been murdered in his sleep; but he soon realized that this was not someone who would kill him; besides, it was clear that when he woke up, that man had already been standing there for some time, and could have killed him if he wanted to.
>
> When Chaka first woke up from his sleep, and their eyes met, he saw that the man's face was distorted with hate, and his lips were like those of a man sick with nausea, and right inside the farthest depths of his eyes he saw malice and unbounded cruelty, he saw someone who had more evil in his heart than any murderer, the very incarnation of malice, treachery and betrayal. His body shuddered, and he blinked his eyes. Then, when he looked at the man again, he found that his face showed sympathy and pity, and was sad on his behalf, and when he looked deep in his eyes, he saw profound compassion and heart that felt the grief of others, and had true love. The face he had first seen was completely gone (Mofolo 1981:36–37).

The figure of Isanusi is one of the novel's key ideological faultlines and a site of textual tensions of the novel. These contradictions are reflected in the fact that the narrator is torn between appraising whether his intervention is necessary or is demonic, and his persona itself is also emblematic of this contradictory

role. Nowhere is this ideological fracture more apparent than in the figure of Isanusi, the enigmatic diviner who guides Chaka's ascent: "When he saw how Chaka was overcome with emotion, he said: 'Have no more doubts, I have already come'" (Mofolo 1981:40).

Isanusi is at once demonic and wise, his influence both enabling and corrupting. Similarly, the nameless woman doctor whom Nandi consults predicts Chaka's greatness, further legitimising African spiritual knowledge systems that the missionary context would have denounced as heresy. The ambiguity surrounding these figures undermines the binary of Christian good versus African evil. African metaphysics is not dismissed but staged as a powerful counter-epistemology. The result is not ideological clarity, but productive ambiguity.

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* has persistently eluded categorical classification. While early readers often interpreted it as a moralistic Christian allegory, later critics have variously read it as a proto-nationalist narrative or as a tragic epic aligned with European classical traditions. These interpretive tensions suggest that *Chaka* resists containment within any singular ideological framework. This chapter argues that such resistance is not a flaw as critics like Neil Lazarus (1986) suggests, but is, in fact, the site of the novel's most critical literary labour. Using Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* (2006) as a diagnostic framework, I read *Chaka* as a literary text structured by its absences, contradictions, and narrative dissonances - what Macherey (2006) would identify as the silences that reveal a work's ideological function. In so doing, I introduce the concept of "subversive subservience" to capture the novel's dual movement: its apparent compliance with missionary expectations and its covert contestation of those very norms. African spirituality and belief systems are given credence and credibility that would have been foreign and seen as sacrilegious within missionary discourse.

Chaka's encounter with the giant water serpent further crystallises the dialectic. In African cosmology, serpents are revered as spiritual messengers, "something portentous which presages either good fortune or extreme bad luck" (Mofolo 1981:11), and killing one constitutes a grave affront to the

gods. Chaka's refusal to attack the serpent, in obedience to the prophetess's instruction, marks him as chosen in indigenous terms. The voices that follow - promising that he "shall rule over nations and their kings" yet "must go by the right path" - constitute a traditional anointing.

Yet, for a narrative shaped by Christian moralism, the serpent is an unmistakable symbol of temptation and fallenness. Mofolo's decision to stage Chaka's consecration through a serpent introduces what Macherey (2006) calls a productive silence - a point where the text refuses to reconcile contradictory ideological demands. At the precise moment of African divine sanction, Christian symbolism injects moral unease. The result is neither celebration nor condemnation but metaphysical ambivalence, signalling the author's divided loyalties.

Nowhere is the dialectic more pronounced than in the enigmatic figure of Isanusi. His entrance is charged with symbolic instability:

> He saw that the man's face was distorted with hate... the very incarnation of malice, treachery and betrayal... Then, when he looked again, he found that his face showed sympathy and pity... profound compassion (Mofolo 1981:36–37).

Isanusi appears simultaneously as a demonic presence and a compassionate guide. This ambivalence is not merely a narrative device but, as Macherey (2006) would insist, a structural indicator of the text's "internal contradictions." Isanusi embodies the tension between African spiritual authority and Christian moral suspicion: he is both the agent of Chaka's destiny and the catalyst for his moral corruption.

The depth of Chaka's emotional response during their first full encounter emphasises this duality: "He saw clearly that his father's kingship was now his... as long as he was with this man" (Mofolo 1981:40). Here, the novel refuses missionary binaries. Isanusi is not dismissed as a witchdoctor or pagan impostor; he is a figure of immense esoteric knowledge, described with reverence ordinarily reserved for biblical prophets. His rituals,

rendered in vivid, non-derogatory detail, command awe rather than contempt.

Yet, the narrator simultaneously frames Isanusi's power within Christian ethical terms. When he offers Chaka a medicine "extremely evil, but also extremely good. Choose!" (Mofolo 1981:43), the moment invokes the Christian doctrine of free will. Isanusi does not coerce; Chaka's moral culpability remains intact. Malaba (1986) rightly observes that Chaka "is not the helpless dupe" of Isanusi - an interpretation fully consistent with the novel's Christian emphasis on personal responsibility. In this sense, Isanusi functions not merely as a spiritual guide but as a **mirror** reflecting the novel's central ideological contradiction: indigenous spiritual power is real, potent, and valid, yet its use remains subject to Christian moral judgement.

Critics have long noted Mofolo's ambivalence. Scholars like Gikandi, Gérard and Malaba argue that *Chaka* ultimately upholds a missionary view of African precolonial history as barbaric, while others - including Irele, Attwell, and Lazarus - emphasise the novel's elevation of African mythic imagination. Lazarus, in particular, stresses that the novel offers "ample textual justification" for both Christian and pagan readings, revealing its internal contradictions as a deliberate artistic strategy rather than a flaw.

Mofolo's mythic reconstruction of Chaka exemplifies this duality. Chaka is said to be "chosen by the gods to... teach the Zulu people the art of war" (Mofolo 1981:10), yet in the same breath he is cast "almost in the role of Christ." The novel cannot disentangle African destiny from Christian typology; its mythic grandeur is continually circumscribed by moral lessons about sin, pride and divine punishment.

This conflict reflects the broader conditions of early African literary production. African writers working "under the gaze of empire" adopted the forms of missionary literacy to articulate suppressed histories. Mofolo's narrative voice is a product of this paradox: he is both enthralled by African cosmology and shaped by missionary pedagogy. The result is a narrative in which African spirituality is neither erased nor uncritically affirmed, but refracted through a Christian moral lens.

As Chaka's power expands under Isanusi's guidance, the novel's moral ambivalence intensifies. The text expresses awe at Chaka's military genius while condemning the "numerous massacres" (Mofolo 1981:90) that follow. The spiritual empowerment that once bestowed legitimacy now becomes the vehicle of his dehumanisation. Yet, even here, the novel refuses simplistic moral condemnation. Chaka's descent is not portrayed as the inevitable result of pagan superstition; it is the product of ethical failure. The same indigenous cosmology that confers destiny also demands accountability. Chaka's tragic fall, thus, emerges from the interplay between spiritual power and moral agency - the very dialectic that structures the entire novel.

The dialectic between indigenous spirituality and Christian moralism in *Chaka* is not simply thematic; it constitutes the novel's ideological and aesthetic foundation. The text consistently legitimises African spiritual authority, (through the woman doctor, the water serpent, and Isanusi) while simultaneously subjecting these systems to Christian moral evaluation. This interplay produces a narrative marked by contradiction, silence, and irresolution, what Macherey (2006) identifies as the true site of a text's ideological work. *Chaka* does not reconcile African cosmology with Christian doctrine; instead, it stages their collision. In doing so, it reveals the profound ambivalence of early African modernity, where authors wrote from inside structures designed to regulate their imagination, yet found ways to resist, transform and exceed them. The novel's power lies precisely in its refusal of ideological purity. Its divided vision - its subversive subservience - makes *Chaka* not only a foundational African epic but also a masterwork of narrative contradiction through which the complexities of African spiritual and moral consciousness are rendered visible.

Mythic Imagination and Strategic Deviation from History in Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*

Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1981) occupies a liminal space between historical narrative and mythic imagination. Its narrative divergences from the historical record have long puzzled critics, some of whom have dismissed them as factual inaccuracies or

lapses of historical discipline. Yet Mofolo's departures from history - his fabrication of characters, compression of events, and moral dramatisation of Chaka's life - are not accidental. Rather, they constitute deliberate narrative strategies that serve aesthetic, ideological and philosophical functions. These strategic deviations allow Mofolo (1981) to transform colonial historiography into a mythic epic of African sovereignty, producing a work that operates simultaneously as moral allegory, cultural reclamation and ideological critique.

Mofolo's narrative variance with history is striking, especially given the evidence of the extensive research that he undertook before writing *Chaka* - a level of diligence he did not exhibit in his earlier two novels. This meticulous preparation, coupled with the text's purposeful reworking of the historical record, suggests a calculated and ideologically motivated intervention. Through these inventions, Mofolo legitimises Chaka's authority, constructs a providential origin for Zulu kingship, and reclaims African agency from the distortions of colonial historiography.

Mofolo's narrator in the novel openly admits to the selectivity of his account:

> The events in Chaka's life were overwhelming because they were so numerous and of such tremendous import; they were like great mysteries which were beyond the people's understanding. But since it is not our purpose to recount all the affairs of his life, we have chosen only one part which suits our present purpose. (Mofolo 1981:153)

This authorial confession emphasises what Pierre Macherey (2006) terms the structured silence of literary production - the unspoken ideological gaps that reveal the contradictions of the text. For Macherey, literary works do not reflect reality directly but construct it through ideological mediation. The incompleteness of a text - what it excludes or suppresses - thus becomes as revealing as what it articulates. In *Chaka*, the narrator's omissions and moral vacillations create precisely this kind of productive incoherence. The novel's seeming submission

to missionary ethics - its moralising tone, its condemnation of pagan superstition - exists alongside a subversive admiration for Chaka's greatness, thereby enacting what may be termed "rebellious obedience." The text appears compliant with Christian moral discourse while quietly undermining it.

Mofolo's most radical act of historical deviation occurs in his depiction of Chaka's birth and the circumstances surrounding it. Historically, Senzangakhona, the Zulu chief, already had legitimate heirs when he fathered Shaka with Nandi; there was no lack of male successors (Kunene 1989:166). Yet, Mofolo invents a situation of dynastic crisis: "The tiny nation of Mazulu was ruled at that time by Senzangakhona, a very young man who had three wives, or maybe four. However, he had no male child in any of his houses." (Mofolo 1981:4) This fabrication transforms a routine birth into a providential event. By making Chaka the long-awaited heir, Mofolo sacralises his birth and endows it with divine necessity. He further moralises this episode by introducing an invented prohibition against premarital pregnancy: "If a girl became pregnant before she was married, she was killed along with all her age-mates." (Mofolo 1981:5) This law has no basis in historical record; rather, it imports Christian moral codes into a precolonial setting. Through this mythic elaboration, Mofolo reimagines Chaka as a "child of sin" (Mofolo 1981:13), a tragic hero whose existence embodies the paradox of sacred kingship under missionary modernity. His suffering and rejection become signs of divine election, aligning him with biblical figures such as Moses and Joseph. Thus, Mofolo's deviation from history transforms an ordinary birth into a metaphysical event that dramatises both divine destiny and human fallibility.

Mofolo's invention of figures such as Isanusi, Ndlebe, Malunga, and the nameless woman doctor further exemplifies his mythic reconstruction of history. These characters, absent from the historical record (Kunene 1989:170), function as extensions of Chaka's internal psyche - his ambition, cunning, and military genius. Isanusi, the sorcerer-prophet who guides Chaka's rise, represents his metaphysical alter ego, "reunited with him at the time of his death" (Kunene 1989:110). Through Isanusi's

occult guidance, Chaka's human intelligence is mythologised as supernatural power.

This mythic mediation externalises Chaka's political and psychological faculties into cosmic forces, transforming his conquests into allegories of temptation, corruption and fate. The strengthening medicines that "transformed him miraculously" (Mofolo 1981:6) become metaphors for the intoxicating nature of power itself. Thus, Chaka's transformation from visionary ruler to ruthless tyrant is figured as both a spiritual fall and a moral revelation.

Mofolo's fabrication of Noliwa - Dingiswayo's sister and Chaka's lover - is perhaps his most poignant narrative invention. Historically, no such woman existed (Kunene 1989:169–170). Noliwa's creation serves both aesthetic and ideological purposes. As a symbol of innocence, fertility and moral equilibrium, she embodies the life principle that Chaka must sacrifice to achieve absolute power. Her death – "something falling down like a heavy stone, and settling heavily on his heart" (Mofolo 1981:127)— signifies the extinction of his humanity.

This episode transforms historical violence into mythic tragedy. Noliwa's pregnancy, symbolising continuity and life, stands in opposition to Chaka's death-driven conquests. Her murder at Isanusi's command becomes a ritual sacrifice that both consecrates and condemns Chaka's kingship. In mythic terms, Chaka's empire is founded upon the annihilation of the feminine principle - the creative and nurturing force of life. Ideologically, this reveals the paradox at the heart of greatness: the same energy that builds nations also destroys them.

Mofolo's retelling of Nandi's death further illustrates his strategic manipulation of history. Whereas historical sources such as Bryant (cited in Kunene 1989:170–171) portray Shaka as mourning his mother's natural death, Mofolo presents a scene of matricide, echoing the earlier sacrifice of Noliwa. This invention completes Chaka's transformation from hero to monster, dramatising the theological notion of the Fall. In Christian terms, the murders of Noliwa and Nandi represent the wages of sin; in African cosmological terms, they signify the rupture of the life-force that binds the king to his people. Through

this distortion, Mofolo converts historical chronicle into moral allegory, exposing the corruption inherent in absolute power.

Perhaps Mofolo's most audacious departure from history occurs in his portrayal of Chaka's decisive battle with Zwide, the Ndwandwe king. Historically, the conflict spanned seven years, culminating in battles at Gqokli Hill and Mhlathuze River (Ritter 1955:149–151). Mofolo's narrator, however, compresses the war into a single day of cataclysmic destruction by recounting the details of the battle as follows:

> When the battle of that day began at sunrise, Zwide's men were countless in number. Chaka started the day with ten regiments without counting the men and the youths, and Zwide with seventeen regiments without counting the men and the youths. A regiment consisted of two thousand people, yet when the sun set on that day all of Zwide's regiments had been turned into corpses, and only three of Chaka's had survived; that is to say that more than forty thousand people died on that day.
>
> When the sun rose on that day there was no nation greater than Zwide's in strength and in the number of its people, but when it set that large nation had been wiped off the face of the earth, and its villages had been turned into ruins (Mofolo 1981:96).

Mofolo's narrator is faithful to historical facts about this epic battle in all details except the compression of time. These narrative inventions recast history through a mythic lens that serves both aesthetic and ideological functions. This narrative compression transforms history into apocalypse. The annihilation of an entire nation "countless in number" within a single day (Mofolo 1981:96) evokes biblical eschatology - the wrath of God visited upon sinful nations. As Kunene (1989:172) observes, "the time-scheme of one day, one battle, one annihilation is not historical but symbolic, corresponding to the timeless temporality of myth." By collapsing time and magnifying scale, Mofolo elevates Chaka's military triumph into a cosmic judgement, merging political history with spiritual destiny.

Mofolo concludes *Chaka* with a prophetic speech in which the dying king foretells the coming of the white man: "You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong... the white man is coming, and it is he who will rule you" (Mofolo 1981:167). This prophecy - absent from the historical record - transforms Chaka's death from a political assassination into a revelation that bridges precolonial and colonial epochs. Through this mythic closure, Mofolo converts tragedy into foresight. Chaka becomes both a victim and a prophet, his death prefiguring the demise of African sovereignty under colonialism. The novel, thus, inverts missionary teleology: the coming of the white man is not salvation but is the advent of tyranny and subjugation.

Mofolo's deviations from history - his fabrications, compressions, and omissions - constitute a coherent aesthetic and ideological project. By refusing the empirical fidelity of colonial historiography, *Chaka* asserts the legitimacy of myth as a mode of historical understanding. Its mythic imagination transforms political chronicle into moral vision, converting history's silences into spaces of ideological revelation. Mofolo's "errors," as some early critics called them, are thus assertions of creative sovereignty: the right of an African author to reshape history through the lens of moral imagination.

In transforming history into myth, Mofolo reclaims the power to narrate African destiny. His *Chaka* is not merely a story about a Zulu king but a parable of kingship, modernity, and the perilous pursuit of greatness. The novel's strategic deviations from the historical record do not diminish its truth; they intensify it. Through mythic imagination, Mofolo achieves what history alone cannot: the revelation of the moral, spiritual and ideological contradictions that define both the man and his age.

Narrative Polyphony and Contradictions of Literary Form

The narrator's inconsistent authority - omniscient in some places, speculative in others - further fragments the text's ideological coherence. This fluctuation between certainty and doubt reflects a refusal to stabilise truth, opening the text to multiple interpretations. This polyphonic strategy -

an epistemological uncertainty - echoes Macherey's (2006) argument that literature is where ideology becomes visible in its fissures. The narrator's ambivalence mirrors the novel's broader ideological ambivalence, oscillating between admiration for Chaka's genius and horror at his cruelty. Missionary stations in Morija, Lovedale and Mariannhill, saw themselves as the agents of cultural transformation involved in a comprehensive attempt to remake the forms of culture which they encountered. They were committed to civilising the natives and offering them the means of participation in the supposed benefits of Western civilisation, the key being literacy and utopian realignment of the world along the lines of universal Christian brotherhood. Thomas Mofolo, a second-generation Christian convert, seemingly upholds these values, yet, in this particular narrative he draws on pre-colonial narrative forms such as traditional songs, praise poetry, collective characters and epic repetition to depict a tragic hero transformed by historical and cultural forces and ultimately restored to glory at the end of the narrative. The narrator's shifting omniscience further destabilises any monolithic reading. At times, he recounts events with certainty; elsewhere, he relies on hearsay: "Those who saw him when he entered the village say that Chaka…came riding on a horse…Others surmise that it was Noliwa" (Mofolo 1981:83). This unreliable narration unsettles the authority of the text itself, enacting the very ideological dissonance that Macherey (2006) identifies as central to the work of literature. The indeterminacy allows multiple truths and worldviews to coexist without synthesis.

Narrative strategy of the novel involves a narrator who is selectively omniscient and deliberately limited in his knowledge of the events. Mofolo's narrator is all-knowing, judgemental and opinionated for most of the narrative but at strategic and key points of the narrative, the narrator's knowledge becomes surprisingly limited and he relies on hearsay and gossip. The ambivalent role of the narrator, at one point he knows everything and other times his knowledge is limited and relies on hearsay to convey the details of the story that he is relating:

> Those who saw him when he entered the village say that Chaka, when he returned from his father's grave, came

> riding on a horse with a shining coat, led by an *intombazana*, a young maiden who surpassed all the maidens of the world in beauty. Many people swear that the *Inkosazana yeZulu*, the Sky Princess, first appeared on that day, and they say further that it was she in person who led the horse upon which Chaka was riding. Others surmise that it was Noliwa, and yet, Noliwa had not yet arrived, for she only came after the cattle had been taken out to the pastures, and she came in company of many people; there was no way in which she could be with Chaka at that time. Besides, that horse which he is said to have been riding is a mystery to us because there were still no horses at that time...Yet, in spite of all that, those who saw Chaka say he came riding a horse, of that they have no doubt whatsoever (Mofolo 1981:83–84).

Macherey insists that the formal structure of a literary work is not ideologically neutral. The way in which a story is told - its narrative arc, generic conventions and rhetorical strategies - reveals the ideological operations supporting it. *Chaka* follows a tragic narrative structure that closely mirrors Western models of classical and Shakespearean tragedy. The protagonist's hubris, isolation, and eventual downfall recall the tragic fates of figures like *Oedipus* and *Macbeth*.

However, this structural choice is complicated by the incorporation of distinctly African oral narrative techniques, cyclical temporality and cosmological themes. The fusion of European tragic form with African storytelling modes generates a formal hybridity that destabilises both traditions. The result is a structure that simultaneously invokes and subverts colonial literary expectations. The tragic downfall of Chaka does not simply warn against excessive ambition; it registers a deeper ideological dissonance between the values of heroic sovereignty and Christian morality.

The enigmatic characterisation of Chaka is an interesting case of ideology of form. Initially, he is depicted as an unproblematised hero and his adversaries demonised as villains. Once he assumes kingship, the narrative perspective transforms

from uncritical sympathy to the ambivalent depiction as simultaneously a visionary leader and a ruthless tyrant. Lastly, there is a problematic ending and his tragic demise as a tragic hero which does not result in the restoration of social order and justice. Chaka follows the trajectory of a classical tragedy - rise, hubris, fall - but resists Christian moral resolution. Chaka's end is not framed as divine punishment but as the inevitable result of his own ambition and fate.

The narrative follows the tragic arc of rise, hubris, and fall - but without the redemptive closure of Christian allegory. Chaka's demise is not framed as divine punishment but as existential collapse. His final isolation and betrayal mark not moral correction but ontological despair. The tragedy is classical in form but African in substance, mirroring a cosmological order that defies Christian teleology. This refusal of closure is ideologically significant. The absence of moral resolution reveals the ideological tension between African cultural memory and missionary modernity.

Formally, *Chaka* draws on both African oral traditions - praise poetry, collective characters, epic repetition - and Western derived literary tragic structure. This hybridisation is not seamless; rather, it produces a creolised narrative that refuses closure or ideological unity. The tragic arc of Chaka's rise and fall, reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Othello* or Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, is undercut by the persistent presence of African cosmologies and social forms, which are invoked but never fully explained or assimilated. As Macherey (2006) contends, such narrative fractures are the most ideologically productive moments in a text, for they expose the fissures in hegemonic discourse.

The epic figure and character of Chaka in the novel is frequently exalted through heroic verses (*izibongo* in isiZulu or *dithoko* in Sesotho) composed mainly by men, as well as songs composed by women. In addition, there are also praise poems for the wild and ferocious animals like the water serpent, the lion and the hyena. These praises, which appear at critical moments in the story, celebrate Chaka's bravery, military prowess and fearlessness. Collective characters like Senzangakhona's senior

wives who are in an antagonistic relationship with Nandi and the young Chaka. On the other hand, the figure of Isanusi may be construed and likened to a Faustian figure who tempts Chaka to sell his soul for power and military prowess. Characterisation of the protagonist as a tragic hero follows the classical tragic arc of rise, hubris and fall. But without redemptive closure.

One of the most telling absences in *Chaka* is the lack of divine justice or redemption. While the novel follows a structure that seems to build towards a moral resolution, Chaka's demise is not accompanied by the triumph of Christian values. Instead, the narrative ends in existential despair. Chaka is isolated, tormented by his conscience, and ultimately betrayed by those closest to him. Yet, his fall is not framed as divine retribution; rather, it feels like the culmination of a tragic arc marked by fate and inevitability.

Macherey (2006) argues that a literary work's ideological function is revealed in its contradictions. *Chaka* does not close the loop on its own moral framework. The anticipated Christian conclusion is withheld, leaving the reader in a space of interpretive suspension. This refusal to deliver closure exemplifies the structured silence which Macherey (2006) identifies as a sign of ideological instability. It is a silence that speaks. Or the eloquent silence.

But doom here is existential, not theological. No redemptive Christian justice concludes the novel; rather, it ends in silence and betrayal. This absence of moral closure is what Macherey (2006) identifies as the moment that a text's ideological function becomes visible. It is not merely what the novel says, but what it cannot say that reveals its subversive work.

The ambivalence of *Chaka* reflects the historical compression experienced by colonised African subjects. As Mofolo attempts to reconcile the grandeur of Zulu imperial history with the moral imperatives of Christianity, his narrative falters in ways that reveal the impossibility of synthesis between African cultural nationalism and universalist ethos of missionary discourse. According to Macherey, these moments of narrative breakdown are the most ideologically productive, for they expose the fissures in hegemonic missionary discourse.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1981) constitutes a profoundly ambivalent literary artefact - one that resists closure, coherence and categorical containment. Through a Machereyean lens, we have read the text not as a failed Christian allegory or a proto-nationalist epic, but as a complex site of ideological production, where conflicting discourses collide, contend and coexist. For Pierre Macherey, the critic's task is not to unify the text or recover an authorial intention, but to locate the absences, contradictions, and silences that bear witness to the historical and ideological forces shaping its production. *Chaka* is exemplary in this regard: it is a text structured by what it cannot say as much as by what it does articulate.

Written under the auspices of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society, and shaped by Mofolo's own Christian convictions, the novel, nevertheless, draws deeply on African oral traditions, cosmologies, and heroic mythologies. It is precisely this ideological bifurcation - between the imperatives of missionary moralism and the residues of indigenous worldview - that animates the text's narrative tensions. Rather than smoothing over these tensions, *Chaka* stages them. The novel performs what may be called a strategy of subversive subservience: a dual movement of outward compliance with Christian-colonial ideologies and covert resistance through narrative form, thematic ambivalence and strategic omission.

Far from being literary flaws, the text's contradictions, gaps, and silences are productive sites of meaning. They are markers of an unresolved cultural and ideological negotiation - between African cosmology and Christian dogma, between colonial modernity and traditional authority, between the oral and the written. These silences function as narrative thresholds where competing worldviews remain in tension, never fully reconciled, and never wholly subordinated. In this way, *Chaka* refuses both the didactic closure of missionary pedagogy and the recuperative unity of nationalist myth-making.

The ideological contradictions at the heart of *Chaka* reflect broader struggles of African societies under colonial modernity - struggles not simply of resistance or capitulation, but of

mediation, translation and negotiation. Mofolo's narrative, in its very incompleteness, gestures towards the limits of both cultural assimilation and indigenous recovery. It is in this instability that the novel's critical force resides. By refusing resolution, *Chaka* invites readers to dwell in the discomfort of ideological ambiguity, to recognise literature not as a mirror of unified meaning, but as a fractured space where historical antagonisms are registered, rehearsed and reimagined.

In sum, *Chaka* should be read as a literary site of ideological contestation, not ideological closure. Through its performative silences and structural contradictions, the novel enacts the complexities of African literary modernity - its entanglements with domination and resistance, tradition and innovation, cultural survival and epistemic violence. Mofolo's *Chaka* (1981), when read through Macherey (2006), emerges not as a passive product of its context but as an active participant in the cultural struggle to narrate African identity under the pressures of colonial transformation. Its silences are not voids, but resonant spaces of meaning. Its contradictions are not errors, but critical apertures. Its ideological subservience is never absolute, for it harbours within it the seeds of subversion. *Chaka* is an exemplary case of how a literary text can exceed the intentions of its author and context, opening new horizons for understanding African literary modernity as a space of both entrapment and imaginative resistance.

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UJ Press

When Thomas Mofolo completed *Chaka* at the Morija mission press, he produced what would become one of the most significant literary achievements in any African language — a work that has generated a century of scholarship without ever being fully claimed by a single tradition. Two distinct critical lineages have formed around it: one reading Mofolo in translation across the postcolonial world; the other engaging with the Sesotho in which he wrote. For a hundred years, they did not speak to each other.

This volume ends that silence.

Power, Resistance, Memory and Meaning: Centenary Reflections on Mofolo's Chaka brings both traditions into sustained, unresolved conversation for the first time. The ten essays gathered here do not merely coexist — they contest one another, find different things in the same passages, and assign different weight to what matters. That friction is not incidental; it is the scholarly method this text demands. *Chaka* has always been a work of productive tension, composed at the crossroads of missionary modernity and indigenous intellectual life by a man who was neither passive instrument nor simple resister, but something more historically interesting than either.

The volume's signal achievement is institutional as much as it is critical: for the first time, the global comparatist and the Sesotho literary scholar occupy the same room as genuine interlocutors. Neither tradition functions as footnote to the other. Neither dissolve into the other. What emerges is a richer, more honestly contested account of one of African literature's most enduring achievements — and an implicit indictment of the epistemological habits that kept these conversations apart for so long.

A hundred years on, Mofolo's *Chaka* is still speaking. This volume, at last, listens in both languages.

Written in an African language at a colonial mission press, suppressed for years by its own publishers, then translated across the globe — *Chaka* is among the most consequential novels produced anywhere in the twentieth century. Its centenary demands exactly this kind of reckoning.

"What Kunene dismantled, with characteristic scholarly generosity, was not the canon itself but the invisible wall surrounding it. He revealed what I had not been taught to see: that the African literary tradition was, and had always been, far deeper, broader, and more linguistically complex than the anglophone curriculum had permitted us to imagine." **MUKOMA WA NGUGI, CORNELL UNIVERSITY · FROM THE PREFACE.**

ISBN 978-1-997499-27-5

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