

**THE ROLE OF CHIEFS AS CHARACTERS IN
MATSEPE'S NOVELS : AN APPRAISAL.**

By

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DECLARATION

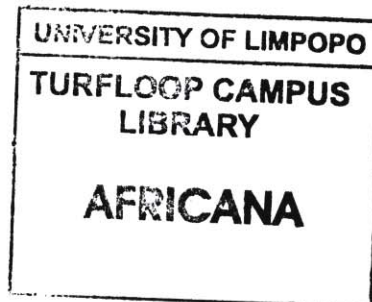
I, MAITE STELLA SEGOOA, declare that **THE ROLE OF CHIEFS AS CHARACTERS IN MATSEP'S NOVELS: AN APPRAISAL**, hereby submitted by me, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

M Segooa

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29-07-04

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DATE



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late aunt, Mmamogolo Mokgadi Nelly Mokgohloa.

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ABSTRACT

In this research an attempt has been made to assess, evaluate and examine the role of chiefs as characters in Matsepe's novels.

The need for this study was found to be necessary because no in-depth study of the role of chiefs in Matsepe's novels has as yet been undertaken.

This study demonstrates how Matsepe portrays chiefs as characters in his novels, what their duties are and how they help in developing his themes.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study is an assessment of the role of chiefs as characters in Matsepe's novels.

Chapter One gives a general introduction to the study, its aims, objectives and methodology used in the study.

Chapter Two deals with characterization of chiefs in Matsepe's novels.

Chapter Three deals with chiefs' role towards the development of themes in Matsepe's novels.

Chapter Four is concerned with the duties of chiefs as characters as portrayed in Matsepe's novels.

Chapter Five gives a general conclusion as well as future research.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM.

Communities in South Africa as well as in the neighbouring countries; predominantly in rural communities, are governed and ruled by chiefs.

Chieftaincy is regarded as an institution of high esteem, although the manner in which chiefs are inaugurated may vary from tribe to tribe.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (1943:832) defines a chief as the common designation of a political leader of a primitive social group, such as a band, tribe or confederacy of tribes.

From the above definition, one can deduce that a chief is a leader. So a leader must indeed, lead and not mislead.

Previously, in the Pedi culture, chiefs were regarded as the most honourable and respected people in the communities. They (chiefs) were inaugurated into power, and rightfully so.

Things such as birth and initiation were considered before he could be regarded as a chief, and only then could he get inaugurated. It was not everyone who could become a chief.

Only the first born son of a chief's principal wife could become a chief. This was so because the Pedi culture allowed a chief to marry as many wives as he deemed it fit. Thus, polygamous marriages were, and still are acceptable in the Pedi culture. The above mentioned statement is reiterated by Mönnig (1978:264) when he states that:

Chiefs marry certain wives for diplomatic reasons from among the daughters of other chiefs or nobles in the tribe, and such marriages are ranked as marriages of choice, or as the Pedi people express it, they are wives that a chief marries for his pleasure.

The principal wife was to be married from the chief-to-be's uncle, i.e., a chief-to-be marries his own cousin. This was done in order to keep family secrets to themselves and to strengthen the family relations and the bond. Hence the saying "**Ngwana malome nnyale dikgomo di boele šakeng.**" (My cousin, marry me so that the **lobola** cattle can be retained in the family kraal).

The particular person for chief candidacy should have undergone initiation school for if he is uninitiated, he would never be regarded as man enough. This is reiterated by Mönnig (1978:112) when he says:-

The position of any uninitiated person, particularly a man, is an invidious one. Such a person is forever regarded as a child without the legitimate authority to partake of adult activities.

Nowadays, chiefs are no longer shown and given the respect and honour that they deserve. African culture is fading away and Western culture is being given priority over the African culture. Many Africans feel ashamed to be associated with African culture.

The situation is also aggravated by the new dispensation that came into power after being democratically elected in 1994 here in South Africa. Black culture is no longer valued. Customs and norms governing the institution of chieftaincy are no longer followed.

Despite the important role that chiefs play in the communities, there is hardly an in-depth study of chieftainship in the literature of 'Sesotho sa Lebowa'. Some of those authors who did, did so cursorily and without elaborating on the matter.

Matsepe has written books that evolve around the issue of chieftainship. That is why his books are used in this study to try and find out what exactly a chief's role is.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim for this study is to highlight and examine the role of chiefs as characterized in Matsepe's novels.

In order to accomplish this objective, the following issues need to be addressed:

1.2.1 Customs and values considered before one can be regarded as a chief

1.2.1.1 Succession to the throne

1.2.1.2 Initiation

1.2.2 Types of chiefs; and

1.2.3 Terminology used in the chieftainship domain.

1.3 **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

This is an appraisal of the role of chiefs as characterized in Matsepe's novels, which will help us understand and know the institution of chieftaincy and the roles of a chief in a particular community.

1.4 **METHODOLOGY**

This type of study needs different types of research methodologies in order for it to be effective and credible. Research, as defined by Mouton and Marais (1988:146), is:-

A collaborative activity by means of which a given phenomenon is studied in an objective manner, with the view to establish a valid understanding of that phenomenon.

The following research methods will be used in this study.

1.4.1 **The qualitative research method**

Qualitative research refers to the collection and analysis of extensive narrative data in order to gain insight into a situation of interest, without which it would not be possible when using other types of research.

Creswell (1994:2) defines research as:-

An enquiry process of understanding a social human problem, based on building complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

Mouton and Marais (1988:204) see the standpoint of qualitative research as that people perceive reality in different ways and that these perceptions are significant for understanding a phenomenon in this complexity. In other words, qualitative research allows for the utilization of contextual approach. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1992:69), can help to give an insight on the options and importance of context in creative work.

“Contextualism holds that the work of art should be apprehended in its context or setting, and that knowledge of it is much richer if it is approached with knowledge of contextualizing.”

From the above excerpt, it is evident that any piece of literature is more sensible if it is put in its proper context. Contextualised information enables one to understand a text better.

1.4.2 The primary research method

The primary research method is a method whereby firsthand information is obtained from respondents. This may be achieved through interviews and questionnaires. However, in this study, only interviews will be used.

1.4.2.1 Interviews

An interview as a research mechanism will help to supplement personal information by coming into contact with people to get access to facts and ideas. Consequently, the researcher will therefore conduct interviews with traditional leaders, politicians, early writers and all other affected stakeholders, to verify the role of chiefs under general, in order to correlate them with what Matsepe has to say about the role of chiefs in his novels. In this study, only unstructured questions will be used to conduct the interviews.

1.4.3 **The textual research method**

The textual analysis method will be employed in this research. This method is suitable because it enables the researcher to establish, as accurately as possible, what an author actually wrote. This is relevant because the researcher has to refer to the text from time to time.

1.4.4 **The secondary research method**

The secondary research method will also be applied in this study as it helps the researcher to establish, as accurately as possible, the importance and relevance of the subject matter already employed by a number of scholars. This method entails the collection of data from articles, magazines, library books, newspapers and dissertations.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Of utmost importance in this study is the highlighting of the following:

1.5.1 The role of chiefs as characters in Matsepe's novels; namely, that:

- He acts as a judge;
- He leads and guides the community;
- He is the principal traditional healer (doctor) and a religious leader;
- He is the ritual leader of the tribe;
- He accommodates new-comers in the village;
- He controls initiation;
- He is the leader of the traditional army;
- He sees to the eradication of poverty in the community; and
- He protects the rights of everyone in the community.

A study of the role of chiefs in Matsepe's novels will help the contemporary society to understand how chiefs came about in the past, how chiefs are viewed nowadays and whether this institution will still be considered in the future or not, given the changes that prevail in the system of government presently in power here in South Africa.

This will also help the coming generation to know their roots and learn also to respect their own culture.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

So far, authors of 'Sesotho sa Lebowa' novels made no attempt of indicating the role of chiefs thoroughly. Those who did, did so narrowly and also not elaborating on the matter. Inadequate information is provided about the role of chiefs.

Among those who wrote something concerning the role of chiefs are Rafapa (1987), Moswane (1985), Mminele (1967) and Sekhukhune (1988), to name but a few.

1.6.1 Rafapa (1987)

1.6.1.1 The chief accommodates newcomers in the village.

Rafapa indicated this role. Whenever a newcomer arrives in the village, such a person should be reported to the chief and it is the chief who will have to accommodate him/her if needs be.

This was the case with Mpitiki when he arrived at the Barolong tribe. Rre Hau had to report his presence to the chief.

“A hlaba moeng ka mahlo a re: Gosasa ke tlo tsoga ke go bega go babuši. Nka wela kotsing ye kgolo ge nka itshwarela wena” (Rafapa, 1987:40).

(He looked at the visitor and said: Tomorrow I will report your presence to the governors. I can land in a big trouble if I can keep you to myself.)

This is also mentioned again when Mpitiki was brought by Jobo to Chief Ntlogeleng of Majaneng village in Zebediela, so that he can be identified by the villagers.

Ba rile go fetša meswaso le madume, motswalagwe a mmotšiša gore o kwele gore go iwa Majaneng na. Majaneng ke leina le batho ba hlompago mošate wa Moletlane ka lona. Ge Stefina ditsebe di tlogela hlogo yola a mmotša gore gosasa mošate o biditše kgoro ya kgothekgothe. Sebiletšwa ga se tsebje gabotse le ge go kwala gore go na le mofaladi yo a tlilego ka taba. (Rafapa, 1987:53)

(After completing jokes and greetings, her cousin asked if she heard that they are to go to Majaneng. Majaneng is the name used by people to respect the Moletlane royal place. When Stefina was still surprised, she then told her that tomorrow there is a general meeting called by 'mošate'. The purpose of the meeting is not well known but it is rumoured that there is a foreigner who has something to say.)

1.6.1.2 He acts as a judge.

Rafapa acknowledges the fact that the chief is a judge who will determine who should take responsibility of Mpitiki now that his mother is late.

“Ge e le tša go botšolliša kgakgano magareng ga Makobe le Moipati mošate wa tseba gore ke tša wona o nnoši go se molata.” (Rafapa, 1987:57)

(When coming to the cross-questioning of dispute between Makobe and Moipati 'mošate' knew that it is its responsibility alone, without the involvement of ordinary citizens.)

1.6.2 Moswane (1985)

1.6.2.1 He acknowledges that one of the chief's roles is to **act as a judge**.

Kgoši Taudikgomong ke lekhutša. Tšatši le di mo tsogetšego o be a kgona go lokologanya ditaba ka tshwanelo, le ge ka nako ye nngwe di be di fele di mo radia. Go mo radia ga ntshe ke gore, molatong go be go fele go tšwelela yo a begilego pele. Ge o ka re o sa re ke ya mošate wa kopana le yo o bego o re o yo mmega a šetše a etšwa go boa o tsebe gore o paletšwe. (Moswane, 1985:79).

(Chief Taudikgomong is a type of person who dismisses issues without going deep into the matter. During days when he was fine, he was able to arrange facts logically, but at times he was unable to do that. The problem was that his cases were always won by the one who reports the case first to him. If on your way to reporting a case to him you meet with the one you want to report already from there, then you must forget about winning the case.)

1.6.2.2 **The chief is the ritual leader of the tribe.**

When rituals such as the offering of sacrifices, curing and protecting the community from any epidemic are performed, the chief must be there to serve as the leader.

Moswane made mention of this fact, haphazardly so, in his book.

“Ge a sa hwe ka pela, ba mo feleletša ka lerumo ba mo tšee ba mo lahlele ka pitšeng tša mohlapo ba tle ba neše pula ka yena”. (Moswane, 1985:91).

(If s/he does not die quickly, they finish him/ her off by using a spear and throw him/her in pots meant for ritual making purposes and he will be used for that purpose.)

1.6.3 Mminele (1972)

He acknowledges the existence of chiefs and that one of their roles is to **rule and govern**.

When Phankga was dissatisfied with the way in which Lahlang was managing the school, he said:

“Nna ka hlahlwa ke motho yeo ke mo hlhago, wa thuto ya mogwapa ya matsatši ale go sa buša kgoši Konkodi?” (Mminele, 1972:18)

(Can I be led by someone I lead, the one with inferior education that was taught during Chief Konkodi's rule?)

1.6.4 Sekhukhune (1988)

He made mention of the fact that the chief is to **act as a judge** if the case is too difficult for men to can pass judgement over at the '**kgoro**'.

“Kgoši a leka go homotša bana ba gagwe ka go beeletša molato selepeng, kgoro ya gaMaredi ya rengwa dipudi tše pedi. Makgothe yena a rengwa pudi. Bakgonegile yena a se ke a rengwa”. (Sekhukhune, 1988:18).

(The chief tried to calm his tribe by judging over the case, Maredi's 'kgoro' was fined two goats, Makgothe was fined one goat. Bakgonegile was not fined.)

Although the above-mentioned authors tried to analyze the role of chiefs in 'Sesotho sa Lebowa' novels, most issues were left unattended. An in-depth study of the roles of chiefs will be treated using Matsepe's novels. This will help the contemporary society to know what powers the chief had in the past.

CHAPTER 2

2. CHARACTERIZATION OF CHIEFS IN MATSEPE'S NOVELS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to examine the portrayal of chiefs as characters in Matsepe's novels. Characterization, as defined by Morner and Rausch (1991:33), is the method by which an author creates the appearance and personality of an imaginary person and reveals their character. It is the ability to present life to a reader and it is judged one of the most important attributes of a writer of fiction.

2.2 WHAT ARE CHARACTERS

People who appear in works of arts are referred to as characters. In support of this view, Abrams (1988:22) maintains that characters are persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say (the dialogue) and by what they do (the action).

For the reader to visualize the character, the author usually employs physical description of varying exactness and fullness.

Although characters in prose works are like real people in some respects, they are in no way identical to people in real life. This is so because they (characters) do not live in the real world but only in the imaginary world that is created by an author.

Although the prose characters are not real people, they are endowed with pain and do experience pleasure. They feel and act on their feelings.

For the reader to understand the characters better, she/he should listen to what other characters say about a particular character, what she/he says and does.

2.3 TYPES OF CHARACTERS

The aim of this sub-section is to analyse the manner in which chiefs are presented to the readers in Matsepe's novels.

There are various types of characters, but in this study, only the following types of characters will be dealt with: protagonist, antagonist and tritagonist. Moreover, the study will only concentrate on chiefs that have a bearing on the said types.

The novels used will be *Tša ka mafuri*, *Letšofalela*, *Kgorong ya Mošate*, *Megokgo ya bjoko* and *Lešitaphiri*. Each type of character will be treated separately from various novels mentioned above, i.e. protagonist, antagonist and tritagonist.

2.3.1 Protagonist

A protagonist is the main character in a work of art. For a novel to be successful, and so that its theme can be clear, she/he should be successfully portrayed. Otherwise, that literary work will be a failure. This particular character should be strong and strive to overcome any obstacles she/he comes across.

Morner and Rausch (1991:176) define a protagonist as the principal and central character of a novel, short story, play, or other literary work.

Conradie (1978:52) defines a protagonist as follows: “Die protagonis is die hoofkarakter of held wat in die drama die sterkste op die voorgrond tree en die toneel van die begin af oorheers. Dit gaan in die drama veral om sy worstelinge, sy gevoelens en sy uitendelike lot”.

This is the kind of character who should be able to adapt according to circumstances. The protagonist is so important that if she/he is not successfully portrayed, then the novel cannot realize its full potential.

Heese and Lawton (1993:115) concur with Conradie (1978) because she defines the protagonist as: “a man better than we are, he should have great moral worth than the average man”.

Hereunder follows chiefs that are portrayed as protagonists in Matsepe’s novels: Tlabego, Mabitša and Letšaga.

2.3.1.1 Tlabego: *Tša ka Mafuri*

Tlabego is a protagonist because people like Chief Ntillišeng (his uncle) and his father (Chief Phentšwe), are against him. He is the one who suffers a lot and is in pain in most cases. He suffers the consequences of his own making.

As it is the Pedi culture, a man has to marry his uncle’s daughter. This was also expected of Chief Tlabego to do likewise by marrying Madimabe (Chief Ntillišeng’s

daughter). However, Tlabego decided not to follow that trend by disobeying his parents and marrying Chief Afakenna's daughter, Ntlhoboge.

In his own words he says:

Le ge o ka hlwe o re neng Madimabe yenaena nka se mo nyale le ge go ka direga goba gwa se direge eng bjang le bjang (1974:19)

(Even if you can ask when as for Madimabe I will not marry her no matter what happens.)

This caused him a lot of problems. When his son Tšhikanoši (Kwelapele's son) is of a marrying age, he also decides not to marry his cousin, but to go and marry Chief Sekatapowana's daughter. He was just following in his footsteps by defying him.

This matter displeased Tlabego, but his father, Phentšwe, was much pleased. To show his pleasure he says:

... Lehono ge morwa wa gago a go dira ka mokgwa woo ke thabile, ka gore ke gona o tla kwago bohloko bja ge morwa wa gago a go bona botlaela bja ge o tswetše motho wo a fetago wena ka bohlale ... (1974:147)

(Today I am pleased by what your son is doing to you, because now you will feel the pain of being seen as a fool by your own son for having given birth to a person who is cleverer than you.)

To show his displeasure, Tlabego says this to Chief Sekatapowana (Tšhikanoši's father-in-law to be):

Nna ke lego tatagwe, ga ke rate ge a etla go go nyalela.
(1974:149)

(I, being his father, is against the idea of him marrying your daughter).

Ntlhoboge, who is his principal wife, gives birth twice to abnormal babies. Firstly, she gives birth to a baby with no sex organs at all. On this, it is narrated thus:

Le go mo tšea ba ilego ba ya go mo tšea, mogwera wa rena ga a ka a tla go tseba gore ke mong, ka gore gona fale go bego go swanetše go ba diitsebišo tša gore ke mong, go be go se selo. (1974:92)

(Although they went to take the baby, our friend did not know of which sex it was, because where the sex organs were supposed to be, there was nothing.)

Tlabego's in-laws also ask him if he was happy about the baby.

“O thabile?”
“Ga go bjalo.”
“Ka lebaka la eng?”
“Ga ke tsebe.”
“Ke mong?”
“Ga ke tsebe.” (1974:92)

(Are you happy?
No.
Why not?
I do not know.
Which sex is the child?
I do not know.)

This questions were just asked to confuse Tlabego even further because there was no way he could know its sex, for the baby had none. The baby was an embarrass-

ment for the community waited and wanted someone who could become their chief one day. They will not accept to be ruled by such type of a person.

Secondly, she gave birth to a baby with two different sex organs. This really frustrated and embarrassed Tlabego because he wanted a child who could become an heir one day, thus succeed him to the throne of chieftainship. On this, it is narrated thus:

Ga se gore e be e le ka phošo ge mosadimogolo a be a le ka mokgwa woo, ka gore e be e le thopa yeo bokaone nka rego e be e le tšhitelo, go ba tšhitelo ga gagwe ke gore e be e le tonankatshadi, ka gore o be a hlakantše bošemane le bosetsana. (1974:195)

(It was not wrong for the old woman to be like that, because the child was a secret which can best be regarded as an inconvenience because it was a hermaphrodite given that it combined both male and female sex organs.)

Tlabego is further pressurized by his father-in-law Chief Afakenna when he tells him that, for the fact that Madimabe gives birth to miracle babies, the best thing to be done is to let one of Madimabe's brothers go and take the reigns at Chief Phentšwe's place. A thing which is impossible for one to can accept.

Under normal circumstances, no traditional community can accept to be ruled by someone who is not the first son of its chief's principal wife.

Chief Afakenna says the following when talking to Chief Ntillišeng:

- Ntillišeng : O re bokaone ke ge morwa wa gago wa lapa le le hlatlamago labo Ntlhoboge a ka yo buša kua ga Kgoši Phentšwe?
- Afakenna : O nkwele gabotse Kgoši Ntillišeng.
- Ntillišeng : Ka mantšu a mangwe, bogoši bja Kgoši Phentšwe bo swanetše go fela motseng wa gagwe, go tsoge bja gago?
- Afakenna : O nkwele gabotse kgoši Ntillišeng.
(1974:207)
- Ntillišeng : (You say the best thing is for your son from the family succeeding that of Ntlhoboge to go and take reigns at Phentšwe's place.
- Afakenna : You heard me very well Chief Ntillišeng.
- Ntillišeng : In other words, Phentšwe's chieftainship should end at his place and then yours should resume?
- Afakenna : You heard me well Chief Ntillišeng.)

Tlabego is also blamed by Chief Afakenna's people for the cow contributed by his uncle, Chief Ntillišeng, because it gave birth to a calf with two heads and as a result, it is no longer welcomed at Afakenna's place.

After having gone through all these mishaps, when he finally wants to go and marry Madimabe, he is told that she is already married, which is an indication that his problems are far from being over.

The following is a narration on the issue of Tlabego's wanting to marry Madimabe:

- Tlabego : Sebatakomo ge ditaba di le ka mokgwa wokhwi, nna ke swanetše go dira eng bjang?
- Phentšwe : Di le ka mokgwa ofe?

- Tlabego : Ke bolela ka ga thari ya Ntlhoboge.
- Phentšwe : Mpotše gore o be o šetše o naganne bjang?
- Tlabego : Nna ke bona gore ke tla be ka gapeletšega go ya go bonana le malome Kgoši Ntillišeng.
- Phentšwe : Mabapi le eng?
- Tlabego : Go ya go kgopela tshwarelo.
- Phentšwe : Ya eng?
- Tlabego : Ya ge ke ile ka kganyetša Madimabe, ka ya go nyala ditlhobaboroko tšekhwi go thwego ke Ntlhoboge.
- Phentšwe : Go ka se thuše selo.
- Tlabego : Afaeya.
- Phentšwe : Se re afaeya, e re ka lebaka la eng.
- Tlabego : Ka lebaka la eng?
- Phentšwe : La gore Madimabe o šetše a nyetšwe. (1974:200)
- Tlabego : (Your honour, when things are like this, what am I supposed to do and how?
- Phentšwe : When they are like what?
- Tlabego : I am referring to Ntlhoboge's babies.
- Phentšwe : Tell me what your opinion is.
- Tlabego : I think I will be forced to go and meet with my uncle Chief Ntillišeng.
- Phentšwe : In connection with what?
- Tlabego : To go and ask for forgiveness.
- Phentšwe : What for?
- Tlabego : For having detested Madimabe and then married these nightmares called Ntlhoboge.

- Phentšwe : That will not help you in any way.
- Tlabego : Is it?
- Phentšwe : Don't say is it, ask why.
- Tlabego : Why?
- Phentšwe : Because Madimabe is already married.)

2.3.1.2 Mabitša: *Letšofalela*

Mabitša is regarded as a protagonist because he is the one who endures all the pain and the one who starts with the book and ends with it. He tries to solve the problem of his principal wife, i.e., barrenness, in many ways than one. Ditlhodi, who is the chief's principal wife is supposed to bear the chief a heir, but she is barren and this creates a problem for Mabitša. The community would not approve that they be without a chief in future because of Ditlhodi's barrenness.

In trying to settle the issue, Mabitša seeks the advice of his medicinemen. The narrator gives an account of this by saying:

O lekile ka bothata go phetha dikeletšo tša dingaka ya re ge a bona gore o itapiša ka lefeela, ka go tlalwa ke pelo a gafela o mongwe wa barwarragwe legogwa la yena Ditlhodi, ka kholofelo ya gore mo gongwe yena letheke la gawe le ka phala la gagwe, fela ya ba manyami go bona go se sethokgwa se se tšwago phoofolo. Ge tšeo ka moka di padile, a tlamega go romela Fowang mphato wa Magasa go ya go mmotšiša gore na bjale yena a reng. (1972:13)

(He tried so hard to carry out the medicinemen's advice, and in realizing that he is bothering himself for nothing, in a fit of rage he allocated Ditlhodi's bed to one of his brothers with the hope that maybe his waist will be better than his, but it was unfortunate to see that nothing came of the efforts. When all those had failed, he was forced to send the Magasa garrison to Fowang to go and ask him what he should do.)

Mabitša, as a chief and a traditionalist, experiences pressure from his community. According to the Pedi culture, a chief's successor is born by the chief's principal wife. If she is barren, then he is put in the lurch.

After Moleti, Ditlhodi's sister, who was requested to come and bear her an heir, gave birth to a baby boy, Mabitša was pleased. Upon hearing the news, he uttered the following prayer:

Ge badimo ba ka nkatla mo lebakeng le, nka ba hlabela
lešaka ka moka. Ga ke sa le motho eupša diketo tša
Ditlhodi le rragwe, ka Moleti mogongwe ke tla swana le
magoši ka moka ... ka ntle ga go nkgopela, mantšibua
akhwi le tlile go lalela ka kgokolo ya pholo yeo ke le
begelago matswalo a ngwana yo ka yona. Hle ga ke re ka
kgang, mphedišetšeng yena, lena bantswadi.

(1972:63)

(If the gods can be on my side this time, I can slaughter the whole kraal for them. I am no longer a person but Ditlhodi and her father's game, because of Moleti perhaps I will be like all kings ... without asking me, this evening you are going to dine by a flat bull by which I will be informing you of the birth of this baby, I do not insist, nurture him for me, you my bearers.)

Mabitša is desperate that the child should grow and not die before he becomes his successor, hence he utters the above-mentioned prayer.

Mabitša is further tormented by his late mother in his dreams, who asks where Ditlhodi is. This is after Ditlhodi returned home because she was angry that Moleti is coming to take her place at Mabitša's homestead. The narration gives an account of this thus:

Bjale gona ba nhlakanya hlogo. Ditlhodi o ntlaišitše go fetiša tekanyo, a tla a nnyatša le mme mo nkego re diebela. Morago ga fao a ikela gagabo ka ntle ga go tshwenywa ke motho. Seo se dirago gore ba se ye go botšiša yena gore naa ge lapa le dula dipudi, e lego seo a se dirago gagabo ke eng, ga ke tsebe. Yena kua a lego ntshe o iketlile o ja di welago mola nna ke eja hlanya ka lebaka la ditaba tše a di dirilego ka boomo. Afa ruri ke tshwanelo yona yeo? (1972:67)

(Now they are confusing me. Ditlhodi tortured me more than enough. She disrespected me and my mother as if we are idiots, thereafter she went to her home without being troubled by anybody. What makes them not to go and ask her what she is doing at her home when her courtyard has become home for the goats, I do not know. She is comfortable where she is, I am eating dirt because of the things she did on purpose. Is this really fair?)

Mabitša is further humiliated and suffers an embarrassment in the hands of his son, Mašwahle, of one of his junior wives, who impregnated his principal wife Ditlhodi.

Lekgotla le le hlomphegago gammogo le rrawešo, e lego gona Mašwahle o gafetšwe ke mang legogwa la Ditlhodi? (1972:149)

(The honourable council as well as our chief, who allocated Ditlhodi's bed to Mašwahle?)

This incident is a serious blow to Mabitša because it came to the attention of everyone that Mašwahle is capable of doing what his father is incapable of doing,

i.e., of impregnating the chief's principal wife. Mabitša is also at loggerheads with Dithutlwa (his father-in-law) for not coming for Moleti after the latter went back to her parent's place. Hence Dithutlwa becomes angry and steals Mabitša's initiation.

Dithutlwa o ile go utswa koma ya Kgoši Mabitša, kgoši ya swanela go ba yena gore le wola e bego e le yona a gapeletšege go hlaba thedi pele ga gagwe ka go tseba gore a se dire ka mokgwa woo, a ka se be le motse wa monna ka ge wona e le wo o letšago pabadi le phalafala. (1972:160)

(After having stolen Mabitša's initiation, he was forced to become the chief so that even the one who was the chief be forced to come and plead before him, because failing to do that, will lead to not having a proper village, for a true one is the one in which initiation occurs.)

To fight with the in-laws is not good in the Pedi culture because marriage belongs not only to two people but to the in-laws also.

2.3.1.3 Letšaga: *Kgorong ya Mošate*

Letšaga is regarded as the protagonist because he is the one who suffers the most and the one around whom the story revolves. His relatives are against him because he does not involve them in the issues that involve them. Instead, he befriends Monoši, who later plots to topple his government together with Chief Diphaphu. They go out on a hunting expedition without informing him whereby a leopard was killed. Instead of bringing its hide to the chief, they kept it to themselves. This was done in order to challenge him. The narration goes thus:

Nkwe yeo ba boilego nayo ga ya begwa etšwe go tsebja gore ke kobo ya kgoši. (1962:44)

(The leopard which they brought back along was never reported although it is known that it is the chief's garment.)

Because of Monoši, Letšaga and his community encounter a lot of problems such as having to leave their homestead to go and live somewhere, because they were afraid of being attacked. This does not fare well with Letšaga because he is a traditionalist and would very much like to be buried at the same place where his forefathers were buried. Again, he would like to perform the sacrifices at their graves. The narrator says that:

Ba hudugile bana ba Letšaga gomme ge e le badimo ba bobona ba tla ba phasetša kae gobane go phasetšwa phupung ya mohu? (1962:66)

(Letšaga and his community have relocated and where will they offer sacrifices as sacrifices are offered at the dead's tomb?)

Letšaga is further challenged by one of his juniors in the name of Boditsi. Boditsi was told of his community which was once attacked and captured. He told his peers that he would avenge them only if he can be given leadership of Mapulana (his peers). The author says:

Lešimelakgano leo le boditše dithaka gore ge yena a ka fiwa boetapele bja Mapulana, a ka yo lefetša setšhaba se ka moka. (1962:5)

(That upstart has told his comrades that if he can be given leadership of the Mapulana, he can go and avenge this whole nation.)

This infuriated Letšaga so much that instead of him reprimanding him, he went with Boditsi's idea and allowed him to go ahead with his plans.

Letšaga also had to go through lot of fighting with many communities. This gave him a lot of pressure because as a chief it is expected of him to protect his people. He fought with Chief Matshelo first through the Mapulana and they defeated and captured him.

Letšaga bjale ke letšaga, o fentše kgoši ya mathomo
yeo a gahlanego le yona. (1972:79)

(Now Letšaga is a real man, he defeated the first
chief he came across with.)

Letšaga also fought against Khwello as well as Thibama and they were also defeated.

Letšaga nkabe e se seo a lego sona lehono gobane nkabe
a ile a se phapharege ge a ba nyaka a ba a fihla a
thunkanya metse ya boMatshelo le boKhwello gammogo
le boThibama. (1962:204)

(Letšaga would not be what he is today because he will
not have wandered when looking for them and
demolished Matshelo, Khwello and Thibama's places
...)

He also had to experience pain caused by death. He lost his mother, his first son and also his daughter who was married to Chief Thibama and who was heavily expectant by the time of her death. The most painful thing was that she was cut into pieces like meat ready to be cooked. This incident will haunt him forever as this was a horrendous experience. The author describes the incident as follows:

Ga se sehlo dimare, ke sa masetlapelo gobane ngwana yola o hwile, o kgabagantšwe bjalo ka kgomo ye e yago ka pitšeng, ... (1962:134)

(It is not wail, it is a tragic one because she is dead, she has been chopped with an axe, she is cut like beef ready to be cooked.)

Letšaga is also faced with a difficult decision to make as he is to choose between his friend Monoši and his kinsmen. Ultimately he chose his kinsmen over Monoši and called them to ask for forgiveness.

In his own words, Letšaga says:

Gona bjalo ke šetše ke bona gore monna wo nka se hlwe ke mo kgona ka ntle ga go kgohlagana le lena gore re be ngatana ye a ka se e thokgego. Ke kgolwa gore dipelo tša lena di tla wa ge bjale ke boletše se se ntshwenyago gobane ka ge Monankhono a šetše a boletše, ke kgopela tshwarelo ya tša pele ka moka, ga go foše kota go foša motho, bana ba tau ga re jane re moloko mong. (1962:47)

(Now I realized that I will not be able to tackle this man on my own without joining forces with you so that we may be one sheaf which he cannot break. I hope you will be satisfied now that I told you what worries me, because like Monankhono has already said, I am asking for forgiveness for all the previous mistakes, to err is human, the lion's cubs do not eat each other, they are kin.)

2.4 ANTAGONIST

The word antagonist is derived from **anti** which means **against** and agonites a champion. An antagonist may therefore be regarded as a champion of opposition in a play, novel, drama, etc.

Antagonist, as defined by Morner and Rauch (1991:10), is usually the character in fiction or drama who stands in direct opposition to or in conflict with the central character. In some instances the antagonist may be a group of people, some force of the central character's personality or psyche.

The above-mentioned is always at loggerheads with the protagonist. She/he opposes almost everything that is said or done by him.

Conradie (1978:55) defines an antagonist as “die teenstander wat die wortelling en krisis by die protagonis veroorsaak, die agtervolger, bedrieger, kweller”.

2.4.1 **Lefehlo:** *Megokgo ya Bjoko*

Lefehlo is regarded as an antagonist because he is against the protagonist Leilane. He does not agree with what Leilane does. He is against women abuse as well as family violence.

When Leilane beat his wife Mohlatšo as well as his father-in-law and the case brought before him for judgement, he fines him. He first told him that he should have settled the issue at home with his in-laws instead of telling them that they should bring the case to the royal place.

Wena Leilane, mošate ga o tlwaelwe, ka gona fela o eletšana le magageno. (1968:23)

(Leilane, the chief's kraal is not play place, so seek advice from your people.)

A chief does not rule alone but in conjunction with his headmen, when they make judgements at the **kgoro**, they bind him also. Leilane was fined four cows.

Leilane, o kgomo ya go ntšha mosadi madi, o kgomo ya go ntšha mogogadi madi, o kgomo ya mošate le ya banna ba ba kgobakanego fa. (1968:24)

(Leilane, you are fined four cows, one for having assaulted your wife, one for having assaulted your father-in-law, one for the royal family and the fourth one for all the men who are gathered here.)

Lefehlo is also against Leilane's going to Chief Nthumule to seek for asylum.

A Leilane a ile go mo fihlela, a tshediša a se makae go kgonthišiša kholofelo ya monna yoo, ... a tlamega go romela Nthumule la gore nthwanthwadiše. (1968:34)

(After having heard what Leilane said, he let few days to pass-by to verify the validity of the man's statement. After having realized the truth of the matter, he was forced to send messengers to Nthumule with the message that please give me back what is rightfully mine.)

Indeed, men who were with the young men were sent to Nthumule's place with the intention of bringing back Leilane.

Ba di išitše kua le kua, tša fela ka lona la gore a romelwe lentšu, kgonthe gwa kgethwa banna ba ba hlakahlakanego le masogana ka gore motho ke mohwanoši fela ga se mosepelanoši. (1968:38)

(They discussed the matter, it was concluded that he must be informed, indeed men together with young men were chosen because a person is not supposed to walk alone but it is fine for him to die alone.)

The messengers delivered the following message to Chief Nthumule.

“Dikgoši, rawešo o re nthwanthwaletšeng.”
“E lego?”
“Kgoši Lefehlo.”
“Ga a re nnyakišeng o re nthwanthwaletšeng?”
“O timeletšwe ke eng?” (1968:49)

(Your worship, our master says please give him back what belongs to him.
Which is?
Chief Lefehlo.
Doesn't he say please help me in search he says bring back what is mine?
What did he lose?)

Lefehlo also uses traditional healers and magical powers in his search for Leilane. His medicinemen sent crows to Nthumule's place to go and fetch knucklebones of Nthumule's medicinemen. This was done because Nthumule refused to give back Leilane to Lefehlo. The narrator says that:

Go re e ipihla, go rotogile serupa sa magokobu a ba sa tsebego gore a tšwa kae, a re go fihla, a phatlalala gare ga bona, mme a thoma go topa le go metša ditaola tšela, morago ga fao a fofela bodikela a šetše leru lela morago, ya ba gona go sepelela ruri ga ona! (1968:48)

(After concealing itself, a group of crows which no one knew where they were from emerged when they arrived, they spread throughout the village as well as among them, they started picking and swallowing those knucklebones, thereafter they flew towards the

north following that cloud and that was when they left for good!)

The very same crows were later sent back to Nthumule to take back the knucklebones to him. This frightened him and his medicinemen. The author says:

Ba ile go bina go fihlela mo Phethedi a kgotsofetšego ntshe, a swara Nthumule ka seatla, ba sepela nae, madira ale a šala a tlaetše gona mola a kgobakanego ntshe. (1968:97)

(After having danced to Phethedi's satisfaction, he held Nthumule by the hand and they went away with him, those soldiers were left stupefied where they were gathered.)

All these were done to get back Leilane and to give him the necessary punishment because Lefehlo was against him.

2.4.2 **Ntillišeng:** *Tša ka Mafuri*

Ntillišeng is an antagonist and totally against Tlabego. He is Tlabego's uncle and expects him to marry his daughter Madimabe but instead he refused to marry her and opted for Chief Afakenna's daughter Ntlhoboge. This infuriated him so much that he decided to do whatever he can to make sure that Tlabego suffers for not having married his daughter.

He employs the services of his medicinemen to deal with the matter. The conversation in the narration goes as follows:

- Ngaka : Le a dumela gore ke dire ka mokgwa woo?
- Ntillišeng : Nnaena ke be ke re a re leteleng la bona le le rego go bile go ka mokgwa woo.
- Tlhanogelo : Monnamogolo, nna ke re o senya sebaka ka lefeela a re mo dumelele go dira ka mokgwa woo a tsebago ka gona.
- Ntillišeng : Aowa, gona tšwela pele motho wa batho, gobane nnete Gona re a ipona gore re tla be re le baletangwedi bale go thwego ba leta leswiswi. (1974:30)
- Medicineman: (Do you permit me to proceed or not?)
- Ntillišeng : I am of the idea that we should wait to be told by them that it is like that.
- Tlhanogelo : Old man, I say you are wasting your time for nothing, let us allow him to do the way he can.
- Ntillišeng : Alright, then proceed, because indeed we will be waiting for something that will never materialize.)

Because chiefs are in most cases traditional healers themselves, Ntillišeng also used his medicinal charms on a cow which he contributed towards his nephew, Tlabego when he married Ntlhoboge. The said cow caused many troubles for Tlabego so much that ultimately, Chief Afakenna wants to take it back to him. The said cow gave birth to a cow with two heads.

The author says:

Fao gona go ile gwa tla gwa befela pele, ka gore namane yeo go ile gwa tla gwa hwetšwa e na le dihlogo tše pedi – ka pele le ka morago. (1974:99)

(It became very much difficult, because it was discovered that the calf has two heads – in front as well as at the back.)

Again, the said cow contributed towards Ntlhoboge's giving birth to abnormal babies. To indicate that Ntillišeng really wanted his daughter to be married to Tlabego's family, he accepted lobola from his sister Nyatšegi.

To cause more emotional pain to Tlabego, Ntillišeng ultimately impregnated Ntlhoboge, who ultimately gave birth to a normal baby boy. After realizing that Ntlhoboge is pregnant, when he asks her who impregnated her, she answers by saying:

- Ntlhoboge : Ke thušitšwe ke ba ba sa ntlhoyago.
Tlabego : Ke wo e lego mang?
Ntlhoboge : Ke mogogadi wa gago.
Tlabego : Mogogadiake?
Ntlhoboge : Kgoši Ntillišeng.
Tlabego : Afaeya. (1974:241)
- Ntlhoboge : (I was helped by those who do not hate me.
Tlabego : Which is?
Ntlhoboge : Your father-in-law.
Tlabego : My father-in-law?
Ntlhoboge : Chief Ntillišeng.
Tlabego : Is it?)

All these was done in order to bring Tlabego back to his senses and to teach him a lesson that one should not reject his/her culture.

2.4.3 **Taudi:** *Lešitaphiri*

Taudi is against the main character which is Tšhwahledi. He wants him dead because he is not his biological son. Mphoka impregnated his principal wife Khutšišo. So, because according to the Pedi culture, the first son of the chief's principal wife is the one who succeed him to the throne, this is why he wants to get rid of him. Moreso, because his wife Khutšišo later on gave birth to Kgathola whom he wants to be his heir.

His hatred towards Tšhwahledi is conspicuous to most of the tribesmen because he would discriminate the two sons openly. He usually prepares feasts for the younger brother. The author says:

... e sa le go belaetša ge a direla o monnyane
menyanya ye e sa felego eupša o mogolo a sa direlwe
selo. (1963:81)

(... It has been long suspicious when he prepared
many feasts for the younger one and none for the older
one.)

Taudi also let Tšhwahledi to go and stay with his grandparents because he had nothing to do with him.

The author says:

Mošemane wa Taudi o mogolo Tšhwahledi – mo dintweng tšeo ke ge a dula kua ga gabomogolo ga Mabothe. (1963:59)

(Taudi's eldest son - Tšhwahledi, during those fights was staying at his grandparents at Mabothe's place.)

To show that he did not care about him, when he disappeared, he did not bother to search for him. Instead he was happy and when it was time for boys to go to initiation school, he ordered that Kgathola should lead the initiates instead of him, remaining home to mourn for his lost brother.

The author says:

Mola go bago bjalo, banna ba thoma go hlodia Taudi ka le le rego ba godišitše. Taudi ga a ka a diegela taba yeo, fela semaka ya ba ge a re Kgathola o swanetše go phara thaba ka ge mogolwagwe a ile le sefsifsi. (1963:83)

(Being that as it may, men started annoying Taudi saying that their children have grown up. Taudi did not hesitate to respond to that but what was surprising was when he told them that Kgathola would accompany the initiates because his brother is lost.)

He also once plotted together with his uncle Chief Mabothe, to kill Tšhwahledi. He knew that should Tšhwahledi die, then obviously Kgathola would become his successor. The author says:

Taudi le Mabothe ba manyaming a magolo, gobane seo ba bego ba se naganne ga sa direga ... E ile ge matšatši a mokete wa Mabothe a batamela, ba mmea leihlo ka tsebo ya gore ba rata go mo phothoma gore ba mo khukhonetše, fela ba swere nonyana ka diphofa. (1963:79)

(Taudi and Mabothe are in great sorrow, because what they have planned did not materialize ... when days of Mabothe's feast drew nearer, they watched him closely with the knowledge that they want to grab him and get rid of him, but they were unsuccessful.)

2.5 TRITAGONIST

A tritagonist is a person causing tension and conflict between the antagonist and protagonist.

Conradie (1978:59) defines the tritagonist as follows:

... die tritagonis, die karakter wat tussen die twee strydende partye staan en verskillende rolle kan vervul.

The tritagonist, according to Conradie, can play different roles.

Muhanganezi (1999:49) states that a tritagonist's main function is to make the conflict between a protagonist and an antagonist more acute. At certain times he tries to arbitrate between a protagonist and an antagonist, with the idea of promoting confrontation between the two.

Cuddon (1998:945) states that a tritagonist is the third character in Greek tragedy, probably introduced on Sophocles.

2.5.1 Afakenna: *Tša ka Mafuri*

Afakenna is the tritagonist because he is the cause of conflict and misunderstandings between Ntillišeng and Tlabego. He is a traditionalist who knows the culture of both Ntillišeng and Tlabego. Though so, he comes between them by accepting Tlabego as his son-in-law. He should have rejected and told Tlabego to go and marry his cousin Madimabe of Chief Ntillišeng. Instead, he caused enmity between uncle and his niece.

One would say that it is greed that let him into doing all what he has done. He wanted his daughter to be Tlabego's principal wife so that she can give birth to future chiefs. When this fails because of Ntlhoboge's inability to give birth to normal babies, he (Afakenna) says:

Ditaba ge di le ka mokgwa wokhwi beng ba ka, nna ke be ke bona bokaone e tla ba ge nka tšea morwake wa lapa le le latelago labo Ntlhoboge, gore a ye kua go bego go swanetše go tla go buša ngwana o mogolo wa Ntlhoboge, a ye go buša ntshe. (1974:207)

(When things are like these my lords, I think the best I can do is to take my elder son from the family succeeding that of Ntlhoboge, so that he can go and take the position of kingship which was supposed to belong to Ntlhoboge's son.)

When accepting Tlabego as his son-in-law, he knew fully well that Ntillišeng will not be elated by his actions. No chief will be pleased by giving birth to daughters who will be married by ordinary citizens.

To indicate Ntillišeng's displeasure, he himself is answering Afakenna's suggestions by saying that:

Le ge tšekhwi o di bolelago di sa ame motse wa ka, ga
ke kgolwe gore o ntshe wo a ka kwanago le tšona.
(1974:207)

(Although what you are saying does not involve my
community, I do not think there can be a person who
will concur with them.)

2.6 RÉSUMÉ

In this chapter, three main types of characters were treated, i.e. protagonist, antagonist and tritagonist. Only chiefs who were portrayed as such were focused on.

CHAPTER 3

3. CHIEFS' ROLE TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES IN MATSEPE'S NOVELS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, focus will be given to chiefs as characters, in order to find out what their role is in developing themes in Matsepe's novels. Attention will be on the following novels, namely: *Letšofalela*, *Tša ka mafuri*, *Mahlatse a Madimabe*, and *Lešitaphiri*.

Each novel, together with the chiefs who helped in developing its theme, will be treated in turns. Although there are main themes and sub-themes, however, only main themes will be dealt with in this study.

3.2 DEFINITION

The concept of theme is defined by Morner and Rausch (1991:223) as:

The central or dominating idea, "the message", implicit in a work. It is an abstract concept indirectly expressed through recurrent images, actions, characters, and symbols, and must be inferred by the reader or spectator.

The theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly.

Heese and Lawton (1993:126) concur with Morner and Rausch when they state that:

[A] theme is the central idea, the basic issue with which the novelist or playwright is concerned through the medium of his story and his plot.

Along these lines, Serudu (1993:203) states that:

Among the many devices a novelist uses to achieve total communication are his characters. Characters in a novel can be regarded as agents through whose nature, actions and interaction the novelist signals the meaning, or theme or 'message' of his work.

3.3 THEMES

3.3.1 *Letšofalela*

Its theme is barrenness. This is a state that is unacceptable in the Pedi culture, especially when it happens to a chief's principal wife who is supposed to give birth to an heir to the throne.

In this novel, Dithodi, who is Chief Mabitša's principal wife, is barren. To show that she is barren, the narrator says:

E šetše e le nywaga ye e tšofalago ge Dithodi a bekilwe, gapegape, e sa le nnete gore le nankhono o sa ikgonere, a sa ikgonerego, kgoši e tlile go ba mang? Motse ka moka o okametšwe ke leru le le šišitšego eupša le sa ratego go na? (1972:3)

(It is a number of years since Ditlhodi got married, it is also true that even today she does not have a child, being that as it may, who will become chief? The whole village is overshadowed with a thick cloud but does not want to rain.)

Chief Mabitša does not want to accept the fact that his principal wife Ditlhodi is barren, hence he gathered all his medicinemen to come and heal Ditlhodi of her barrenness so that she can be able to conceive. This is narrated thus:

... Kgoši Mabitša a bitša boreatseba ka go bona ngaka ya lapa la gagwe e šitilwe. E nngwe ya tšona e ile go mo laola e re tuu, ya mo gagola ka thipa ge e mo hlabela ka lenaka la bosadi. Morago ga fao e ile ya mo oretša tše dingwe, ya mo apea ya mo hlapiša bjalo ka ge a hlapiša lesea, ya mo noša mehlatšišo, ya mo idiša se le sela ka tshepho ya go ka mo kgona, feela gwa pala. (1972:4)

(Chief Mabitša called traditional healers seeing that his family's traditional healer failed. After one of them examined her, cut her with a knife when injecting her with womanhood. Thereafter she was steamed by others, cooked, and washed like a baby, she was made to drink nauseating medicines, and was told which food she is not supposed to eat any longer with the hope that he will be able to let her conceive but all in vain.)

Chief Mabitša was so desperate that Ditlhodi should bear him a child that he did not fail to follow all instructions given to him by his traditional healers. The narrator says:

O lekile ka bothata go phetha dikeletšo tša dingaka, ya re ge a bona gore o itapiša ka lefeela, ka go tlalwa ke pelo a gafela, o mongwe wa barwarragwe legogwa la yena Ditlhodi ka kholofelo ya gore mo gongwe yena

letheke la gagwe le tla phala la gagwe, feela ya ba manyami go bona go se sethokgwa se se tšwago phoofolo. Ge tšeo ka moka di padile, a tlamega go romela Fowang mphato wa Magasa go ya go mmotšiša gore naa bjale yena a reng. (1972:13)

(He tried so hard to comply with all the traditional healer's advices, after realizing that all was in vain, in a fit of rage he allocated Ditlhodi's bed to one of his brothers with the hope that maybe his waist will be better than his, but it was a pity to realize that nothing better was happening. After all was in vain, he was compelled to send Magasa's garrison to Fowang to go and ask him what should be done by him in this instance.)

To show that Mabitša was indeed desperate that Ditlhodi should have a child, he did not mind to allocate a bed to one of his brothers, knowing that a child born in those circumstances will still be accepted as his own because in the Pedi culture there is a saying that **ngwana ke wa dikgomo**, i.e., a child belongs to a man who married its mother, whether that child is man's biological child or not. As long as that man is married to its mother, then automatically the man becomes the child's father.

Barrenness causes conflict between the two families, i.e., a wife's family and the husband's family.

After realizing that Ditlhodi will never have a child, Chief Mabitša then sends garrison of Magasa to Chief Fowang (Ditlhodi's father) to ask him what is it that he is supposed to do with Ditlhodi's barrenness. On this, the narrator says:

Ge tšeo ka moka di padile, a tlamega go romela Fowang mphato wa Magasa go ya go mmotšiša gore naa bjale yena a dire eng. (1972:13)

(After all failed, he was forced to send Magasa garrison to Fowang to go and ask him what is it that he must do.)

Realising that barrenness is not acceptable, Fowang then decides to give one of his daughters to Mabitša to go and bear her sister children. In the Pedi culture, such a particular person is referred to as **tlhatswadirope** (thigh cleanser). But unfortunately, Dithhodi's younger sister Mofadi is already engaged to be married to Chief Pelompeta. Then, it is decided that her half-sister Moleti will serve as Dithhodi's 'thigh cleanser'. This caused conflict between Moleti's parents because her mother was against the idea of her becoming Dithhodi's 'thigh cleanser'. The discussion between Moleti's parents concerning this issue is as follows:

- Dithutlwa : O bolela bjang wena mosadi ge o realo?
- Mosadi : Ga ke bolele ke a lora, ka gore se ke sa se ratego ga ke se rate. Naa Dithhodi yoo wa lena dirope tša gagwe di tšhilafadišwe ke ngwanake ge le re a yo ba tlhatswadirope?
- Dithutlwa : Se tepe mantšu mmago ngwana, a re di lesetše re tla di eletšana bosasa.
- Mosadi : Ga go selo se se lesetšwago fa, ge ke re ga a ye ga a ye. (1972:28)
- Dithutlwa : (How do you speak woman when you say that?)
- Wife : I am not speaking I am dreaming, because what I dislike I dislike. Is that your Dithhodi's thighs dirtified by my child when you say that she is going to be her thigh cleanser?
- Dithutlwa : Do not exaggerate mother of the child, let's leave the matter we will discuss it tomorrow.
- Wife : There is nothing to be left here, when I say she is not going she is not going.)

The above discussion is an indication that Fowang also knows that barrenness is unacceptable. That is why he went all out to search for Dithodi's 'thigh cleanser'. By so doing, he created enmity between himself and Dithutlwa and his wife.

3.3.2 *Tša ka Mafuri*

Its theme is that a chief's principal wife is married from the chief's uncle. Tlabego, who was supposed to marry his cousin Madimabe (Chief Ntillišeng's daughter), violated this Pedi norm by marrying Ntlhoboge (Chief Afakenna's daughter). When he talks to his mother concerning this issue, Tlabego says:

Le ge o ka hlwe o re neng Madimabe yenaena nka se
mo nyale le ge go ka direga goba gwa se direge eng
bjang le bjang. (1974:19)

(Even if you can say when, as for Madimabe I will not
marry her whatever may happen anyway.)

This theme is developed through the following three chiefs, viz., Phentšwe, Ntillišeng and Tlabego.

After Tlabego (Phentšwe's son) refused to marry his cousin Madimabe, Chief Phentšwe and Chief Ntillišeng plotted to make his marriage full of misery. They used witchcraft as well as medicinal charms to do that.

Ntlhoboge gave birth twice to abnormal babies. First, a baby without any sex organ, and secondly, with both sex organs. On this, the narrator says:

Le go mo tšea ba ilego ba ya go mo tšea, mogwera wa rena ga aka a tla go tseba gore ke mong, ka gore gona fale go bego go swanetše go ba diitsebišo tša gore ke mong, go be go se selo. (1974:92)

(Although they went to fetch the baby, our friend was unable to know its sex, because where the sex organs were supposed to be, there was nothing.)

It is very rare for a child to be born without any sex organ. This indicates that witchcraft played a vital role.

Tlabego's second child was born with both sex organs as mentioned earlier. On this the narrator says:

Ga se gore e be e le ka phošo ge mosadimogolo a be a le ka mokgwa woo, ka gore ngwana wola e be e le thopa yeo bokaone nka rego e be e le tšhitelo. Go ba tšhitelo ga gagwe ke gore e be e le tonankatshadi, ka gore o be a hlakantše bošemane le bosetsana. (1972:195)

(It was not wrong for the old woman to be like that, because the child was a secret which can best be regarded as an inconvenience. It was an inconvenience because it was hermaphrodite since it combined both male and female sex organs.

3.3.2.1 Chief Phentšwe's role

He develops this theme by making sure that Madimabe ultimately becomes his daughter-in-law, whether Tlabego likes it or not. Hence he goes to Chief Ntillišeng to negotiate marriage with him. In his own words he says:

Ke kgopela feela gore Madimabe a goroge. (1974:76)

(All what I ask is that Madimabe should come to my homestead.)

To make sure that this happens, he sacrifices to share his kingdom with Tlabego.

Bokaone nna le Tlabego re ka upše ra arogana setšhaba. (1974:76)

(The best I can do is for me and Tlabego to share the community.)

3.3.2.2 Chief Ntillišeng's role

Ntillišeng on the other hand develops this theme further by making everything in his power (magical powers included) to make sure that Tlabego's marriage to Ntlhoboge becomes a disaster.

He had ulterior motives about all this Tlabego-Ntlhoboge marriage saga. This is indicated by his action of agreeing to contribute a cow for Tlabego as part of his marriage goods in marrying Ntlhoboge. The narration goes thus:

Ngaka : O tlile go mo tšwela?

Ntillišeng : Sethole seo se lekanwego ke go itiwa ke poo.
(1974:43)

Medicineman: (Are you going to contribute a cow for him?)

Ntillišeng : A cow which is ready to be inseminated by a bull.)

Under normal circumstances, no right thinking person can agree to contribute a cow for someone who was supposed to be his son-in-law so that he can go and marry another woman.

He does that intentionally and has a good excuse given that in the Pedi culture an uncle should contribute a cow for his nephew when he marries. Hence the uncle is called **Majadihlogo** (one who eats heads.)

To show that magical powers such as witchcraft was used, when Ntillišeng was with his medicineman, after the latter proved that indeed Tlabego will not marry Madimabe, the following was said:

Aowa, gona tšwela pele motho wa batho, gobane nnete gona re a ipona gore se tla be re le baletangwedi bale go thwego ba leta leswiswi. (1974:30)

(Well, then carry on, because indeed we see that we will be like waiting for something that will never materialize.)

Ntillišeng gave his medicineman the go-ahead to can do whatever he can to make sure that Tlabego's marriage to Ntlhoboge fails.

To show that Ntillišeng was the one behind Ntlhoboge's miracle babies, he was capable of impregnating her and she gave birth to a healthy normal baby boy.

The discussion between Ntlhoboge and her husband goes as follows:

Ntlhoboge : Ke thušitšwe ke ba ba sa ntlhoyago.
 Tlabego : Ke wo e lego mang?
 Ntlhoboge : Ke mogogadi wa gago.
 Tlabego : Mogogadiake?
 Ntlhoboge : Kgoši Ntillišeng.
 Tlabego : Afaeya. (1974:241)

Ntlhoboge : (I was helped by those who do not hate me.
 Tlabego : Who is that one?
 Ntlhoboge : Your father-in-law.
 Tlabego : My father-in-law?
 Ntlhoboge : Chief Ntillišeng.
 Tlabego : Is it?)

3.3.2.3 Chief Tlabego's role

He develops this theme by trying to make things right with Madimabe after having realized that he made a mistake by marrying Ntlhoboge instead of her. When talking to Chief Phentšwe (his father) he says:

Seo nnaena ke se bonago, ke gore go phethege lela la mogologolo wa bogologolo le boletšwego bogologolo gore sa pala se a lesetšwa, go be go phethege le la gagwe le le rego maropeng go a boelwa. (1974:207)

(What I see happening, is that an old sage which was uttered long ago that says what is impossible should be left as it is, and also that it is possible to return to the ruins.)

Ultimately he comes to his senses and even decides to go and ask for forgiveness from his uncle Chief Ntillišeng for having detested Madimabe. The narration continues thus:

- Tlabego : Nna ke bona gore ke tla be ka gapeletšega go ya go bonana le malome Kgoši Ntillišeng.
- Phentšwe : Mabapi le eng?
- Tlabego : Go ya go kgopela tshwarelo.
- Phentšwe : Ya eng?
- Tlabego : Ya ge ke ile ka kganyetša Madimabe, ka ya go nyala Ditlhobaboroko tšekhwi go thwego ke Ntlhoboge. (1974:200)
- Tlabego : (I think I will be compelled to go and meet with my uncle Chief Ntillišeng.
- Phentšwe : In connection with what?
- Tlabego : To go and ask for forgiveness.
- Phentšwe : What for?
- Tlabego : For having detested Madimabe and marrying this nightmare called Ntlhoboge.)

3.3.3 *Mahlatse a Madimabe*

Its theme is that a person has both physical and spiritual needs which must be satisfied at all time. Failure to satisfy one of them, then a person will be incomplete and will be unbalanced.

In this novel, Seitshwenyeng, whose spiritual needs should be satisfied, is like a mystery to those who live with him: they do not understand his actions. This is so because he is a person who is called to serve God. People having this type of calling, often do strange things that are beyond human beings' comprehension. People might even think that such are bewitched. His father once found him at the

entrance of the home in the early hours of the morning and when asked what he was doing there, the narration goes thus:

... mofetodi a ipolela gore go na le fao a go hlologetšego, fao fela a sa go tsebego. E be e se ka phošo ge tatagwe a gakanega, kudu ka gore o ile ge a re na ke badimong fao a go hlologetšego yola a re ga go bjalo. (1981:33)

(... the respondent said there was a place that he was yearning for although he does not know the place. It was not a mistake that his father became confused, especially that when he asked him whether it was the place of the gods that he yearns for, the other said it was not like that.)

3.3.3.1 Chief Sebege's role

He develops this theme by organizing a hunting expedition that was to be undertaken by Seitshwenyeng's age group.

The narrator says:

... kgoši a bitša pitšo. Go yona o boletše gore dithakana tša Seitshwenyeng di swanetše go tšwa lesolo. Lona o ile a re ke la go ya go mo nyakela le go mo tlela tšhwenegatšana ye e gampago. (1981:40)

(... the chief organized a meeting. In it he said Seitshwenyeng's peers must go out on a hunting expedition. It was supposed to go and seek and bring him a pregnant baboon.)

That baboon was to be used in the healing process of the chief's daughter who was barren. Even though Seitshwenyeng's parents plead with the chief that their son should be excused from the expedition, he insisted. On this, the narrator says:

Seitshwenyeng le ge a ile a sepela le bona, e be e se ka thato ya batswadi ba gagwe. Ba tloge ba etšwa go kgopela kgoši gore a se ye, ba be ba mmotša gore ka lebaka la eng fela yena a re ge motho a ka ya le dithabalakana tša mohuta woo, gona lesolo lela le ka se hlwe le eba ntshe, ka gore batswadi ba bangwe bale le bona ba tla tla ka dikgopelo tše di fapanego. (1981:41)

(Even though Seitshwenyeng went with them, it was against his parent's wish. They pleaded with the chief that he must not go, and also told him the reason why, but he said if one can listen to such trivialities then the expedition would be a failure because other parents will also come with varying requests.)

Chief Sebego insisted that Seitshwenyeng should go with his peers so that ultimately he (Seitshwenyeng) should meet with the missionaries at Chief Molobi's place so that the former's spiritual needs can be satisfied.

3.3.3.2 Chief Molobi's role

He develops this theme further by refusing that Seitshwenyeng should go back home after he cured him of the illness that his medicinemen were unable to heal. He offered to give Seitshwenyeng one of his daughters so that Seitshwenyeng can forget about going back home. On this, the narrator says:

... yena a re yeo e ka se tsoge e diregile ge e le gore
yena o sa phela e bile o sa buša. (1981:90)

(... he (Molobi) said that won't happen for as long as
he is still alive and still governing.)

The delay helps Seitshwenyeng to finally meet with the missionaries who then fulfill his spiritual need. Were it not for Chief Molobi and Chief Sebegu, Seitshwenyeng would not have met the missionaries who help him with the fulfillment of his spiritual need, of which he all along longed to fulfil. We know this because he told his wife Thanthakedi and his parents, Motšhelatšhego and Nthapedišeng, that he is yearning for a place he does not know.

3.3.4 *Lešitaphiri*

Its theme is “Kingship is inherited and is not given away like a garment.” That is, kingship is a hereditary position. The narrator mentions that:

Bogoši bo a tswalelwa ga bo apolelwe bjalo ka kobo
gobane kgoši e sego ya geno ke molata. (1963:48)

(Kingship is a hereditary position it is not given away
like a garment, for a chief who is not yours is like a
commoner.)

In this novel, problems are caused by Taudi's principal wife, Khutšišo, who gives birth to her first son by a commoner named Mphoka. This created problems for both Taudi and Mabothe; they could not stand the fact that Tšhwahledi, who is son of a commoner, should succeed Taudi to the kingship position.

3.3.4.1 Chief Taudi's role

He develops this theme by wanting to get rid of Tšhwahledi so that his biological son Kgathola should succeed him to the kingship position.

His hatred towards Tšhwahledi is so much that he even kills his father Mphoka. He even prepares a number of feasts for Kgathola but none for Tšhwahledi. On this, the author says:

E sa le go belaetša ge a direla o monnyane menyanya
ye e sa felego eupša o mogolo a sa direlwe selo.
(1963:81)

(It has long been suspicious when he prepared many
feasts for the younger one and none for the older one.)

He also lets Tšhwahledi to go and stay with his grandparents because he had nothing to do with him. On this the author says:

Mošemane wa Taudi o mogolo Tšhwahledi – mo
dintweng tšeo ke ge a dula kua ga gabomogolo ga
Mabothe. (1963:59)

(Taudi's eldest son Tšhwahledi – during those fights
was staying with his grandparents at Mabothe's place.)

He also once plotted, together with Mabothe, to kill Tšhwahledi so that Kgathola succeeds him to the kingship position. On this the author says:

Taudi le Mabothe ba manyaming a magolo, gobane
seo ba bego ba se naganne ga se sa direga, ... E ile ge
matšatši a batamela, ba mmea leihlo ka tsebo ya gore

ba rata go mo phothoma gore ba mo khukhunetše, fela
ba swere nonyana ka diphofa. (1963:79)

(Taudi and Mabothe are in great sorrow, because what they planned did not materialize, ... When days of Mabothe's feast drew nearer, they watched him closely with the knowledge that they want to grab him and get rid of him, but they were unsuccessful.)

Taudi also did not want Tšhwahledi to be initiated. That is, when he disappeared, he did not bother to search for him but instead he ordered that Kgathola should go together with other boys to the initiation school. He knew that an uninitiated person remains a child and as a result, the society will not accept to be ruled by him. On this the author says:

Mola go bago bjalo, banna ba thoma go hlotia Taudi ka le le rego ba godišitše. Taudi ga a ka a diegela taba yeo, fela semaka ya ba ge a re Kgathola o swanetše go phara thaba ka ge mogolwagwe a ile le sefsifi. (1963:83)

(Being that as it may, men started worrying Taudi saying that their children are big enough to go to the initiation school. Taudi did not hesitate to respond to that but what was surprising was when he told them that Kgathola would accompany the initiates for his brother is lost.)

3.4 RÉSUMÉ

In this chapter, the main themes of the following novels were treated: *Letšofalela*, *Tša ka Mafuri*, *Mahlatse a Madimabe*, and *Lešitaphiri*. Chiefs who helped in the development of those themes were focused on.

CHAPTER 4

4. DUTIES OF CHIEFS AS CHARACTERS AS PORTRAYED IN MATSEPE'S NOVELS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The position of chieftainship is regarded with high esteem in the Pedi culture because of the status and honour that goes with it.

(Gobane gar'a Baswana bogoši bo phala dihlaho ka moka le mahumo ka moka. (1962:115)

(Because amongst the Blacks kingship is better than all wealth.)

As a chief, one's society does almost everything for him. For example, they would marry the principal wife for him, construct a house for him, plough and harvest fields for him, they in turn expect him to perform certain duties for them. Those duties are wide and diverse. This is asserted by Mönnig (1978:253) when he states that the functions of a chief are wide and varied. He is considered to be the father of his tribe, its execution head, the commander-in-chief of its army, its legislator and supreme judge, and supreme priest and ritual head.

Although the position of chieftainship is occupied by one man only, he should make sure that all what is expected of him by his community is carried out properly. This is asserted by Mönnig (1978:276) when he states that chieftainship is an office held single handedly by only one man.

In this study, chiefs' roles will be mentioned at random from various novels of Matsepe.

4.2 DUTIES PERFORMED BY CHIEFS IN MATSEPE'S NOVELS

4.2.1 Judge

As defined by Bradford (1994:509), it is a public official appointed to hear and try legal cases.

Mönnig (1978:255) states that as legislator and supreme judge, a chief has to protect or punish and provide justice for all tribesmen. Appeals from all lower courts in the tribe appear before him, as well as a whole range of cases which are brought directly to the court over which he presides.

Mönnig (1978:318) goes further to say that a chief acts as a presiding officer in the court and is in this capacity known as 'Moahlodi', i.e., the one who judge, or as 'moswara-selepe' – the axe holder. Although he holds no literal axe in his hands, his function is seen as deciding a case, as if by chopping with an axe.

In many, if not all of Matsepe's novels, this function is reflected.

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, when Motenampša is castrated and his wife is angry, she goes to the royal place to engage in the following conversation with lekgotla (i.e., the royal council).

- Lekgotla : “Gabotsebotse o bona o ka kgotsofala ge re ka dira eng?”
- Mosadi : “Ge woo a dirilego monna wa ka ka mokgwa woo le yena a ka dirwa.”
- Lekgotla : “Ke lekgotla.”
- Mosadi : “Lona lekgotla leo.”
- Lekgotla : “Ka moka ga lona.”
- Mosadi : “Naa ga la e kwana ka moka ga lona?”
- Lekgotla : “Le e kwane, eupša kahlolo e ntšhwa ke mošate.”
- Mosadi : “Wona mošate woo, kudukudu yena yoo a go mo iša seatla.”
- Lekgotla : “Ke yena wokhwi kgoši.” (1974:109)
- Council : (What is it that must be done to can satisfy you?
- Woman : If the same can be done to the one who did this to my husband.
- Council : It is the council.
- Woman : That particular council.
- Council : The council as a whole?
- Woman : Was it not an agreement of the whole council?
- Council : They agreed, but judgement is passed by ‘mošate’ (the tribal authority)
- Woman : That ‘mošate’ in particular the one who performend the act.
- Council : It is the chief.)

This is indicative of the fact that although a decision can be made in the 'kgoro' by the council as a whole, it is the chief who is going to pass the final judgement. The narrator also says the following to show that indeed the chief is regarded as the judge:

Molato wa letšatši leo lekgotla le ile ka o iša kua le kua la se hwetše kahlolo ye e o dudišago gabotse, feela leparankwe la tla la di kgona, ka gore le ile la re: Tefo ya gago o se ke wa ya go e nyaka go batswadi ba mosadi. (1974:34)

(The council tried to solve that day's case but could not find a suitable judgement, but the chief solved the case by saying: Don't go and seek for your payment from your wife's parents.)

In *Letšofalela*, Aditle had many wives to the extent that he did not know all of them, and as a result, women married him only to return home to be remarried. His sons went to one woman's parents who did that to demand their father's 'lobola' back.

The narrator says:

Le ge eba ga gwa ba bjalo, ke ka go reng ge barwa ba ile ba ya go gapa magadi ale sebakeng sa go ya go begela mošate? (1972:10)

(Even if it was not like that, why did the sons go for the "lobola" cattle instead of reporting the case to mošate?)

To show that a chief is a judge, the narrator further says:

Kgoši o ile a sa dutše kgorong bosasa bjo maabane a ntshe a bego a ahlola molato wola, ... (1972:116)

(Whilst the chief was still seated at the “kgoro” a day after he judged that case, ...)

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, the following is said to show that a chief is indeed regarded as a judge:

When Chief Letšaga’s tribe is angry because Monoši went to Chief Matshelo’s place instead of paying his fines, and hence they want him punished, the chief says:

... Ge eba re mo sekišetša go tšhabela ga Matshelo, gona go swana le go otlala morwa wa gago yo a bolailego nkwe a sa rongwa , ... (1962:83)

(If we summon him for having gone to Matshelo’s place, then it is like punishing your son who killed a tiger without being sent, ...)

Where judgement is to be passed, it is the chief who will always have the final say.

When two groups were fighting over a kudu, the narrator says:

Letšaga a tswalela lekgotla ka taelo ya gore ba dule ba theeditše phalafala ya mošate ge e ba bitša. (1962:150)

(Letšaga concluded the council’s sitting by ordering them to await the call by the ‘mošate’'s trumpet when it will be summoning them.)

In *Lešitaphiri*, when Chief Taudi’s principal wife gave birth to a baby boy whose father was not him, and he called his tribe as well as his in-laws to solve the matter, the narrator says:

Ke tshwanelo ge maledu a Mabothe a robja ke megokgo le mefsikela, gobane ga se phošo yeo e ka bego e dirilwe ke Taudi – moahlodi wo a tsebago gore ge motho a na le molato wa mohuta woo, o swanetše go begwa bjang ka baka lang. (1963:14)

(It is right for Mabothe's beards to be full of tears and mucus, because it is not a mistake that was supposed to have been committed by Taudi – the judge who knows how a person with such a case should be reported and why.)

When Mabothe (Taudi's father-in-law) called Taudi and he comes alone instead of being accompanied by his nobility, the narrator says:

Mabothe ga a ka a diegela go di kgobokanyetša banna. Ba ile go di kwa, ba sodiša maledu ka ge ruri mokgonyana wa bona a šwahlile sethokgwa ka hlogo a nnoši e tšwe a na le setšhaba seo a se ahlolelago melato nako le nako. (1963:31)

(Mabothe did not hesitate to assemble his men. After hearing them, they became sad because their son-in-law walked through the bush alone although he has a tribe for which he solves cases time and again.)

4.2.2 He controls initiation

Initiation in Pedi culture is regarded as a very important institution because it is the one that determines whether a person is an adult or not. Only initiated people can be regarded as men and women. An uninitiated male will always be regarded as a boy and will never take part in issues involving men, such as attending the 'kgoro', etc.

Mönnig (1978:112) states that:

As an institution (initiation) it is one of the cornerstones of the whole social and political organization. It is not an individual affair, but is communally undertaken by the whole tribe, and is under the personal direction and control of the chief.

In *Lešitaphiri*, the following is said to show that a chief controls initiation. When people realizes that their children are big enough to can go to an initiation school, and seemingly the chief is reluctant to let them go there, they start pestering him by informing him that their children are now ready to can undergo initiation. He tells them that it will be possible only if Kgathola (his biological first son) is going to lead it.

The narrator says:

Ge ba ekwa tšeo, ba thintha dihlogo, fela ba ka reng koma e le ya kgoši? (1963:83)

(When they heard that, there was nothing they could do because initiation belongs to the chief?)

Lekgotla le le hlomphegago, go hlwa re tlhaka ga go re thuše selo gobane re kgopela koma, ga re re mang a ripše molala, re kgopela fela gore kgoši a ntšhe koma. (1963:74-75)

(The honourable council, it is not helpful for us to keep on suffering, we request for initiation, we don't say anyone should be beheaded, we only request that the chief should allow initiation to take place.)

In *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, the same is also implied. After Chief Lefehlo's father died, because he was a paramount chief, all other chiefs mourned his death by stopping initiation except for Nthumule. The narrator says:

Magoši ka moka a ile ge a dira tšeo, Nthumule a ntšha koma ya basetsana kgafekgafe ... (1968:33)

(When all other chiefs did that, Nthumule kept on allowing girls' initiation to take place on regular basis.)

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, after relocating and settling at their new place, Chief Letšaga's mother asked him to let the girls go to initiation school. The narrator says:

E ile ge motse wa Letšaga o fedile go agwa, gwa re Mante mantšibua a mangwe a botša yena kgoši gore mokgekolo o re koma ya basetsana e tšwe e kgakole lelala (motse o mofsa). (1962:68)

(After Letšaga's new homestead was completely erected, Mante told the chief that his mother wants him to allow girls to go to initiation school in order to use for the first time (the new village).

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, when Tlabego denies his tribe the opportunity to take their children to initiation school, they go to Chief Afakenna because he is regarded as the cause of the problem. One of them says the following:

Beng ba rena, re rothiša megokgo ya madi ge re ilale, ka gore re godišitše, eupša kgoši o gana go ntšha koma. (1974:122)

(Our honour, we are not happy as we are, our children have grown up, but the chief denies them the opportunity to go to initiation school).

The above extract indicates that it is only the chief who can make initiation possible. If he is not willing to do that, then no initiation will take place.

They also say the following:

Banna : Kgoši re godišitše.
 Afakenna : Le godišitše eng?
 Banna : Bana.
 Afakenna : Bjale?
 Banna : Ntšha koma. (1974:118)

Men : (Chief they have grown up
 Afakenna : What has grown up?
 Men : Children.
 Afakenna : Then what?
 Men : Let them go to initiation school).

4.2.3 Leader of traditional army

As the chief should protect his people, he needs to have a traditional army, which will help him in doing that during times of war. Mönnig (1978:292) states that “at the head of the army stands the chief.”

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, this is indicated when Chief Letšaga leads the army which was going to fight Chief Thibama. The narrator says:

... ke ge lebotho la madira a Letšaga le phara molapo wa bobedi le etilwe ke Tshetlo pele mola le Letšaga a le gona ka sebele gobane ga a lora a fentše eupša ditaola di mmoditše a tomotše mahlo. (1962:86)

(... the multitudes of Letšaga’s army was crossing the second valley led by Tshetlo and Letšaga was personally also there because he did not dream having won but was told by the knucklebones being wide awake.)

The narrator goes further to say:

Ka Sesotho kgoši ke yena a hwetšago se sengwe le se sengwe pele – ka ntle ga go etela pele mohl'a marumo. (1962:67)

(In Sesotho the chief is the one to receive everything first – besides leading the army during times of war.)

In *Tšhelang gape*, when Sehlola (Chief Tholaboreledi's son) went to initiation school at Chief Diholamoko's place, and this infuriates his father, the following is said by the narrator to show that indeed the chief is the leader of a traditional army.

Ka ntle ga go hlwe a rarelararela bjalo ka kgarapane o ile a bitša mphato wa gagwe woo a ilego a o šupetša ka lerumo feela gore go iwa kae, ... (1962:149)

(Without wasting time, he called on his garrison whom he used the spear to show where they were going to, ...)

This is done by Chief Tholaboreledi when he is on his way to go and inform his father-in-law, Chief Diankedimoša, that Chief Diholamoko refuses to release his son Sehlola who went for initiation at his place.

In *Lešitaphiri*, after Mphoka was kidnapped and Taudi informed Mabothe, the latter says the following to show that a chief is the leader of the traditional army. The narrator says:

A itahlela godimo ga lekaba leo le bego le dula le apešitšwe ka ge e be e le a mantši mme a balellana ka mošomo wa wona, a eta madira a gagwe pele a tšama a letša phalafala a hlaba mekgoši a lebile ga Taudi. (1963:57)

(He climbed on top of his pack-ox which was always ready for use because they were many and took turns

in performing their duties, he led his army blowing his trumpet and also blowing alarm on his way to Taudi's place.)

After having arrived at Taudi's place, he, together with Taudi, led their army to Chief Matepe's place. On this, the narrator says:

Taudi le Mabothe ba šupa bohlabela ka marumo le ditšhoša ... ba latelwa ke madira ao a kobakobago morago ga bona bjalo ka mamane morago ga ditswetši. (1963:57)

(Taudi and Mabothe are pointing southwards with their spears and swords, being followed by the army which was trotting behind them like calves behind a cow that has recently calved.)

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, Chief Phentšwe also once leads his traditional army. After it was reported to him that the boy he sent people for was captured together with some of his messengers in the cave by Chief Afakenna and his medicineman, he becomes furious and goes for them. The narrator says:

Ka ntle ga go hlwe a romeletša o ile a eta madira a gagwe pele gwa lebja ga Kgoši Afakenna e le madira a a hlakahlakanego le basadi ... (1974:182)

(Without delegating anybody he led his traditional army and went to Afakenna's place, it was the army which was mixed with women ...)

In *Mahlatse a Madimabe*, also, Chief Sebege also leads his traditional army even though they were not going to fight but to search for Seitshwenyeng, who disappeared while with his garrison at the veld, looking for a pregnant baboon, that was needed to heal Sebege's daughter who was barren. On this, the narrator says:

... ba kwana, ka gore ka le le latelago ba tlile ba tšwa lesolo leo le hlatselago gore ke la dikodutala. (1981 :77)

(... they reached an agreement because the following day they undertook an expedition which was for the elderly.)

4.2.4 Eradication of poverty

The chief as the head of a tribe should see to the well-being of his people. In Matsepe's novels, the chiefs do exactly that. This is so because if there is poverty, this will result in illnesses and ultimately to deaths. This would not please the chief because chiefs become proud if the size of their tribe is large.

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, the chief does this by making sure that the tribe has enough food stored for times of war and drought. The same was done by Chief Sekatapowana when he showed Tšhikanoši where the food is stored. On this the narrator says:

Kua lešokeng ba tšwa go bontšha moeng wa bona mereo ya mehutahuta ya diphoofole le dibata, ba mo laetša le mefoma yeo go iphihlwago ka go yona, gammogo le ka fao go boloketšwego dijo ka mokgwa woo di ka se tsenwego ke meetse. (1974:150)

(At the veld they showed their visitor different traps for game and animals, they also showed him caves in which they hide themselves, and also where food is stored in such a way that they cannot be reached by water ...)

In *Lešitaphiri*, after Chief Matepe was defeated and captured by Chief Taudi and all what belonged to him taken, the narrator says the following:

... mogale wo ka yena mellwane e kgarološitšwego moo e lego gore ga go mang a ka hlwago a lla ka go hloka tšhemo. (1963:58-59)

(...a hero by whom borders were extended in such a way that no one will be complaining about lack of a ploughing field.)

From the above extract, it is implied that every citizen is allocated a ploughing field or a piece of land to plough on by the chief in order to alleviate poverty.

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, Chief Matshelo used to send his people to go and harvest another chief's ploughed field because the chief's plough field is very large, the implication is that the harvest will then be used to take care of the poor in his community. On this, the narrator says:

O iphetošitše poifišo ya tikologo ya gagwe gobane o kgona go roma batho ba gagwe gore ba yo buna tšhemo ya kgoši e nngwe. (1962:76)

(He turned himself into a fearful person around his surrounding because he is able to send his people to go and harvest another chief's ploughed land.)

4.2.5 Accommodates newcomers in the village

As the head of the tribe, all newcomers should report to the chief first and he decides whether to keep them in his village or not. This is done in order to keep order in the community, for failure to do that would lead to a lot of problems, such as, being attacked before he would even know that there are strangers in his village.

In *Letšofalela*, when Mabitša's tribe was seeking for accommodation, they were given one by the former Fowang. The narrator says:

... go fihlela ge ba adibetšwa ke Fowang wa kgale.
(1972:6)

(... until they were accommodated by the former Fowang.)

In *Mahlatse a Madimabe*, after Seitshwenyeng got lost, he finally reaches Chief Molobi's place who accommodated him. He was brought before him by some of Molobi's garrison who found him at the veld. On this, the narrator says:

Ka kwano ya bona ba ile ba re ka ge sela ba bego ba se romilwe ba se ba se hwetša bokaone ke go iša lethopša lela go kgoši, kgonthe lentšu la lehlabula ya ba le tee.
(1981:86)

(In their agreement they said because they could not find what they were sent for, the best thing is to take the captive to the chief, indeed they all agreed.)

Chief Molobi did the same thing to the three missionaries who were to teach them about the word of God. They also were accommodated. On this, the narrator says:

... kgoši o ile go lemoga gore maru a a kokotlela a bile a šišitše ka mokgwa wo o sa šitego gore lephoto le tlile go tšea motho, a re bokaone go iweng gae gore baeng bale ba ye go kgona go iketla le go itaodiša ka botlalo ... (1981:102)

(After realizing that the clouds are gathering and thickening in such a way that it was obvious that a person will be flooded, the chief said the best thing is for them to go home so that those visitors can rest and be able to explain themselves in full.)

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, Monoši was also accommodated by Chief Matshelo after having escaped from Letšaga's punishment. After Matshelo's men found Monoši and Diphaphu at the veld, they brought them to Chief Matshelo because he is the one who will decide what to do with them. On this, the narrator says:

Ge ba tsena ka kgoro ya mošate ke ge Diphaphu a etetše pele, Monoši a itshwareletše ka magetla a gagwe ... (1962:76)

(Diphaphu was in front and Monoši was balancing with his shoulders when they entered through the royal place.)

In *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, Leilane was accommodated by Chief Nthumule after he ran away from Chief Lefehlo's punishment. He found Nthumule and his men solving a case at the 'kgoro'. On this, the narrator says:

Re šetše re kwele gore mogwera wa rena wa potego (Leilane) ge a fihla ga Nthumule, o hweditše ba namola bao ba bego ba betšana ka dirumula. (1968:29)

(We already heard that when our loyal friend (Leilane) arrived at Nthumule's place he found them solving a case of those who were at loggerheads.)

Chief Tshehlwana also was the one who accommodated Maphuthe and the missionaries. The narrator says:

BoMaphuthe ba boela morago le beng ba bona bao ba ilego ba re nare yeo e yo fiwa kgoši, ka yona e be tšhupetšo ya gore ba inyakela kwano fela. (1968:109)

(Maphuthe and others returned together with their master who said the buffalo should be given to the chief, as an indication that they only needed peace.)

In *Lešitaphiri*, Chief Matepe was also accommodated by Chief Tladiphaswa after his people were captured by Mabothe and Taudi. On this, the narrator says:

... ka ge kgoši yeo Matepe a gorogetšego go yona e be e šetše e kwele ka ga Taudi le Mabothe. (1963:61)

(... as the chief to which Matepe has arrived already heard about Taudi and Mabothe.)

4.2.6 He is the principal traditional healer (doctor) and a religious leader

Mönnig (1978:270) states that the chief, as the religious leader and principal 'ngaka', stands above their head and they fall directly under him.

This statement refers to a traditional healer who attains exceptional status and is frequently considered to stand just below the chief. Although the chief does not practice as 'ngaka', he is regarded as such (Mönnig, 1978:97). On the other hand, the chief may not practice as ngaka. He is a layman and his position is also a social one. As chief witchdoctor he possesses a divination set which is inherited.

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, Tlabego always resorted to his knucklebones when things went wrong. On this, the narrator says:

Bjalo ka mehla le mehla, kgoši o ile ge a tsoga a tšholla ditaola pele ga go tšwela ka ntle. (1974:131)

(As usual, when he woke up the chief threw his knucklebones before he went outside.)

In *Kgorong ya Mošate*, this is confirmed that chiefs are themselves traditional healders. On this, the narrator says:

Diphaphu o na le tša gagwe dingaka e bile mo gongwe yena ka noši ke ngakangaka gobane magoši ka moka a bjalo. (1962:23)

(Diphaphu have his own doctors, and maybe he himself is the real one because all chiefs are like that.)

Chief Tlhathamedi was himself a traditional healer. On this, the narrator says:

Tlhathamedi le yena ke monna – e sego fela ka gore a tšwala lekgeswa – ke monna yoo a ikepelago; ke ngaka ye e swerego tše di tšwago mantšhwahlašwahleng. (1962:173)

(Tlhathamedi also is a man – not only because he puts on a crupper – he is a man who digs medicines for himself; he is a traditional healer who has medicines from thick bushes.)

In *Lešitaphiri*, it is also implied that Chief Taudi and Chief Mabothe are traditional healers themselves that is why they prepared magical tricks for Tladiphaswa. The narrator says:

Taudi le Mabothe ka go tseba seo ba se dirilego, le bona ba se bope thoko. (1963:70)

(Taudi and Mabothe because they knew what they have done, did not sleep.)

In *Letšofalela*, the following is said about Chief Mabitša to show that chiefs are traditional healers. On this, the narrator says:

Ge kgoši ka kgonthe a tseba bongaka ka mokgwa woo, o be a reng a sa remele Ditlhodi yoo go ikgonara ga gagwe go tsošitšego ledimo leo le ganago go okobala? (1972:57)

(If the chief knew about healing so much, why didn't he heal Ditlhodi whose barrenness caused endless conflict.)

Chief Fowang was also a traditional healer. The narrator says:

O a hlamula monna mogolo, o bolela seo a se tsebago ka ge bongaka bja gagwe nke o bo amogile dingaka ka moka ga tšona. (1972:56)

(The old man is talking, he says what he knows because his medical practice is as if he took away from all other doctors.)

4.2.7 He is the ritual leader of the tribe

He is responsible for the following types of rituals: rituals for curing, protecting the community from any epidemic, alleviating pain from the sick, etc. On this, Sekhukhune (1988:48) states that: "the head of the tribe or family, with the assistance of medicinemen, normally takes the lead in conducting ritual activities, i.e., ritual of 'go phasa' to make a sacrifice or sacrificial offering.

Mönnig, on the other hand (1978:255), states that:

As a religious and ceremonial leader of the tribe the chief has to sacrifice to his ancestors on behalf of the whole tribe, to officiate in rainmaking ceremonies, to initiate and to take part in rituals and ceremonies connected with sowing and harvesting and to arrange for, organize and take prominent part in the initiation of the youth.

In *Letšofalela*, Chief Mabitša does this by offering sacrifice to the gods after having heard that Moleti is blessed with a baby boy. On this, the narrator says:

Ka ge e be e le ya badimo e ile ya hlabelwa phupung
ya rragwe, gwa khunangwa fao. (1972:64)

(Because it was for the gods it was slaughtered at his
father's grave, they knelt there.)

In *Lešitaphiri*, Taudi and Mabothe killed an old man whose parts were to be used
for offering sacrifices. The narrator says:

Mola mokgalabje wola a felago ba mo feafeela a sa
fiša ba ntšha tšohle tše ba di nyakago, tša go neša pula.
(1963:54)

(After the old man died, they took care of him whilst
he is still warm, they took out what they needed, the
ones for rain making.)

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, Chief Afakenna also leads his tribe in offering sacrifices to their
gods. On this, the narrator says:

Kgomo yeo e ile ya išwa kua ba robetšego ntshe ba re
go ithatharatha ba fetša ba theoga nayo gore e ye go
hlabja e jewe. (1974:45)

(The cow was brought to a place where they were
buried and after talking ambiguously, they descended
with it so that it can be slaughtered and then eaten.)

The narrator also says the following to indicate that the chief leads sacrifices:

Ge ngwedi o tšholotše bolwetši go thwe kgoši a ntšhe
kgomo ya go kgopela badimo gore ba re phophothele
go Yena. (1974:57)

(If there is an illness it is said that the chief should
offer a cow to ask gods so that they can plead for us to
God.)

4.2.8 He protects the rights of everyone in the community

The chief protects the rights of everyone in the community, that is why he is addressed as the father of the nation.

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, Chief Tlabego protected the rights of a man who was pestered by his wife by saying he does not want her to conceive a baby boy. On this, the narrator says:

A ka kgona ka go go ituela gona ge o mo tlabela
lefeela. (1974:56)

(He can by only beating you for surprising him for
nothing.)

Instead of punishing the man, he realized that the woman was wrong and was asking for the impossible.

In *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, Chief Nthumule also protected Mohlatša and Morara by disagreeing with him after he assaulted them and escaped to his place. The narrator says:

Kgoši : Ka go se se ahlole, ke re ga o ne molato, molato o na le
yena?

Leilane : Le Morara thobela.

Kgoši : Etšwe kgoši ya gago e sa realo? (1968:36-37)

Chief : (By being fair, should I say you are not guilty, the guilty
one is him?)

Leilane : The guilty party is Morara my lord.
Chief : Even if your chief does not say that?)

In *Letšofalela*, Chief Fowang protected Motshere even though he was dead (killed by Setabotabo). On this, the narrator says:

Le ge re sa tsebe kahlolo yena ke kgomo ye e tlemilwego e letetšego mohlabi feela. (1972:75)

(Although we do not know what the judgement will be he is like a tied cow which is waiting for the slaughterer only.)

4.2.9 He leads and guides the community

The chief does not do that alone. He is helped by his councilors, advisors and his headmen. He never takes a decision alone but will always consult with them.

In *Tša ka Mafuri*, Chief Sekatapowana informs his council when he realizes that he is unable to solve the matter. On this, the narrator says:

Kgoši Sekatapowana di ile go mo phafōša borokong bjo a tswetšwego le bjona, a di lahlela lekgotla la gagwe. (1974:38)

(After Chief Sekatapowana was awakened by the news, he needed assistance from his council.)

In *Letšofalela*, Chief Kgafedi is unhappy because his principal wife, Matheledi, died before she could give birth to a boy who will lead the society in future. On this, the narrator says:

O duma ge nka be Matheledi a tlogetše sentlanyana se se tla tlogo se hlahla setšhaba. (1972:90)

(He wished Matheledi would have left behind a child who would lead the community.)

In *Lešitaphiri*, after Lefehlo's father died, he was compelled to take reigns in leading the community. The narrator says:

Rragwe o ile go ikela le seswiswi seo ba rego ke lehu, a tlamega go iša setšhaba mafulong a matalana le go lapološa moya wa sona. (1968:23)

(After his father's death, he was compelled to take the nation to greener pastures and to let their souls rest.)

The above extract implies that Lefehlo had to lead his community after his father's death.

4.3 **RÉSUMÉ**

The duties of chiefs as outlined in Matsepe's novels were treated in this chapter. That is, what the duties of a chief involve, for example, judging of cases, accommodating newcomers in the village, controlling initiation, ritual leader of the tribe and other activities that befit his standing.

CHAPTER 5

5. GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

In the seven novels used in this study, Matsepe indicates it clearly that he has a high respect for chiefs as well as the institution of chieftainship. He is of the idea that chiefs should be given the honour and respect that they deserve, and that this position is a hereditary one that cannot be given like a garment.

He says:

Bogoši bo a tswalelwa ga bo apolelwe bjalo ka kobo ...
(1963:48)

(Kingship is a hereditary position it cannot be given
like a garment, ...)

He disrespects those who wanted to defy and oppose a chief with the intention of obtaining chieftainship positions for themselves.

He also dislikes chiefs who thought that they can be able to rule the communities single-handedly, without involving their councilors as well as their advisors; such as headmen, nobility, and men as a whole.

He strongly believes in ancestors and that people can communicate with them by offering sacrifices to them and they in turn communicate with the living through dreams.

The same view is shared by Junod (1938:130) when he states that “the ancestor-gods also communicate with the living in their dreams”.

Schapera (1950:252) also concurs with the above-mentioned statement when he states that “Often enough the ancestor spirits appear to the living in dreams”.

Matsepe also believes that chiefs are capable of solving disputes at traditional courts and amicably so. He also has a strong value for initiation.

All in all, the issues that he ponders on are those that dominated in societies before the twentieth century.

5.2 Future research

Matsepe does not concentrate on one issue only in his novels. He made mention of many burning issues, such as succession to the throne of kingship, ancestors, traditional healers and witchcraft. Students in future may still have many issues that they can research on.

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