

72

E.M. RAMAILA, THE WRITER
(A literary appraisal)

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation for the degree of
Master of Arts
at the University of the North hereby submitted by
me, has not been previously submitted by me, for
a degree at this or at another University, and
that all material contained therein is recognised.

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CONTENTS

		page
Chapter I		
ORIENTATION	1.0.0.0-1.0.0.3	1
First Publications in Northern Sotho	1.1.0.0-1.1.1.7	2
Chapter II		
BIOGRAPHY OF E.M. RAMAILA	2.0.0.0-2.0.1.2	9
Chapter III		
RAMAILA'S EARLIER WORKS		
<i>Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote</i> (1935)	3.0.0.1-3.0.2.8	16
<i>Setloxo sa Batau</i> (1938)	3.1.0.0-3.1.2.4	32
Chapter IV		
THE SHORT STORIES		
Introduction	4.0.0.0-4.0.0.3	45
<i>Molomatsebe</i> (1974 edition)	4.1.0.0-4.1.3.9	46
<i>Taukobong</i> (1968 edition)	4.2.0.0-4.2.1.2	70
Chapter V		
HUMOUR IN RAMAILA'S WORKS	5.0.0.0-5.0.3.0	78
Chapter VI		
REVOLT AND PROTEST IN RAMAILA'S WORKS	6.0.0.0-6.0.4.0	104

		page
Chapter VII		
POETRY	7.0.0.0-7.0.1.7	135
Modern Poetry	7.1.0.0-7.1.0.7	149
Chapter VIII		
CONCLUSION	8.0.0.0-8.0.1.3	154
BIBLIOGRAPHY		162
SUMMARY		166
OPSOMMING		168

Chapter I
ORIENTATION

1.0.0.0 The aim of this investigation is to set the writings of E.M. Ramaila in their historical perspective and to reach a balanced assessment of their literary value, that is, to see what merit there is in his works and whether a literary tradition can have started with his works.

1.0.0.1 The method of research used will be that of examining the texts themselves and whatever is written on them so as to try and establish how far Northern Sotho literature has been influenced by them. The various manuals on the theory of literature will also be consulted in order to find out how far Ramaila's works conform to, or depart from the current views on literature.

1.0.0.2 The twentieth century can be regarded as the era of the birth of the Northern Sotho literature, with E.M. Ramaila with his biography on the life of Rev. A. Serote, entitled *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote, 1935* in the forefront. From 1935 up to the present, the Northern Sotho authors have produced about 50 novels, 20 dramas, 35 volumes of poetry and, in addition to these, also works on the short story, biography, historical narrative, detective novel and essays. The statistics given above indicate that the Northern Sotho literature is still very young indeed. Conscientious and ambitious authors of the Matsepe calibre are badly needed so as to have the Northern Sotho bookshelves flooded with literary works.

1.0.0.3 Apart from the attempts made by Combrink, Breed and Groenewald, critical evaluations on Northern Sotho literature still lack. The lack of proper assessment of the Northern Sotho works has led to the conclusion that the Northern Sotho literature is of an inferior quality - a remark which is more relevant to quantity than to quality. The fact is, there is no language with a literature of good books only. Very many Northern Sotho books are, however, superficial and do not delve into the intricate problems of life. This weakness disappoints the discerning readers. Bearing in mind that the purpose of literature is to entertain and instruct, the only way to enhance the standard of the literature of a language is to give objective and constructive criticisms by pointing out that which is inferior and commending that which is worthwhile. It was in his survey of the Southern Sotho literature that *A.J. Moloji* (1968, p.1) arrived at the conclusion that

"unfortunately, to date, no serious evaluation of their books has been attempted These weaknesses will continue as long as the artists are aware that there is no critic to scrutinise their work, sift the shallow from the more purposeful works, and fight hard to discourage poor workmanship".

The First Publications in Northern Sotho

1.1.0.0 The first publications in Northern Sotho were written by the missionaries. They were, therefore, based on the word of God. The missionaries had one main aim in view namely, to teach the word of God to their converts and to exhort them to stand firm in their faith. Amongst these

writings were books such as

- Anonymous: *Puku e xo kopantšoexo xo eona ditaba tša mehuta-huta* (A book containing miscellaneous narratives) 1st ed. Schulze, Middelburg Tvl., 1893; 2nd ed. Berlin, 1906.
- Knothe, C.: *Thuto ea tumelo ea Bakriste.* (Instruction in Christian belief.) Berlin, 1893.
- Anonymous: *Ditaba tše diño e tša Badumedi.* (Some tales of believers.) Botšhabelo, Middelburg, Tvl. 1893.
- Knothe, C.: *Bibel e lego mañoalo a makgethoa a testamente e tala le a e mphza.* (Bible, that is, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament.) by Revs. G. Trümpelmann, G. Eiselen, Kadach, A. Serote. Berlin, 1904.
- Hoffmann, C.: *Hosiana, thabelang Morwa David e a tlang.* (Hosiana, rejoice at the son of David who cometh.)
- Hoffmann, C. & Trümpelmann, J.: *Mphago o abelwago badumedi ba Jesu Kriste.* (Provision given to the believers in Jesus Christ.)
- Hoffmann, C.: *Thuto ya Konformasi.* (Confirmation Instruction.)
- Hoffmann, C.: *Basokologi ba tla rutwa eng?* (What should the converts be taught?)
- Luther, Dr. M.: *Katekisma e nnyane e nago le diema.* (The little catechism with proverbs.)
- Luther, Dr. M.: *Diema tša Bibe le.* (Bible texts.)
- Schwellnus, Dr. P.E.: *Ditaba tša Bibe le.* (Bible stories.)
- Schwellnus, G.: *Lethabo la Bošego bjo Bokgethwa.* (Rejoicing of the night of the Lord.)

Schwellnus, Dr. P.E.:	<i>Reta Morena!</i> (Praise the Lord.)
Schwellnus, Dr. P.E.:	<i>Ditaba tša kereke ya kgale.</i> (History of the ancient church.)
Schwellnus, Dr. P.E.:	<i>Swara o tiiše: Dr. Martinus Luther!</i> (Grip and hold fast Dr. M. Luther.)
Schwellnus, Dr. P.E.:	<i>Thuto thabeng.</i> (The Sermon on the mount.)
Schwellnus, Dr. P.E. & Baumbach, Dr. J.:	<i>Kereke le Thomo.</i> (Church and Mission.)
Phokanoka, Rev. P.:	<i>Josefa, morwa Jakobo.</i> (Joseph the son of Jacob.)
Legodi, Rev. A.:	<i>Ruthe wa Moaba.</i> (Ruth of Moab.)
Other publications were:	<i>Difela tše kgethwa, e lego dikopelo tša badumedi.</i> (Sacred songs, that is, songs for the believers.) ... Lutheran Hymn Book.
	<i>Agenda:</i> Order of the Lutheran Church Service.

1.1.0.1 These were the humble beginnings of Northern Sotho as a literary language. Religious literature was followed by secular writings which still emanated from missionaries' hands. Here mention can be made of books such as *Tša Magoši le Dilete* and *Maphelo* both written by Dr. P.E. Schwellnus and *Mebušo* by Rev. C. Hoffmann.

1.1.0.2 Up to this stage fiction as is portrayed in novels, had as yet not appeared in the Northern Sotho literature. The first book in Northern Sotho written by a Northern Sotho author on a Northern Sotho man, was the biography of Rev. A. Serote written by E.M. Ramaila. It was, indeed, the first book in Northern Sotho which dealt with the

life-history of a fellow mortal, the stalwart Rev. A. Serote. It is this very book that made the ordinary Northern Sotho man conscious of the fact that he could also embark on literary contributions to his own language. Ramaila's pioneering work also marks the dawn of an era of various publications in the different literary genres by the Northern Sotho authors.

1.1.0.3 From the appearance of Ramaila's book, Northern Sotho literary publications did not increase as markedly as might have been expected. Various factors account for this slow development.

1.1.0.4 Firstly, there were few literate people amongst the Northern Sotho. The Northern Sotho lacked men and women who could unfold the wealth of their experiences in writing or produce artistic descriptions of their customs and traditional usages. The white missionaries were able to produce series of readers, e.g. Dr. Schwellnus' *Padišo* series: SSA - Std.VI. But in the other forms of literature such as drama, novel writing, there was no progress.

1.1.0.5 Secondly, writing as an art form has also great demands. For one to be a writer, one has to have a deep insight into the vagaries of life. In addition to this, one has also to have the ability of painting these vicissitudes of life artistically. His able use of language should paint living and memorable pictures in the minds of the readers. Amongst other early Northern Sotho Literates, there was Rev. C. Machaba who wrote a biography entitled *Bophelo bja Moruti C. Machaba I*, 1938. Other contributions were M.J. Madiba's *Tsiri*, 1942 and Phalane's *Motangtang*, 1943.

1.1.0.6 Thirdly, there are many regulations that control the publication of books. Before a Northern Sotho book can be published, the publishers have first to be assured that the book will be prescribed for use by schools, failing which, the book will not be published at all. This implies that Northern Sotho has no reading public other than the school children who read for the purpose of their examinations only. The publishers' reservations always have a retarding effect to the growth of any literature.

1.1.0.7 Fourthly, the reviewers of manuscripts can also be a retarding factor to the development of our literature. One reviewer should not be empowered to decide the fate of a manuscript singly. One would plead for a panel of reviewers rather than individual reviewers in order to avoid having a good manuscript being buried alive only because it fails to satisfy a fastidious reviewer.

1.1.0.8 It would also be welcome if the writers could be made aware of the short-comings of their manuscripts. They would then be too happy to correct their errors and would also guard against repeating such errors in their future works.

1.1.0.9 Finally, it can be remarked that conversation is healthy, but too much of it is bad. Time is overdue that the art of reading be inculcated into our youth so that the Northern Sotho people eventually become a nation of avid readers, and not just people who delight in talking. Once the reading habit can be established, then Northern Sotho literature is bound to develop. Books will no longer be bought for examination purposes only, but also for the store of information

that abounds in them.

1.1.1.0 In Chapter II, a resume of Ramaila's life-history will be given. Ramaila's life-story as a pupil, student and teacher will be sketched. It will culminate with his ordination as a pastor. Attention will also be given to how he got inspired to write.

1.1.1.1 Chapter III deals with the first phase of the study, namely, historical writings viz. *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote* (a biography on Rev. A. Serote) and *Setlogo sa Batau* (The origin of the Batau tribe). These two works will be examined against the literary development of their time of emergence and an attempt will be made to determine how they enriched the Northern Sotho literature.

1.1.1.2 The short story will be discussed in Chapter IV where Ramaila's two volumes of short stories *Molomatsebe* and *Taukobong* will also be considered. Some aspects of Ramaila's language and style will be discussed in order to evaluate Ramaila's success as a writer.

1.1.1.3 Chapter V, which is the second phase of the study, deals with Ramaila's humour as revealed in *Tsakata*, *Molomatsebe*, and *Taukobong*. An assessment will be made of how far this humour helps in enhancing Ramaila's writings.

1.1.1.4 The next phase of the study appears in Chapter VI where an attempt is made to examine Ramaila's protest and revolt as found in his social novel, *Tsakata*, and in his short stories in *Molomatsebe* and in *Taukobong*. An attempt will also be

made to establish the probable causes of the writer's protest and revolt and their possible solutions as can be inferred from his postulations.

1.1.1.6 Ramaila's poetry and hymns will be examined in Chapter VII, and their aesthetic beauty will be assessed.

1.1.1.7 Chapter VIII, which is the conclusion, gives Ramaila's achievement as a Northern Sotho writer.

Chapter II

BIOGRAPHY OF E.M. RAMAILA

2.0.0.0 Epaphras Mogagabise Ramaila was born on 30th January, 1897, in the little village of Lehlakaneng near the Botšhabelo Mission Station about 16km from Middelburg in the then Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (South African Republic), at present Transvaal, the northermost province of the Republic of South Africa. His father, Nathaniel Pududu Ramaila, an elder in the Lutheran Church at Botšhabelo, was very keen on having his sons educated. Through the zeal of the church elder Ramaila, his eldest son, Henry, was trained for the Lutheran ministry. However, he died of the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic a few months before his ordination.

2.0.0.1 His youngest son, Epaphras, received his primary and post primary education at the Botšhabelo Practising School and Botšhabelo Training Institution respectively. He qualified as a teacher in 1915, in spite of the fact that his sisters were opposed to his schooling and would have preferred that he seek work in the cities. During the three years of teacher-training, the youngest Ramaila was also trained as an evangelist, so as to equip him to serve any community in the dual capacity of teacher and evangelist. (*Bantu Education Journal*: Sept.1956, p.254)

2.0.0.2 In 1915, he was appointed assistant teacher at the Lydenburg Mission School because of his quick grasp of Afrikaans which was the language used by the black community there. From Lydenburg, he went to Rustenburg in the Western

Transvaal and was principal of two schools before he eventually became principal of the Saron School at Phokeng. The Std.VI class of this school was considered a preparatory class to the Bethel Training Institution (Lichtenburg District, west of Rustenburg), because the pupils who wished to attend this teacher-training school, were expected and advised to go to the Saron Lutheran School for Std.VI. As a result thereof teachers of the former Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission Schools virtually received part of their training from Ramaila. He was such a good thinker and adviser that the elderly Phokeng residents used to conclude many meetings and kgotlas (tribal meetings) where he had helped them, with the words:

"Bana ba dikgomo, ithuteng molodi, le gopoleng motlha malata a tsamaya".

(Children of cattle, learn how to whistle, and remember the days when the servant herd-boys shall have left you.)

This was an advice to the Bafokeng youth to learn from the wise Ramaila while he was still with them, for he was not a Tswana by birth and would eventually leave them.

2.0.0.3 On 21st December, 1922, E.M. Ramaila married Blandina Mathumetse, the daughter of Rev. Nathan Mathumetše, who was by then pastor at Thabantsho in the Groblersdal district, Transvaal. Blandina was then a teacher at Thabantsho. Ramaila had known this family in 1915 when he was teaching in Lydenburg in the Eastern Transvaal. Rev. Mathumetse was then following the evangelists' course at the Botšhabelo seminary, and when Ramaila came home during holidays, he became better acquainted with this family because of the talkative old man, Mathumetse. It is how he met Blandina,

proposed to her in 1918 and eventually married her in 1922. The wedding was solemnised by Rev. Mathumetse in the Lutheran Church at Thabantsho. At the time of his marriage, Ramaila had been transferred from Lydenburg and was teaching at Saron Lutheran School.

2.0.0.4 At the end of the school holidays during which he married, Ramaila left with Blandina to Phokeng where they lived happily together although they were teaching at different schools. At Phokeng two children were born to them - a girl, Angelina* born on 31st October, 1923 and a boy, Henry Segome*, born on 24th December, 1924.

2.0.0.5 In 1929, E.M. Ramaila returned to join the staff of the Botšhabelo Training Institution where he taught music and Northern Sotho. He did not concentrate on the students who were doing teachers' course only, but was also entrusted with the task of teaching Arithmetic, English and History to the students who were doing the evangelists' course. While he held this responsible post, he did excellent work and distinguished himself as an outstanding music teacher and choir master. Whenever he writes about a school in his works, he never forgets to write about music and concerts. To him, a school without music is no school at all. Ramaila composed music and verse, and four hymns in the Lutheran hymnal stand to his credit. Some poems that Dr. P.E. Schwellnus, his great benefactor, used in the fine *Padišo* series of readers like

* Angelina, now Mrs Kgaphola, is principal of the Moretele Lower Primary School in Mamelodi, Pretoria.

* Henry Segome passed his Teachers' Course at Botšhabelo, his B.A. at Fort Hare and his M.A. at Columbia University (U.S.A.); and now serves as the Field-Officer of the National Council of Churches after a few years' teaching.

'Mmutla' (the hare), came from his pen.

2.0.0.6 During this time, Ramaila was an active member of organisations such as the *Transvaal African Teachers' Association*, commonly known as *T.A.T.A.*, of which he was a co-founder. The 1928 calendar has the picture of all the foundation members of the T.A.T.A. Ramaila appears as treasurer on this picture - a position he held for several years, until he came to Botšhabelo in July 1929, when he asked to be relieved of this post in order to concentrate on his work at the Botšhabelo Training Institution.

2.0.0.7 The year 1933 saw Ramaila back at the Lydenburg Mission School, the very school at which he had served as an assistant teacher 18 years previously. He was now head of the school. In 1935 he went to Sabie, still in the Eastern Transvaal, as principal of the Lutheran school and evangelist of the Lutheran congregation there. In 1936, he came to his last place of abode, Brakpan, in the East Rand, still in the dual capacity of principal and evangelist. He spear-headed the amalgamation of the schools in Brakpan in 1939 and retired in 1959 after having been principal of the junior department which became the Thabong Community School for 20 years, and a teacher with 44 years' continuous service in all (*Taukobong:1968, p.4*).

2.0.0.8 It was when he was at Brakpan that he studied for ministry under Dr. P.E. Schwellnus, the then superintendent of the Berlin Mission in South Africa. He attended classes on Saturdays and during the holidays. On 27th February 1944, Ramaila was ordained as a pastor by Dr. P.E.

Schwellnus in the Marshall Street Lutheran Church in Johannesburg. After his ordination, Rev. Ramaila continued to minister to the Brakpan Lutheran Congregation and, at the same time, to head his school which was now known as Thabong Community School. After his retirement as a teacher in 1959, he continued to serve as pastor up to his death on 23rd August, 1962.

2.0.0.9 In addition to his success as teacher and pastor, Ramaila's hand never grew tired of committing events and situations to writing (*Bantu Education Journal*:Sept.1956, p.254). He believed more in the written word than in sole reliance on memory. It was the thirst for writing which enabled him to make contributions to the periodical *Mogwera wa Babaso* (A friend of the Blacks) - a Lutheran Church bulletin of which he became the first editor. Some of his contributions were also sent to the Lutheran Church Almanac, *Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke*, to the periodical *Abantu - Batho* (people) 1917-1929, and to the *Good Shepherd*, an organ of the Transvaal African Teachers' Association. Some of his contributions also appeared in some European newspapers (*Dinose*:1966, p.26).

2.0.1.0 By his regular contributions to the periodicals and pamphlets, Ramaila's talent as a writer was sharpened and his ability as a story-teller, tremendously improved. This rare gift of story-telling evinces itself in the books that he has left us to enjoy, especially *Molomatsebe* and *Tsakata*. The following books given according to their year of publication, all come from Rev. Ramaila's pen:

- (i) *Borwa bo a foka* (The South-wind is blowing) (1929).
- (ii) *Ditaba tša South Africa* (The History of South Africa) (1930).
- (iii) *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote* (The life-story of Rev. Abraham Serote) (1935).
- (iv) *Setlogo sa Batau* (The origin of the Batau tribe) (1938).
- (v) *Molomatsebe* (One who bites one's ear) (1951).
- (vi) *Taukobong* (The lion in the blanket) (1952).
- (vii) *Tsakata* (The wise one) (1953), and
- (viii) *Seriti sa Thabantsho* (The dignity of Mt.Thabantsho) (1961).

2.0.1.1 From Ramaila we learn to listen. Ramaila does not just start writing; but writes that which he has heard from others or about his own personal experiences. When people spoke, he listened intently. He listened to stories on health, life and general talks of people. Because of his ability to listen, he was also able to tell others. After he had listened to a story, Ramaila thought deeply about it and finally arranged the thoughts meticulously. Because of his warm-heartedness, he did not judge; but put the facts in such a way that everyone should be able to give his own judgment:

"Ramaila o gana go rema mola taba e ka ithema".
(Ramaila does not want to pass judgment when the matter can judge itself.)

(*Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke*:1963, p.27)

This characteristic of Ramaila's is also evident in most of the stories in the book, *Taukobong* (1952).

2.0.1.2 It is in Ramaila's books that we are also made aware of his deep knowledge of the life of his people. He is nearest the hearts of the black people. He knows their wishes and aspirations; and their pleasures and griefs. For one to know what is in the minds of the Blacks, one should read Ramaila. It is in Ramaila's books also, that we are made aware of the rare gifts that God bestowed on him: the wealth of beautiful and yet simple and straightforward language, the wealth of good and logical arrangement of facts, the wealth of politeness and the wealth of love for his fellowmen - very great gifts, indeed. We read with deep appreciation the eulogy which was given this stalwart on the day of his burial, 28th August, 1962 by Rev. P.M. Mamogobo in the poem:

"Mogagabise a Ramaila a Monare Tau sebakaborena
 Sebakaborena le bomonere Mohlotse a Lepelle,
 Noka di ela meetse diphororo nkgo ga di tšhollelane,
 Madibamaswana ga a retele ge mamokebe a se gona.
 Bakgaditsi ba ile re a belega ba belega Tau 'a Tswako,
 Tau e rora pukung tawana tša ema maseme.
 Nong o nanabela o reng o na le diphego?
 Phurulla phego phefo di go dumele,
 Fofa o akalale pukung nonyana di tšee mephepho.
 Ihlo la nong le bona mehla e se fano;
 Le bone kgole mahube a baswana a sa tšwa.
 Ihlo la kgori le a bonišiša bana ba kwale ba topa mehlala.
 MoHolla, Kgaditsi a meetse monepenepeng, meetsemagakwa
 Mogobe nkego noka tlhoka-boelelo
 Kganthe boelelo bo sa le gona
 Bo sa le gona manthong a ditšhaba:
 Bana ba mosadi yo moso ba sa nyorilwe!
 Mamokebe, nyaa meetse Kgaditsi mantho a kgolwe!
 Ramaila a Monare Rasengwala puku mafahlafahla,
 Bana ba nwa moro, ba nwa kgodu e tšwang sotseng.
 Robala moHolla!"

(Mogagabise of Ramaila of Monare, a lion that vies for power,
 A competitor for power with the missionaries at Mohlotse of
 Lepelle (Olifants river);
 Rivers flow water like waterfalls, pots that don't share the
 water,

Deep pools are not dangerous in the absence of the water serpent.
In their attempts to give birth, the Bakgaditsi gave birth to
the lion of Tswako,
The lion that roars in books to the consternation of the young
lions.

Big bird why do you struggle when you have wings?
Spread your wings and let the wind allow you to fly,
Fly and soar over books so that young birds should take example.
The vulture's eye is able to see through the ages;
It saw from afar the dawn of the blacks.
The eye of the big bird sees distinctly and makes the children
follow its example.

Pillager of the waters of Kgaditsi among the thick bushes, the
big waters.

A pool like a river without an outlet
And yet an outlet is still there
It is there among the people of the nations:
The children of the black woman are still thirsty!
Water serpent, give water at Kgaditsi so that people be quenched!
Ramaila of Monare, the prolific writer of books,
Children drink the gravy, they drink the genuine staff.
Rest in peace pillager.)

Chapter III

RAMAILA'S EARLIER WORKS

3.0.0.0 In this chapter, the two earlier works of Ramaila's viz., *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote* (1935), a biography on Rev. A. Serote, and *Setlogo sa Batau* (1938), an historical narrative on the origin of the Batau, are examined.

Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote (1935)

3.0.0.1 Earlier on mention was made of the fact that this book was the first Northern Sotho literary work to be produced by a Northern Sotho author on a Northern Sotho personality. The theme of this book, the arrangement of the plot, the language and style, are all Ramaila's own. In his own words (p.57), Ramaila states that he could very much have liked Rev. A. Serote to have written the book himself:

"Xona fao ka be ka duma xe e ke a ka ngwala puku ya tša bophelo bya xaxwe Xo šupa therešo nka re ke be ke duma meetse a sediba sa tlhaloxanyo ya xaxwe, 'me ke kxanyoxa xe a ka re noša ona ka seatla sa xaxwe". (Just there I even had a wish that he could write a book on his own life Indeed, I could even say that I had a craving for the waters of the fountain of his thoughts, and wished that he could water us with his own hand.)

3.0.0.2 As this could not be possible because Rev. A. Serote had grown old and feeble, it is not surprising that Ramaila, undertook to write this biography on the Kopa author, pastor, musician, philosopher, poet and great teacher from

articles in *Mogwera wa Babaso* and *Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke*.

3.0.0.3 By definition, a biography is "a branch of literature and of history comprising narratives of the lives of individuals". (*Universal World Reference Encyclopaedia*:p.697) As a preface to his biography, *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote*, Ramaila gives us a brief historical background of the Kopa tribe. It is from this tribe that A. Serote originated. This background is followed by a well-arranged sequence of chapters such as: A. Serote's youth, his schooling, his work as teacher and evangelist, his visit to Germany which culminated in his ordination as a pastor on 3rd April, 1903, his return from Germany and work amongst the Bapedi at Mmitse in the Lydenburg district and amongst his own people at Botšhabelo, his contributions such as philosophical sermons and poetry in the form of hymns and finally his death on 8th August, 1930. In all these chapters, some of which are very short, the manner in which Ramaila attempted to preserve for posterity, the stature and ability of Rev. A. Serote (1865-1930) is appreciated.

3.0.0.4 The above biography could have been more varied were it not for the modification done to it by Ramaila's mentor, Dr. P.E. Schwellnus. He found it contained some criticisms on Rev. A. Serote which would not have been pleasant to the members of his family. He thus censored those criticisms from the book. In spite of all this, it was such an enjoyable piece of literary work in its day that it enjoyed wide publicity in all the Northern Sotho schools. Perhaps with the inclusion of the omitted material, it could have survived much longer.

3.0.0.5 The fact that Ramaila took pains to study the requirements of a biography is also to be appreciated because, apart from the intimate knowledge of the life of the biographee, one would also require documentary evidence to render his biography more authentic. Documentary evidence usually contains more vital information than the biographer might know. The biographer, therefore, requires additional information from documents such as diaries, letters, treatises. Ramaila (p.53) complains of the sad lack of these in the words:

"... etšwe le mokeng le bona ba sa rate xo laodiša le xo tumiša tša bophelo bya tatabo, ba hloma eke ke boikxodišo. Mohlomong motho o be a ka di (dikopelo) hwetša dipukung tše di ngwadilwexo ka seatla, xe a filwe tumelelo ya xo hlahlofa dipuku tše byalo le mangwalo a Moruti Serote".

(... although even then they were also reluctant to speak about and praise their father, because they regarded it as being boastful. Perhaps one could have found them (the hymns) in his hand-written books, when given permission to inspect such books and the letters of Rev. A. Serote.)

3.0.0.6 The appearance of Ramaila's book on the life of Rev. A. Serote influenced Rev. C. Machaba II to write a biography on his own father, Rev. C. Machaba I, entitled *Tša Bophelo bja Moruti Charles Machaba I* (1939). When Ramaila's biography is compared with that by C. Machaba II, one finds that the latter is more of an historical narrative than a real biography. It dwells more on the origin and migrations of the Machaba family, the tribal wars in which they were involved and ends with the history of the spreading of the gospel among the *Batlokwa*, a tribe staying west of Zoekmekaar in the northern Transvaal, by Rev. C. Machaba I. The readers are not made to know Charles Machaba I: his personal likes and dislikes, his

talents and how he used them - in short, it fails to expose the biographee convincingly to the readers. It therefore lacks insight, variety, humour and the aesthetic beauty which characterise Ramaila's book.

3.0.0.7 In his unpublished dissertation, Breed (1954, p.55) remarks that "Ramaila slaag nie daarin om die gestalte van Serote voor ons te laat opdoem as waaragtige mens en tegelyk as draer van die idee van sy tyd ...".

3.0.0.8 The comparison between the existential circumstances of A. Serote and C. Machaba is odious. A. Serote was born of christian parents whereas C. Machaba was born of non-christian parents. His father was a witch-doctor. It cannot be concluded, as Breed asserts above, that because C. Machaba "was 'n bokwagter", he was therefore "'n draer van die idee van sy tyd". A. Serote (1935, p.10) also looked after calves at the Mission Station. The atmosphere of life at a Mission Station is by far different from that in the tribal areas, where beer-dances abound, circumcision, together with all the other forms of tribal ritual, is practised. Life at a Mission Station revolves round the church and the school. It is less rowdy than that in the tribal kraals. In actual fact, all the early teachers and pastors emanated from the mission stations. They are the people who, on completion of their teacher-evangelist training, infiltrated into the tribal areas and produced teachers and pastors even from those areas.

3.0.0.9 A. Serote was in fact the culmination of the German missionaries' aspirations. They had carefully gone round to select two young men they could bring up themselves in

order to prove whether the blacks were impervious to education and religion. But in Mabogoane and Serote, they found two young men who received their training as teachers and evangelists without much trouble and were consequently the forebears of the future teachers and pastors. The point which should be quite evident is that whilst A. Serote, because of his christian parents, received his education fairly easily, C. Machaba had to struggle for it and obtained it far away from his home. How many black men do we not have, who leave their homes in the tribal areas illiterate, but through the agency of friends and night schools far away from home, receive their education? Whereas A. Serote is the epitome of the atmosphere of life at a Mission Station, C. Machaba is the epitome of the atmosphere of life in a tribal area, away from which, as God would have it, he received his education and religion in Lesotho.*

3.0.1.0 Breed (1956, p.55) goes further to assert that

"daarby is dit duidelik dat die skrywer A. Serote verafgood. Hulle was stamgenote en ook familie, en dit gee dikwels aanleiding tot subjektiwiteit en selfs sentimentaliteit".

Ramaila could not have possibly "verafgood" A. Serote who was his close relative although he had married his aunt. He could not have exaggerated anything about A. Serote because it would have been refuted by Revs. Winter, Eiselen, Hoffmann, Trümpelmann, and his mentor, Dr. P.E. Schwellnus - all, missionaries who trained A. Serote from boyhood and therefore,

* Lesotho: The new name for the Basutoland British Protectorate in R.S.A. It is now independent of British control.

knew him more than Ramaila. Dr. P.E. Schwellnus was the editor/reviewer of most of Ramaila's earlier works. It is stated by Ramaila's only son, Henry, that some portions of the book on A. Serote had to be left out because Dr. Schwellnus feared they might engender ill-feeling, particularly to A. Serote's family. Ramaila drew his admiration of A. Serote from what he observed about him in school, in church and even at home. The book appears to be one-sided as it dwells mostly on the laudable aspects of the biographee's life; but when read closely, one gets places where Ramaila mentions some of Serote's short-comings:

"Ke mo mehleng ya moraxofela mo batho ba bang ba ilexo ba thoma xo belatšwa ke dithero tša xaxwe tša xo boloka bahu. Fao, ba be ba sola xe a bolela tše mpe tša bophelo bya mohu e ke o a *kwera* le xo ahlola ...".

(A. Serote:1935, p.27)

(It was during the latter years only when some people started complaining about his funeral sermons. There, they criticised his references to the bad things which were related to the life of the deceased as if he was *mocking* and even passing judgment)

3.0.1.1 The influence that a teacher may have on his pupils should not be underestimated. Some pupils, at times, so admire their school master, that they go to the extent of ego-identifying themselves with him. This is purely psychological. When Ramaila's life as a teacher and pastor, and as a musician and writer is considered, it is realised that Ramaila had been so deeply inspired by A. Serote that he strove to be like him; and on the literary plain, surpassed him. Surely, in life, if people failed to draw

inspiration from others, then very little progress would be made.

3.0.1.2 Breed goes on to dismiss A. Serote as an author, on the ground that the latter lacks a single book that stands to his credit today. It is here where we find that Breed fails to appreciate the Northern Sotho Bible (1904), the moving sermons, hymns and poems of Serote's which have been included in the biography by Ramaila. In the Lutheran Almanac, *Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke* and the periodical, *Mogwera wa Babaso*, there are articles which prove that A. Serote was a writer, perhaps, not an author.

3.0.1.3 In any case, the two biographies, together with *Setlogo sa Batau*, a tribal history, can be acclaimed as the three books that prompted the development of Northern Sotho literature by the Northern Sothos themselves.

Some aspects of Ramaila's *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti A. Serote*

Serote, a poet and a musician

3.0.1.4 Here Ramaila gives us an insight into one of the rare gifts that Serote had, namely, the gift of being a poet and a musician. Ramaila remarks that even if Serote had not attended school, he would have been an outstanding bard. He would have been one of the few gifted poets who are endowed with the natural ability of praising their chiefs and heroes. This is expressed in the words:

"... re lemoxa ka byako xore le xe a ka be a sa rutwa,
e ka be e le yo mong wa dithwadi tša xo reta maina ...".

(A. Serote:1935, p.53)

(... we immediately realise that even if he had not
been educated, he would have been one of the best
bards.)

3.0.1.5 Serote's inborn gift as a poet was realised early
by Rev. G. Trümpelmann at the Botšhabelo Mission
Station. It was Rev. Trümpelmann who developed it further by
teaching Serote how to write poetic stanzas on the Western
pattern which involves metrical feet and rhyme schemes. This
is seen in all the hymns that Serote composed for the Lutheran
Church. About this, P.S. Groenewald (1966, p.109) remarks as
follows:

"Verder is die versreël en die versreëlsegment minder
streng op 'n linguistiese grondslag uitgemeet, terwyl
die groter verstegniese eenhede feitlik sonder uitson-
dering almal metries bepaald is. Die digters was in
hierdie geval sendelinge en evangeliste".

But the indigenous Bantu poetry, unlike Western poetry, is not
bound by rhyme schemes and metrical feet. It has its own
features such as the use of the introductory copulative phrase
"Ke nna" (I am) followed by the relative details. It is full
of alliteration, parallelism, rhythm, imagery, humour, linking
and pathos e.g.

"Ke nna Sekwati sa Mmaboforohlo,
Sekwatakwatiša motho botlakala.
Ke Sekwati sehlwa le ngwanana ntlong,
E le mmamo a go ja tatago ngwanana".

(*Seriti sa Thabantsho*:1961, p.12)

(I am Sekwati of Mmaboforohlo,
 A hard nut to crack.
 I am Sekwati, the stayer with a girl in a hut,
 It being a trick to eat (conquer) her father.)

Judged on the poetic features of the Western mould, the above lines may be found absurd, and yet the poetic features that abound in them are maddening to the indigenous Northern Sotho audience.

3.0.1.6 Serote was thrilled by the guidance given him by Rev. G. Trümpelmann on how to compose poetry on the Western pattern. As a result of this, he composed the poem: *Sello sa Thabantsho* (The Lamentations of Thabantsho), a poem in which he laments the devastation caused during warfare to the Bakopa* by the Swazi warriors at Thabantsho (A. Serote:1935, p.7). The guidance he received of fitting new words to the existing melody, did not fall on deaf ears. It was because of this inspiration that Serote left the Lutheran Church a legacy of no less than 18 hymns, the moving words of which are all his composition. Thanks to Rev. Trümpelmann who succeeded in realising and exploiting Serote's inborn talent on poetry and music, for

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air".

(Gray, T.: *The Elegy*)

3.0.1.7 Ramaila tells us that Serote was himself a wonderful singer and an efficient choir trainer. It is, therefore, not surprising that amongst all the presents which

* The Bakopa are a Pedi clan staying at Maleeuwskop near Groblersdal in the Transvaal.

he brought from Germany, there was an organ, the very musical instrument which inspired him to compose hymns on repentance, redemption, heaven and eternal life. About the organ, Ramaila writes as follows:

"'me sa mmudulela moya wa tlholoxelo le xo loka,
wo ka wona a ilexo a dira mantšu a dikopelo tše ntši
tše di bolelaxo tša boitsholo, phološo, le lexodimo,
le bophelo byo bo sa felexo".

(A. Serote:1935, p.23)

(And it (the organ) blew into him the spirit of nostalgia and reverence, the spirit by which he was able to compose the words of many hymns dealing with repentance, redemption heaven and eternal life.)

Serote: A pastor, writer, philosopher, teacher and preacher

3.0.1.8 If ever there has been any man amongst the Bakopa upon whom talents were showered, that man was Serote. In 1902, when he undertook a trip to Germany for the translation of the Bible into the Pedi-Kopa dialect^{*}, he was a mere teacher and evangelist. By then he had already worked for 12 years at the Lutheran School and congregation which he had personally founded at Mmitse. His stay at Mmitse was a blessing in disguise for the Pedi people; for it was at Mmitse that he studied the Pedi dialect, a dialect which was slightly different from the Kopa dialect, and a dialect into which the Bible was to^{be} translated. It was also during his stay in Germany that he improved himself as a preacher by listening attentively to the inspiring sermons delivered by

* The Pedi dialect is the central dialect on which Northern Sotho is built.

one efficient and eloquent preacher, Rev. Konrad, a man who was rated as influential as Dr. Martin Luther. It was always a pleasure for Serote to attend church services conducted by Rev. Konrad. Ramaila comments on this as follows:

"Motho yo a nexo le temoxo o holexa ka xo sepela a butše mahlo le ditsebe xo amoxela tše di ka mo thušaxo".

(A. Serote:1935, p.24)

(An observant person is benefitted by travelling with his eyes and ears open to receive all that which can help him.)

3.0.1.9 Before Serote could return to South Africa, he was ordained minister in the "Bartholomeuskirche" by the "Missionsdirektor Gensichen" on 3rd April, 1903. In the evening of the same day, thousands of Lutheran and other enthusiasts gathered to listen to his farewell sermon which was interpreted to them by Rev. Merensky. On that evening, Rev. A. Serote is said to have preached one of the most moving sermons he had ever given. When Rev. Serote returned to South Africa, he was a full-fledged minister and a re-orientated preacher.

3.0.2.0 Rev. Serote worked for a very short time at Mmitse before he was transferred to Botšhabelo where he lived and worked until his death on 8th August, 1930. It was at Botšhabelo that his versatility manifested itself in full. His authorship reached its climax at Botšhabelo; for it was here that he composed hymns and sent letters to the Lutheran organ, *Mogwera wa Babaso*, some of which letters were humorous, others very sad, and others still instructive and didactic. It is also here at Botšhabelo that he contributed regularly to

the Lutheran Church Almanac, *Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke*, various instructive articles, five of which are included in this biography to indicate how humorous and instructive Rev. Serote's pen was. The quality and depth of Serote's letters and narratives published in the periodicals clearly distinguish him as a sagacious pastor, writer, philosopher, preacher and a great teacher. One needs to read *Ramosexo o a nyaka xomme o a bona* (*Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.36*) (Ramosexo wants and is given), to enjoy a wonderful exposition of how those who hunger for the Lord find themselves eventually with God; or *Ngwanešo o leba kae* (*Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.46*) (Fellow brother/sister whither goeth thee?), a humorous and yet pathetic story of a man who persisted on evil ways until his doom. Rev. A. Serote was an accomplished writer and preacher. In support of this, Ramaila writes:

"Babadi ba ba mo tsebaxo, batla bona xore pene ya xaxwe le leleme la xaxwe di be di sa fapane".

(*Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.30*)

(Readers who know him, will realise that his pen did not differ from his tongue.)

3.0.2.1 It is not the intention of the observations given in the previous paragraphs, to give an anatomical dissection of the book: *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti A. Serote*, but merely to indicate that it falls within the scope of a well-written biography.

3.0.2.2 Ramaila is deeply impressed by the gifted Rev. A. Serote, the man who taught him at school and subsequently in the seminary; the man whose family he visited regularly, for this man had married his aunt and he had

Andreas, Serote's son, as his friend. When reading this book, one is able to feel the filial touch that Ramaila had towards this family.

3.0.2.3 One reads with appreciation about the role which the Berlin missionaries played in the evangelisation of the Bapedi; and one cannot help looking back at Botšhabelo, which was founded by the early Berlin missionaries. It was the seat of the Transvaal Lutheranism and the seat which busied itself with the training of evangelists and teachers, the majority of whom left the seminary very much ready to serve the communities in which they were placed both in the school and in the church.

3.0.2.4 Ramaila, very much like his biographee, is a good writer. He uses a straightforward narrative style loaded with imagery and humour as in

"Xo sepela ke xo bona, xaxolo yo a sepelaxo a lebaleba".

(1935, p.22)

(To travel is to see, especially the one who travels with open eyes.)

or

"xomme xe katse e yo taxwa ke lethabo la papadi ye ya taboxataboxa, ya be ya namela mohlašana woo e sa le o monana, ya nyaka xo o roba".

(*Mor. A. Serote*:1935, p.11)

(and when the cat got drunk from the excitement of this game of scampering around, it even got on to this tree which was still young and feeble and nearly broke it.)

3.0.2.5 Ramaila is an honest author who views issues with a balanced mind and a critical eye. He does not merely delight in exaggeration. When the virility of his hero, Rev. A. Serote, started waning, Ramaila remarked in the following words:

"xona mo lebakeng leo xwa lemoxwa xape xore sobopexo sa xaxwe sa xo tia se fetoxile, o bonala bokxalabye".

(*Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.24*)

(just at that time, it was noticed that his strong physical build had changed, his appearance was that of an old man.)

3.0.2.6 On the other hand, when young Serote had the opportunity of being taught by Rev. G. Trümpelmann after

"a lemoxa ruri xore o filwe neo ya xo laodiša ditaba le xo opela,"

(*Bophelo bya Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.12*)

(he realised indeed that he was gifted at narrating incidents and at singing,)

Ramaila commented on this rare luck with this philanthropic effusion:

"Batho ba baso ba bantši ba filwe dineo tša mehutahuta; eupyā ka xobane ba sa hwetše thuto ye e tletšexo, ye e ka budušaxo dineo tšeo xore di palexe di tšwele molaleng, ba hwa natšo".

(*Bophelo bya Mor. A. Serote:1935, p.13*)

(Many blacks have been endowed with various talents, but because of lack of sufficient education which would foster those talents to fruition so as to be visible to all, they die with them.)

which bespeaks sadly and painfully of the many talents of his own people which die unexploited because of sheer lack of proper guidance. Hence this tribute to Rev. A. Serote, which appeared in the *Mogwera wa Babaso* (Sept.30, p.78) of the first month after his burial

"xo ile yo moxolo wa setšhaba sa Basotho, monna ruri, monna wa makxonthe, wa xo rata setšhaba sa xabo ka pelo e fišaxo, wa tumelo e tiilexo, wa tsebo, wa lerato, wa boikokobetšo, modira-khutšo".

(There has died the great one of the black race, a man indeed, the real man, who had a burning love for his nation, (the man) with a strong faith (in God), with knowledge, with love, with humility, and a peace-maker.)

3.0.2.7 During his composition of the biography on Rev. A. Serote, Ramaila had two forces with which to contend. Firstly, there was the Serote family which was rather reluctant to discuss their father's life freely with the author, because they were by nature humble and taciturn people who shunned overbearingness. Besides, the author could not get free access into Serote's letters, documents and manuscripts. Secondly, there was the reviewer of his manuscript, Dr. P.E. Schwellnus, who cut off certain portions of the manuscript as he felt they might displease the members of the Serote family. But with all these forces against which Ramaila had to contend, he was able to write the first biography ever to appear in the Northern Sotho literature. For a "pure biography comes into being when the author, eschewing all extraneous purposes, writes the life of a man for its own sake, and, though adhering to truth, attempts to compose that life as a work of art". (*The Art of Biography*:1965, p.13).

3.0.2.8 According to the following few remarks from the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Ramaila's biography, with all the remarks given above, can be regarded as successful because "it is clear that the highest requisite in the biographer, whatever his material and whatever his motive in writing - whether to justify or defend his subject, to hold up a certain ideal of conduct, to apply a new psychological approach or to present simply a biographical novel - is the equipment which he himself brings to his task. In the first place he must have sympathy for his subject. Secondly, there must be absolute sincerity ...". Although Ramaila's work may be said to lack balance as the good points appear to be preponderating over the bad, he, through his interesting conversational style which abounds in well-employed proverbs and idioms as well as humour and pathos, has succeeded in presenting his hero, Rev. A. Serote, to the Northern Sotho reading public. And, like his hero, Ramaila was also a sagacious pastor, writer, philosopher, preacher and teacher.

Setloxo sa Batau (1938)

3.1.0.0 Ramaila's next contribution to Northern Sotho literature is the book entitled *Setloxo sa Batau*, which is on the origin of the Batau tribe. This is a forerunner of the genre of historical narratives in Northern Sotho literature. Ramaila influenced other Northern Sotho writers to produce works such as *Ba gaMphahlele* (1941) by Phatudi and Phaladi, on the Mphahlele; *Mebušo* (1941) by C. Hoffmann, on governments in Africa, Europe and Asia; *Tša Mogoši le Dilete* by Dr. P.E. Schweltnus, on the South African Bantu chiefs and

their tribes; *Batau ba a tšitlana* (1973) by M.M. Makgaleng, on the division of the Batau (people of the lion); *Mokone wa Mabula* (1974) by M.C. Boshielo on the Koni of Mabula; and finally, *Lešiko la Baaparankwe* (1973) by P.D. Sekhukhune, on the leniage of the Pedi chiefs.

3.1.0.1 Historical narratives are narratives dealing with historical events which are still remembered and are still so vivid as not to be called legends. Although these narratives have been passed down from generation to generation orally, they are not subject to any rigid form otherwise they would be history.

3.1.0.2 In the book, *Setloro sa Batau*, Ramaila gives the history of the Batau (the Lion people), from where he could trace their probable origin, the various places to which they migrated, up to the present where they are found concentrated in the Transvaal south of the Olifants river at Phaahla, Masemola, Marishane, Mphanama, Kgaditsi, Tubatse, Moopong and other places near Jane Furse and Magnet Heights in the Middelburg district.

3.1.0.3 Ramaila gives the probable origin as Wakkerstroom, in south-eastern Transvaal, where they split from the Swazis who were then ruled by Chief Nkwana. In his book, *Batau ba a tšitlana* (1973, p.2), Makgaleng states that they were never Swazis and that according to one of his informants, a certain Moileng Chiloane, facts indicate that they came from the diamond diggings in British Bechuanaland. This cannot be so much regarded as a point of divergence because both authors seem to agree that the Batau at one stage stayed at Wakkerstroom

where the Swazis under Chief Nkwana stayed. In support of Ramaila on the one hand, and Makgaleng on the other, M.C. Boshielo in his *Mokone wa Mabula* (1974, p.6) (the Koni of Mabula) writes:

"... ga go setšhaba se se hloletšwego moo se hwetšwang gona ka tlhago".

(... there is no tribe which has as its origin, the place where it is found at present.)

3.1.0.4 When they were at Wakkerstroom, they had the "sun" as their totem. This totem was similar to that of the Swazis (*langa* = the sun in Swazi; *letšatsi* = sun in Sotho). Similarity of totems is common among the blacks and points out that different people with the same totem emanate from the same stem irrespective of geographical habitations.

3.1.0.5 In veneration of the sun totem, the Batau had to eat their meals before sunset and those who were in the circumcision school had to return from their game-hunting before sunset. This totem was further enshrined in their praises e.g.

"Re Malakeng-maso mašweu ka dikala".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.5)

(We are the Black people of the Sungod, whose white is merely a war gear.)

3.1.0.6 In *Batau ba a tšitlana* (1973, p.2), Makgaleng further argues that

"Batau ba a bolotša, Maswatse aowa"

(The Batau practise circumcision, while the Swazis do not);

but Ramaila puts it clearly in *Setloxo sa Batau* (1938, p.18), that the Batau like the Swazis and the Zulus did not have circumcision and that they acquired it from the Babina-Tlou (people of the elephant), Baphiring (people of the wolf) and the Batau of Makobe.

3.1.0.7 From Wakkerstroom, the Batau migrated into the Ermelo district where they stayed near Lake Chrissie under Chief Ngwato. Ramaila gives us proof of this as embedded in their praise

"Batho ba ba boaxo Seokodibeng se se meriti mebedi,
mong wa maloba".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.5)

(People who come from Lake Chrissie which has a plant with two beautiful shadows that alternate daily.)

3.1.0.8 This "Seokodiba", the big lake, is sometimes confused with the little fountain found at Mphanama where the Batau later on stayed under Chief Moxašwa. To clarify this, Ramaila points out that even the Batau who never stayed at Mphanama, use the praise of "seokodiba", which is indicative of the fact that it is none other than Lake Chrissie.

3.1.0.9 It was during their stay at Lake Chrissie that Chief Ngwato changed their totem from the "sun" to a "big bird". They venerated the totem of the big bird up to the time of Chief Matlebjane I who praised himself as follows

"kxori ke a nanabela, nong ye kxolo
Matlebjane-'a-Ngwato-'a-Nkwana-e-tšwa-Tswako.
E re ke a fofa, phofa di a xana ...".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.6)

(The bird, it attempts to fly, the big bird
Matlebjane of Ngwato of Nkwana, the bird from Tswako.
It tries to fly, yet the feathers do not allow it.)

3.1.1.0 From Lake Chrissie, the Batau migrated further to Tswako, a mountainous area in the Lydenburg district. The Batswako are said to be part of the Pulana tribes whose totem was "tau", a lion. From chief Matlebjane's praise quoted above, the words

"... e-tšwa Tswako. E re ke a fofa, phofa di a xana".
(... it comes from Tswako, It tries to fly, the feathers do not permit.)

suggest there having been warfare between the Matlebjane people and the Batswako. Possibly, the Batswako, the Pulana people, could have been a splinter group that broke away from Matlebjane's or Ngwato's people and moved ahead of them as a result of tribal differences. This is partly supported by the fact that there is a closer affinity between the Pulana language and that of the Batau.

3.1.1.1 Ramaila and Makgaleng differ according to details as to the change of their totem by the Matlebjane people from the "big bird" to the "lion". Ramaila advances two reasons why they changed their totem: (i) that they killed a lion thinking that it was a mere wild cat and when they later learnt that it was a lion, they adopted it as their new totem; and each time they killed a lion, they would perform certain rituals with its hair: such as, smelling it and/or brushing their own hair and faces with it. They believed that by doing this, they were giving themselves the strength and the bravery of the lion; (ii) that on their arrival at Tswako, they fought

against and defeated the Batswako who, in order to establish peace, donated a young woman as wife of the chief of their conquerors. This was a further stabiliser of their new totem, "the lion" which infiltrated into their praises

"Re Batau ba phax'a-malala-'a-Moenyane".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.6)

(We are the Batau clan of the hero who lived at Moenyane.)

3.1.1.2 Makgaleng on the other hand gives a different version on the changing of their totem by the Batau. He speaks of two chiefs, Moela Mashego and Khonyoko Marule, who occupied the same geographical area. The two chiefs heard in due course that one chief, Mokwena Magašula, killed lions. As a result of an argument which broke out one day between Khonyoko and Magašula, they went out with their men to hunt lions. Khonyoko and his men had sworn to kill the lion without employing any weapon. So, when a lion was seen, the Khonyoko men were ordered to kill it. They got dead scared of it, until the Magašula men attacked and killed it eventually. Khonyoko later on killed a wild cat, snatched the lion from the Magašula men and gave them the wild cat.

3.1.1.3 Makgaleng confronts the readers with two problems because of lack of clarity in his exposition

(i) the three chiefs about whom he writes are all Pulana. Makgaleng does not indicate how they are linked up with the Matlebjane I people from Lake Chrissie. None of them moved with the Matlebjane I people to Mokwena. (ii) As a result of this missing link, his story on how the Matlebjane I people adopted the lion as their totem cannot be accepted in preference

to that given by Ramaila.

3.1.1.4 Ramaila's description of the movements of the Batau from place to place is more plausible and therefore, credible. He writes that they moved from Wakkerstroom to Lake Chrissie, then to Tswako in the mountainous area of the Lydenburg district, where they changed their totem to that of the "lion", and then to Mokwena (the Crocodile river which is a tributary of the Komati river). Makgaleng (1973, p.3) writes that before they stayed at Mokwena, they might have stayed at several places such as Lekokoto, Lepunama and Shakwaneng (Lake Chrissie). The possibility of their having stayed at several places before getting to Mokwena is acceptable; although it differs from that given by Ramaila above.

3.1.1.5 Makgaleng (1973, p.5) further gives two statements which baffle the reader:

- (i) *Bale ba šetšego Lekokoto ba ile ba boela Mokwena.*
(Those who remained at Lekokoto returned to Mokwena.)
- (ii) *Mogašwa a thopa sefoka. A thotha setšhaba, a boela Mokwena sebong sa Somcoba.*
(Mogašwa was victorious. He took the tribe, and returned to Mokwena to the fortress of Somcoba.)

3.1.1.6 From the above statements, the reader is given an impression of the Batau tribe going back to Mokwena for the second time and this contradicts that which Makgaleng quoted above gives. Again, Mogašwa is like a bolt from the blue. The reader is not informed of how he fits into the Batau royal hierarchy. He is only told that Mogašwa took the

Batau tribe back to Mokwena; whilst Ramaila (1938, p.8) writes that when the Batau left Tswako (in the Lydenburg district) for the banks of the Mokwena river, they were still under Chief Matlebjane I. Ramaila, therefore, gives a more acceptable version than Makgaleng.

3.1.1.7 The changing of their totem from "the bird" to "the lion" had serious repercussions on the Batau tribe. The Bakgaditsi, an old tribal clan of Ngwato's days, had several objections to the trend of affairs in their tribe:

- (i) They objected to the incorporation of the conquered into their tribe. They feared that the conquered would one year wax strong and conquer them in turn. Hence their praise song:

"Re baHolla, batho ba ba tšwago Holla,
le hollago kgomo le motho.
Re Bakgaditsi se-meetse-monepenepeng,
Batho ba bo-thetelego-'a-bodiba, meetse magakwa,
Mogobe nkego noka-tlhoka-boelelo".

Setloxo sa Batau:1938, p.7)

(We are pillagers, people who come from the land of pillage,
Them who pillage beast and man.
We are the Bakgaditsi of the sweet waters under the huge tree,
People of the round lake, the huge waters,
A lake like a river without a flow.)

- (ii) They were further against the change of their old totem "the big bird" to that of the "lion".

3.1.1.8 The above objections made by the Bakgaditsi clan, infuriated the Batau tribe and consequently led to

serious bloodshed. Many Bakgaditsi were murdered, some fled to the place now known as Kgaditsi in the Lydenburg district, others fled to Botlokwa near Zoekmekaar in the Northern Transvaal and formed the Rasibilo clan, whilst a third group surrendered. To placate those who surrendered, the Batau tribe accommodated their totem of "the big bird" and adjusted it to "the lion of the air", in order to maintain their oneness.

3.1.1.9 From Tswako, the Batau tribe migrated to Mokwena under chief Matlebjane I. It is at Mokwena where they are said to have stayed for a very long time with the resultant increase in their numbers and wealth. Proof of their having stayed long at Mokwena lies in their having been ruled by three successive chiefs namely, Matlebjane I, Mokwena, and Matlebjane II. Makgaleng (1973, p.5) further states that during the reign of chief Mokwena, they assimilated many Swazi refugees by giving them wives from the Batau maidens and also giving the Batau young men wives from the Swazi female refugees; and in so doing, made their own tribe invulnerable.

3.1.2.0 The disintegration of the once famous Batau tribe occurred during the latter years of chief Matlebjane II's reign. Because of his breach of tribal etiquette - by staying in the youngest wife's hut, receiving tribal cases and presents there instead of in the chief wife's cottage - Matlebjane II was murdered by his own sons. In fact his sons: Selwane, Phaahle, Masemola and Matlebjane's elder brother's son, Mogašwa, planned the murder in such a way that he be killed by the assegai of his youngest wife's son; whilst the other sons agreed (in private) to bend the tips of their assegais so that they should not hurt. This incident led to the disinte-

gration of the Batau tribe. Each of the sons of chief Matlebjane went away with his group of followers as their chief:

- (i) Selwane became chief of the Moopong tribe from which developed the Manganeng people, namely, the Nkadimeng and the Mofolo people.
- (ii) Mogašwa left with his group to Mphanama and his people are today also found in the Jane Furse and the Magnet Heights areas.
- (iii) Phaahle became the father of the Phaahle people around Lobethal. From these people developed the Mosese, Phaahla-Makgala and the Morewane people of Manoge.
- (iv) Masemola stayed with a large group of followers at Pshiring in the Magalies location. From his large tribe developed the Marišane tribe, the Nchabeleng tribe of Mankopane, the Diekeng tribe, the sons of Tseke of Manganeng and the Ramushu's who subsequently went to the Mphahlele's location.
- (v) Photo's fate was sealed by his father, Matlebjane II, on his death bed:

"Photo o rogakilwe tšatši la polao ya Matlebjane, a botšwa gore batho ba gagwe ba ka se kokotlele le motse a ka se o bone".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.19)

(Photo was cursed on the day of the murder of his father. He was told that his people would not increase, and also that he would have no tribal kraal.)

Photo is the founder of the Tladi tribe, the clans of which tribe joined some of the above tribes, for

instance, the Tladi-'a-Seepe clan which is under chief Nokaneng at Mphanama, the Mahlase-'a-Seepe clan which is under the Masemola tribe and the other small clans found at Manganeng and in Mphahlele's location. Photo was an ill-fated chief.

- 3.1.2.1 What follows in the rest of the book, *Setloxo sa Batau*, is actually an exposition of how MatlebJane II's sons built up their tribes during their times of perpetual warfare with the Swazi's, Matebele, Zulus, Bapedi, Bakone, the white people and even amongst themselves. These details are amplified further by Makgaleng in his *Batau ba a tšitlana*, a book in which a greater detail is given on the Pulana history, which is given scantily in Ramaila's book.
- 3.1.2.2 Ramaila goes on to sketch what occurred during the reigns of certain Batau prominent chiefs such as Chief Tseke II, chief Mabowe I, chief Mabowe II and closes with the restoration of peace by the Boers and the spreading of the gospel by the Lutheran Berlin missionaries such as Revs. Gruetzner, Endemann, Nachtigal, and Merensky; and some Batau religious pioneers such as Mmaphokeng and Dibakeng of Masemola's location; Stoffel Pududu and Noa Holla of Tisana.
- 3.1.2.3 With the book, *Setloxo sa Batau*, Ramaila immortalised the history of the Batau tribe by giving an objective exposition of the Batau tribe from the earliest times in their history that he could trace up to about 1938. His exposition is objective in the sense that he describes, to his readers, both the good and the bad incidents in the history of the tribe to which he belonged, the Batau. Both Ramaila, in the book

Setloxo sa Batau, and Makgaleng in his book, *Batau ba a tšitlana*, adopt the same disposition of giving their readers the true facts which they were able to uncover, whether good or bad, without any fear of scandal. Of this Ramaila writes:

"Selo se se timetšaxo mohlala wa setloxo le bophelo bya batho ke xo tšhaba leepo (nyefolo) Ka baka leo le balaodiši ba tša boxoloxolo ba rata xo anexa tše botse fela xomme tše di sa lokaxo ba hwa natšo".

(*Setloxo sa Batau*:1938, p.

(What makes people lose the trail of their origin and way of living, is to be afraid of being belittled (or looked down upon) In that way the narrators of old histories prefer to talk of that which is good only, and die with that which is bad.)

while Makgaleng writes:

"... moo tša gabo o mong di sa kgahlišego a se kwe bohloko, maikemišetšo ke go boloka setlogo sa gaborena Tsebang ga go setšhaba sefe se tsebjago, seo setlogo sa sona se latswitšwego ke hlware".

(*Batau ba a tšitlana*

(... where the history of someone's origin is not pleasant, he should not feel sore about it. The aim is to preserve the history of our origin Know that there is no race with an illustrious origin.)

3.1.2.4 What enhances the success of Ramaila's historical narrative is the able manner in which he has arranged his material and the eloquent exposition of his matter. Ramaila does not believe in giving his reader hard historical facts; but he always supports his facts with praise-poems that are relevant to what he is describing. The quotations from

these poems edify the reader and contribute to his understanding of the facts which are put across to him. *Setloro sa Batau* is thus an ably written historical account on "the people of the lion", the Batau.

Chapter IV

THE SHORT STORIES

Introduction

4.0.0.0 Man has an inborn craving for a short story. As far as it is known, people have always wanted stories of some sort; from the primitive myth and folktale, right up to the present day, there has never been a time when the vast majority of the people of all classes and traditions have not had an inexhaustible thirst to live in imagination in the lives of others and to be held in suspense as to "what happened next". And these are the marks of a story: it gives vicarious experiences and it holds our interest by adequately arousing our curiosity and satisfying it. This desire is universal (*Schreiber*:1965, p.120).

4.0.0.1 From the preliterate times, stories were told in the evenings by the fireside. Their content ranged from myths, fables, legends, to true stories on heroes, battles and a host of other topics and incidents. These stories were presented orally to their audiences and according to E.M. Forster (1949, p.28):

"the primitive audience was an audience of shock-heads, gaping round the camp-fire, fatigued with contending against the mammoth or the woolly rhinoceros, and only kept awake by suspense".

4.0.0.2 It was only in the last century that the short story emerged as a sophisticated written art form which probably reached its maturity in America through the

influence of Gogol's story "The Overcoat", Chekov's "Death of a civil servant", and also short stories by Turgenev, Maupassant, Joyce, Sherwood, Anderson and the Irish short story writer Frank O'Connor who asserts that there is always, in the short story, the sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society. He calls them the submerged population, by which we understand poor, eccentric or lonely people, who realise the final impossibility of adequately communicating with other people, and people who will always be incompatible with the groups to which they belong.

4.0.0.3 E.M. Forster approximates the length of a novel to above 50 000 words; so a short story can be approximated to range from 500 and above (*Molebowa:1974, p.17*). The writer of a short story is free to use any style that suits him for the purpose of that story, without losing sight of the fact that "the first essential in a short story is the power of interesting sentence by sentence" (*Galsworthy:1964, p.vii*).

Molomatsebe (1974)

4.1.0.0 When literally translated, Molomatsebe means "one who bites the ear". This volume of short stories contains 32 short stories, the last two of which were written posthumously by E.M. Ramaila's son, Henry Segome, on his father's instruction. The stories in *Molomatsebe* have a bearing on the vagaries of the modern life of the South African Black man. The author's main aim in all these stories, was to point out the evils which arose from their modern way of living, in the urban as well as in the rural areas - the areas

he knew very well because he had taught in their schools and ministered to their congregations in Lydenburg, Botšhabelo, Rustenburg and East-Rand (1915-1962). The warning which permeates the whole book is that "evil-doers suffer retribution, whilst those who do good are blessed". It is this warning which gives the book its moralising or didactic tone, and of this, Prof. P.S. Groenewald has this to say (*Limi*: 1975, p.52).

"Ramaila is prekerig en betrek die moreel-etiese maatstaf tematies in sy verhale: die 'kwaad' is lelik en verfoeilik."

4.1.0.1 The short stories in *Molomatsebe* can be classified as follows:

(a) Those that are based on superstitious beliefs:

- (i) Tšhelete ya sepoko (Ghost money).
- (ii) Ba laotše kobo ya morwediagwe (They divined her daughter's garment).

(b) Those that are based on intrigue and crime:

- (i) Oorlee Outa.
- (ii) Mofori (The cheat).
- (iii) Swarang mong wa kuane ye! (Arrest this hat's owner!)
- (iv) A re yeng motšhatong (Let us get to the wedding).
- (v) O se bone thola boreledi teng ga yona go a baba (It is not all gold that glitters).

- (vi) Mojatshweswane yabo o lefa ka noni yabo
(In for a penny, in for a pound).
- (vii) O ipolaile (He killed himself).
- (viii) Moruti wa Bohlabela (A pastor from the
East).
- (ix) Moloi ga a na mmala (A witch has no colour).

(c) Those that are based on religion:

- (i) Tshokologo ya Joel (Repentence of Joel).
- (ii) Letšoba le le ponnego (A withered flower).
- (iii) Reratilwe le Ruth wa Springs (Reratilwe
and Ruth of Springs).
- (iv) Moruti ke moruti kae le kae (A pastor is
a pastor everywhere).
- (v) Yo a ikgodišago o tla kokobetšwa (He who
prides himself will be humbled).

(d) Those that are based on urban life:

- (i) Ke fahlilwe (I have something in my eye).
- (ii) Swarang mong wa kuane ye (Arrest this
hat's owner).
- (iii) Wena o reng o sa hwa (Why did you not also
die).

(e) Those that are based on theft:

- (i) Mofori (The deceiver).
- (ii) Mahodu a tlo fahlwa ke barui e seng ka
boomo (Thieves will unwittingly be hurt by
those from whom they steal).

(iii) Lešoka! Mphe batho (S.O.S.).

(f) Those that are based on co-operation:

- (i) Di sa hlakanego ke dithaba (It is only mountains that do not meet).
- (ii) Ba baka mohu (They quarrel over a dead person).
- (iii) A timela (He got lost).
- (iv) Ba bašweu le ba baso ba reng ba sa hlatlolane (Why do the blacks and the whites not help one another in times of trouble).
- (v) Le nna ngwanaka o tla hwa (I also, will have my child dying).
- (vi) Lepolantane le thuša monna wa mosotho setimeleng (A Blantyre man helps a Sotho old man in the train).
- (vii) Mona (Jealousy).
- (viii) Go sa boelweng ke teng, maropeng go a boelwa (It is to the womb that one cannot return; but one can return to the ruins).

4.1.0.2 It should be borne in mind that this grouping of stories under the various headings is not watertight, as one story may, according to the nature of its contents, be grouped under more than one heading. For instance, in the story: "Swarang mong wa kuane ye", one is mindful of three things viz. (i) depiction of life in the urban areas, (ii) the criminal tendencies of youth in the urban areas, and (iii) the weaknesses of some parents in the upbringing of their children.

Sources of inspiration

4.1.0.3 True to his calling as a teacher and pastor, and because of his unbounded love for his people, Ramaila wrote to warn them against the pitfalls they could fall into in life. On the other hand, he encouraged them to strive for what was 'good' and beautiful and to shun that which was 'bad' and despicable.

4.1.0.4 In *Molomatsebe*, the author is Ramaila on the pulpit. He gives the Ten Commandments in a very original, practical and striking form. He is not the teacher, but the patriarch giving advice and warning through the medium of short stories, well-chosen proverbs and half-forgotten sayings. He never scolds nor threatens; but he encourages and extends his sincere love to his people lavishly.

4.1.0.5 The experiences he gained in the rural as well as in the urban areas in the dual capacity in which he served, enabled him to see the good character traits as well as the short-comings of his people. Consequently, when he wrote he wanted to bring a message to his people, and he wanted to contribute towards a solution of the various problems which confronted his people.

4.1.0.6 The origin of *Molomatsebe* is interesting. A chance reading of a Fort Hare University paper written by his son on *Setlogo sa Batau* gave him the idea of compiling the stories he had contributed to the various journals into a volume of short stories. And so *Molomatsebe* was born.

The themes covered by the short stories in *Molomatsebe*

4.1.0.7 Ramaila's ability as a short story writer is seen in his painting of humorous and memorable pictures on the vagaries of life. In this way, the reader is able to comprehend the kleptomania, the criminal disposition and the vicious jealousies of his characters because of the convincing manner in which their wayward and humane tendencies have been depicted. The following themes are handled in *Molomatsebe*.

Deceit

4.1.0.8 When generalising on the nature of some of his characters who perpetrate criminal deeds - even those who eventually land in trouble - it is quickly realised that the author's aim is to make the reader aware of the deceptive manner in which many people victimise their own fellow mortals:

"Mehla le mabaka di fetogile ka mokgwa wo o makatšago. Mo metseng ye megolo ya makgowa, batho ba ithutile maano a mantši a bofora, mme ba phela ka mefufutšo ya diphatla tša bangwe".

(*Ramaila:1974, p.10*)

(Times and conditions have changed in a very remarkable manner. In the big cities of the whites, people have taught themselves many plans of deceit, and they live on the sweat of other people's brows.)

4.1.0.9 Many cheats and criminals about whom he writes, are those that pose as venerable and kind-hearted people, people whom none can associate with evil and yet they

are the worst evil-doers. They are like wolves in sheep skins. They victimise people in that way.

4.1.1.0 Revenge, jealousy and vainglory are character traits which Ramaila despises in some of his stories. These traits are manifested in those who delight in disappointing others, those who delight in inflicting pain on others, those who delight in revenging themselves against others and those who look down on others. All these wayward character traits bring unpleasantness to humanity.

4.1.1.1 Ramaila warns the reader not to be afraid of the truth and thus shelter behind the words

"Hleng batho ba bangwe ba dira ka yona tsela ye!"
(How then do other people do exactly as I have done.)

This type of weakness is also found amongst those that are supposed to be Christians and yet are still tied down to superstition, witchcraft and their traditional way of life.

Chicanery and criminal practices

4.1.1.2 The stories which deal with chicanery and criminal practices have many points which indicate that in many instances, the criminals that prey on their victims are people who are well-known to them and perhaps even those who are their friends. These criminals employ the following tactics:

- (i) they pose as people who agree with their victims in thought and deed, and
- (ii) they come to their would-be victims as responsible and respectable beings, with the intention to harm them.

Christianity and repentance

4.1.1.3 Many Christians are hampered in their faith by superstitious beliefs and earthly pleasures, and even attempt to simulate some Biblical characters so as to be regarded as true witnesses of Christ.

Life in the urban areas

- 4.1.1.4 The short stories that deal with life in the urban areas reveal the following points to the reader:
- (i) vice that is brought about by frantic attempts to procure money,
 - (ii) kindness and atrocities that abound in cosmopolitan areas where many races that are antagonistic towards each other live together.
 - (iii) irregularities that are brought about by the lack of salubrious laws that are dedicated towards the maintenance of law and order.

Originality in Ramaila's short stories

4.1.1.5 Ramaila's short stories portray true incidents which he personally witnessed or was told of, so that his stories are governed by an element of realism (*Limi*:1975, pp.63-70). He merely projects his personality into them. Because of his narrative skill, he is able to remain in the background and present his story through the words and actions of his characters, as well as, through the plot.

4.1.1.6 Ramaila's intention in his short stories is not so much to convince the readers with historical facts but to amuse and teach. The characters he describes in his stories are real and true to life. This is because of his wide knowledge of his people as he reveals it in almost all the short stories e.g. in the story: "Go sa boelweng ke teng, maropeng go a boelwa" (*Molomatsebe*:1974 ed., pp.141-145) where his description of Mahlare's disposition towards his family remains true to life at all times. Ramaila's description of the actions of his characters, gives the reader true pictures which leave the reader with no chance of complaining about the character(s) being fantastic because "sy dade is so bowemenslik wonderlik dat die leser homself as 't ware in 'n fantasie wêreld inlees ..." (*Groenewald*:1975, p.12). Ramaila knew the short-comings, beliefs and superstitions of his people and his graphic description of milieu and character made him succeed as an accomplished Northern Sotho short story writer.

The construction of Ramaila's short stories

4.1.1.7 In all his short stories, Ramaila adhered to the three prerequisites of a short story, namely: characterisation, milieu and the plot. One of these essentials namely, the plot, usually preponderates over the others. Because of its bearing on the Northern Sotho manner of narration, the short story "Moloi ga a na mmala" will be discussed first. Reference to the other short stories will also be made.

4.1.1.8 In "Moloi ga a na mmala", Ramaila narrates two incidents which take place on one Saturday night between Brakpan and Springs. The first is reported by a certain Theodor Mokwena. On a Saturday night at about 20h00, as he was cycling from Brakpan to Springs, he met a group of men who surrounded him, beat him up and robbed him of his bicycle. He did not remember well what happened thereafter because when he regained consciousness, he found himself in the Far-East Rand Hospital where he was recovering from serious head and body injuries.

4.1.1.9 The second incident in this story is told by Simson Riba that on one Saturday night, as he was travelling from Springs to Brakpan, he met two men at the junction of the two roads: one leading from Springs to Brakpan and the other leading from the Far-East Rand Hospital to Nigel. One of these men was pushing a bicycle and they were talking to each other in Zulu. Just as he was about to pass them, they attacked him after the other had put down his bicycle.

4.1.2.0 It was a great error they had committed because

Simson Riba who had a sjambok in his hand and was an experienced fighter, gave them a thorough beating. After he had had the best of it, one of the assailants took to his heels and left his friend who was sprawling on the ground whilst Simson was belabouring him mercilessly with the sjambok. The assailant who had taken to his heels would not dare return to the battle field; but shouted in Sotho from a distance, that his helpless friend should stab Simson with a knife. Simson then realised that his assailants were Sotho, and not Zulu speaking men. For fear that the one who had broken loose might return and injure him from behind, Simson took their bicycle and left.

4.1.2.1 The story has the coincidence which is centered round a bicycle. Theodor Mokwena reports that he was robbed of his bicycle by vandals on Saturday night, whilst Simson Riba reports that he took the bicycle after outwitting two assailants with a thorough beating on the same Saturday night. Although Theodor Mokwena and his friend, Elias Mokgomo, have scars the cause of which is highly kept secret, the bicycle still remains an enigma.

The plot

4.1.2.2 In the short story "Moloi ga a na mmala", Ramaila actually narrates two independent stories on Theodor Mokwena and Simson Riba. The two stories converge on a bicycle. The co-ordinator of the two stories is the narrator who is not involved, and about him Groenewald (*Limi*:1975, p.56) writes:

"'n Verteller word as bindingsfaktor gebruik en hy is soos die Matsepe-verteller naamloos".

4.1.2.3 In the short story, "Tshelete ya sepoko" (Ghost money) (*Molomatsebe:1974, p.7*) for instance, Ramaila goes further to employ what Groenewald calls "tussen-gangers", namely, "morutabana" (teacher) and "kgošana" (chieftain). As in "Moloi ga a na mmala", the story "Tšhelete ya sepoko" also includes two narratives namely, the story on the visit of "morutabana" and "kgosana" to the coast where they were entertained lavishly by two tycoons, and the story of the ghost money.

4.1.2.4 Palaki Tsebe in his book, *Noto ya Masogana*, has a character named Lešala, who is drawn into the plot; but Tsebe's Lešala is a kind of lifeless figure that does not impress the reader, whereas "morutabana" is wise and alive. After he has met the two rich magnates at the coast and also after he had heard of the story of the ghost money, "morutabana" prepares the reader to identify the two rich men with the witch-doctor and the ghost.

4.1.2.5 The narrator in "Moloi ga a na mmala" - a semi-detective short story, stands closer to "Ntashenda" in Moloto's detective story: "Tšhipu e rile ke lebelo" (A springhare believed itself to be a fast runner) or the Matsepe's nameless narrator. This role of a narrator is a new feature which Ramaila introduced into the Northern Sotho prose fiction. And hence the employment of this feature by other authors e.g. "Natshenda" by Moloto, "Lešala" by Tsebe, "Albi" by Rammala and Matsepe's nameless narrator as in *Megokgo ya Bjoko* (Tears of the brain) of which Groenewald (*Limi:1975, p.57*) remarks:

"*Megokgo ya Bjoko* is 'n braverstuk waarin die skrywer van 'n verteller vertel wat vertel; die verteller is naamloos ...".

4.1.2.6 One other striking feature of Ramaila's plot is that it is evidence of a master-mind having been at work. It has an easy flow from the beginning to the end without any chance of ever boring the reader. Ramaila is also a meticulous writer. This character trait of the author is reflected in one of his letters to his son, Henry, who was by then persuing his studies at the Colombia University in America. The letter is dated 30th December, 1954, and has as two of its concluding sentences:

"Ke ngwala ka lebone e le bošego ka mo kerekeng.
Ka baka leo ke a kgopamiša ...".
(I am writing by candle light in the evening inside
the church. As a result my lines are not straight)

From the above two sentences, one point is clear to the reader and that is, Ramaila's belief in doing things with all meticulous precision.

4.1.2.7 Ramaila has a simple and spontaneous manner of narration. Reading only a few lines creates suspense in the reader and settles the reader as to the tone of the story. Then follows the plausible development towards a climax after which the suspense is unwoven gradually into a logical and effective conclusion which is pregnant with a moral lesson. The type of conclusion which does not leave the reader in doubt as to how the story started, developed and ended.

4.1.2.8 Another advantage which Ramaila has in his short stories, is his thorough knowledge of the places which appear in his short stories - be they in the towns and

cities or in the rural areas of the eastern, central and western Transvaal. This can be illustrated by his description of the mountains and rivers of the Eastern-Transvaal in the story: "A timela" (*Ramaila:1974, pp.37-41*), when he had to travel to the dedication of the Lutheran Church at Frankfort; or his description of the places around the Magaliesberg in the story "Oorlee Outa" (*Ramaila:1974, pp.42-48*) where a gang of robbers from Rustenburg looted innocent travellers who crossed the Skoonkloof valley at night; or his description of the routes between East-Rand and Derdepoort (Pretoria) in the story "Ba baka mohu" (they quarrel over a corpse) (*Taukobong: 1968, pp.87-91*). All those who know the places which are described by Ramaila in his short stories, applaud the precise manner in which these scenes have been painted:

"Lona (Skoonkloof) ke lengope le le elago meetse mohla wa dipula fela bjalo ka mangope a mangwe ka moka. Seka se šele mo go lona ke botelele, gobane le thoma dithabaneng tša ka thoko e nngwe, le putla tsela e kgolo, la be la fihla tlas'a thaba ya Magaliesberg, mo le kopanang le metswedinyana e mengwe, ya ba gona e bago nokana ye e elelago tlase Commissie Drift. Ge motho a ka ema kgojana le lengope le la Skoonkloof, a lebelela koloi ya dipholo a le ka nthago ga yona, a ka bona go sobelela dipholo ka moka, go bile go sobelela le koloi go re tse!, dipholo tša pele di sešo tša rotoga. Seo se laetša bophara le boteng bja lengope le le bilego le medile mehlare ka godimo le ka tlase, le bilego le boifiša le ge e le mosegare".

(*Molomatsebe:1974, p.44*)

(It (Skoonkloof) is a donga in which water flows when it rains just like other dongas. A strange sign about it is its length, because it starts from the small mountains on the one side, crosses the main road, and even reaches up to the foot of the Magaliesberg mountains, where it meets with some streamlets, and then becomes a rivulet which flows down to Commissie

Drift. When one can stand further away from this Skoonkloof donga, and look from behind at a team of oxen and an ox-waggon, one will see all the oxen and the ox-waggon disappearing in it before the fore oxen reappear. This indicates the width and the depth of this donga which has an overgrowth of trees above and below it, and is scaring even during the day.)

Characterisation

4.1.2.9 Ramaila's concern in all his short stories is to impart a lesson to the readers. The moral lessons are not thrust onto the readers, but they are part of the story. At no time do the readers ever get bored by the didacticism of his short stories as it is infused into them. The stories are true because in them are recorded true incidents that occurred to living people. Ramaila does not delve into character depiction, although he sometimes excels in the description of the stature, the inclinations or behaviour patterns, and the facial appearances of his characters. The following is how he ably describes an ugly woman who incidentally also had ugly convictions. In the story "Le nna ngwanaka o tla hwa" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.23), which is an ugly threat given by a barren ugly woman called "Satsope". She implied that she would also have a funeral of one of her children, when she would also slaughter a sheep and would retaliate by not offering those that had not offered her mutton on the occasion of their children's funerals. Ramaila (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.24) describes this woman as follows:

"Eka bofetwa o be a bo goketšwe ke bokobo bja gagwe,
gobane le leina la gagwe, batswadi ba ile ba mo neela

lona ka gobane a se botse. Ba be ba leka go ikhomotša ge ba re: 'sa tsopa ke go tšwela', ba era gore motho ge a filwe ngwana wa sekobo, o phala yo a hlokilego ngwana. Ka baka leo o ile a bitšwa ka la Satsope. Ba ka ntle, ka go mo kwera, ba be ba mmitša Mmankoditlhano, mme le lona la be la mo gomarela ka ge dinko tša gagwe di ahlamile, di penaletše mo moropong wa phaphathi. (It would appear her spinstership was brought about by her ugliness because even her name was given her by her parents as she was not pretty. They were trying to console themselves when they said: 'what is made of clay should be evident', meaning that when one has begotten an ugly child, one is better than the one without. For that reason, she was named Satsope (i.e. of clay). The outsiders, when mocking at her, called her 'one with five noses', and even that name stuck to her because of her widely-opened nostrils which rose at the end after a flat bridge.)

4.1.3.0 Ramaila ego-identifies himself more with that which is 'good' and noble, than that which is 'bad' and despicable. Consequently his pen is more eloquent when he describes ugly people than when he describes a beautiful person. He is able to give ludicrous pictures of ugly people, but does not succeed in giving the reader full descriptions of beautiful people, for example, in the story "O ipolaile" *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.146), Ramaila gives a further description of ugliness as follows:

"Jacob Legukubu le yena e be e le sogana la go befa. Bokobo bja pele e be e le yo mosomoso, wa tlalo la makgwakgwa. Gape nko ya gagwe e be e le ye kgolo ya sephara. Mohlopa wa go befa ga gagwe e be e le mahlwana a manyennyane. Aowa ruri, motho wa batho o be a nakile go hloka mahlo, e no ba dithobana. E bago ge a re o a sega gona, a budulale e be fsii fsii".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.146)

(Jacob Legukubu was himself also an ugly young man. His first ugliness lay in his being pitch black, with a rough skin. Again his nose was big and flat. The greatness

of his ugliness lay in his tiny eyes. No, indeed, the poor person nearly had no eyes but merely small openings. And when he tried to laugh, then he would shut his eyes, so that he sees nothing whatsoever.)

4.1.3.1 In the very same story, Ramaila describes a beautiful woman as follows:

"... Bjale godimo ga seo, kgodišo e kgolo, le go bogega mo gogolo, e be e le ka gobane mosetsana yo, Mmapeu, e be e le yo mobotsebotse, le gona a eme ka dinao, a tsarogile phoka, a bile a na le mmele, gape e le yo mosehlasehla wa legala. A ngwana wa tsoro!"

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.147)

(... now in addition to that, what satisfies greatly, and what was admired most, was because she was very beautiful, and tall, clever and even stout and light in complexion. What a trim girl!)

At no time does Ramaila indicate what is beautiful about this lady apart from her light complexion. The reader has simply to accept the fact that she was very beautiful. In his book, *Taukobong* (1968, p.50), Ramaila gives a slightly detailed description of a rare beauty as follows:

"Mmapekwe e be e le mosetsana wa sebopego se sebotse wa mmala wo mošweu. Nko ya gagwe e be e le ya mohuta wo o sa atago gare ga Babaso gobane moropo wa yona o be o tsoga makgatheng a mahlo ka go rotoga, kgabagare o bea lehutla, mme mafelelo o theoga ka go lepelela molomong. Nko ye e be e swana le molomo wa nonyana ye e jago dinama".

(Mmapekwe was a girl with a beautiful figure and was light in complexion. Her nose was of a rare kind amongst the blacks because the bridge thereof rose from between the eyes and the nose, and in the middle made a sort of a hump, and finally descended to overlook the mouth. This nose was like a beak of a carnivorous bird.)

Here, in addition to the light complexion, Ramaila has added to the description, a rare nose similar to the beak of a flesh-eating bird and, incidentally, this lady was carnivorous in that every man that attempted to marry her, died just before they could marry.

4.1.3.2 It would, however, be incorrect to generalise that the Northern Sotho writers cannot describe beautiful women. The younger authors like Motuku, Moloto, Mamadi, Machaka - to mention a few, describe beautiful women expressively as follows:

"... Mosima kgarebe,
Maramana borejane, tlalo boletjana
Nkwana mpharana, mahlwana ntšhokele,
Menošwaana pekenya bjalo ka legakabje".

(S. Mamadi: *Mekgolokwane*:1962, p.31)

(... Mosima young woman, with
Lovely smooth cheeks, lovely soft skin
lovely flat nose, lovely sympathetic eyes,
lovely white teeth that shine like pearls.)

or

"Lerole e be e le mosetsana yo botse kudu, wa mmalana wo mošwaana, wa meno a botšikitlane le mmele wa go betlega: ngwana wa ledumedišego. Godimo ga tšeo ka moka, e be e le seithati. O be a re ge a apere, wa hwetša diapararo di aperwe ke motho. Ge a re ke a sepela, gona, fo homola o re tuu! Nku e rekwa mosela".

(Motuku: *Morweš'i*:1966, p.19)

(Lerole was a very beautiful girl with beautiful white teeth and a beautiful figure. She was a very attractive girl. Besides all these, she was a dandy. When she had put on her dresses dandily, you would find her a trim person. When she walked, alas! Her buttocks would be the source of attraction.)

or

"Ke kgarebe e tshehlana ya go ema ka maoto. Moriri wa gagwe o moso, o swanelana kudu le dintšhi tša gagwe tše o ka rego ke tša maitirelo. O na le nkwana ya ntlhana, le mahlwana a maswana a bogajana. Ditsebe tše kgolo tša go ema, gomme di nyalana gabotse le sefahlogo sa gagwe sa go ela. Molomo ke o monyane wa go itshoka, gomme o na le tšhenamare menong a ka pele a ka godimo, ka go la ntsogotlo. Mohlomong leino leo le tšwile ka go bolaya, goba le ntšhitšwe ka boomo, bjalo ka ge le tseba mekgwa ya go ikgabiša ya makgarebe e sa fele. Mmeleng gona e dio ba mobu, gomme mesepelo e dio ba go elela. Ba re le dikgogo di be di mmoga ka go kekela ge a feta. E be e le kgarebe ya go tswalwa ke badimo le batho Ka boripana, re ka fo re: o filwe, ngwana wa batho."

(Moloto: *Tšhipu e rīle ke lebelo*:1962, p.11)

(It is a tall young woman, light in complexion. Her dark hair matches with the eye-brows which appear as if they are artificial. She has a lovely thin nose and lovely sharp eyes. Her big long ears match well with her smooth calm face. Her mouth is small and has a little slant, together with an aperture in the upper incisors on the left. Perhaps the tooth was extracted because it was aching, or it was purposely removed, as you know how diverse young women's decorative pranks are. Her figure is like that of a wasp and her gait, elegant. It is said that even hens admired her beauty by cackling when she went past. It is a young woman born of gods and people In short, it could just be said, she is gifted (in beauty), poor girl.)

or

"Botsana bjola bja gagwe bja ge e sa le lese, bo be bo boile, bjale bo kganya boka letšoba. E le natšhweu ya dithama tša mapupurese, ngwan'a dikoti marameng. Ngwan'a meno a gagwe ao nkego a be a betlwa ke badimotsela ba Matlaileng. O be a na le mohlaga wa koto, a re ge a sega, e ke o tshwa gauta. Nko ya gagwe yona, homola o re tuu! e be e na le mokgokwana e ke ke molomo wa lešee. Botse bja Sele bo be bo pipa molomo. Gomme le yena ka

ge e be e le tsoro, nke o a bo kgantšha. O hwetše a hlapile mothepa, a iphorosotše, ntšhi e tšhaba le go mo kgoma."

(Motuku: *Leratorato*:1970, p.7)

(Her infant beauty had returned and it was now beaming like a flower. She now had a light complexion, smooth round cheeks, with dimples on them. A girl with beautiful teeth which appeared as if they were carved by the fairies of Matlaileng. She had beautiful jaws and when she laughed, it was as if she was spitting gold. As for her nose don't speak. It had a bend which was like the beak of a bird. Sele's beauty was beyond description. And because she was herself a dandy, she seemed to be bragging of her beauty. Find her having trimmed and perfumed herself, flies also become afraid of sitting on her.)

or

"Badimo ge ba mmetla ba be ba iketlile;
Ba mo nathiša a phala le moredingwana,
Letsogo la Modimo la fela le ba phošolla.
Le ge e le yo moswana, o phala senakangwedi
Botse bja 'gwe bo lelemile bo ntšhitše leepo;
O tšhabile mabu o ka re ke hlame ya legola"

(Machaka: *Naledi*:1967, p.31)

(The gods took their time when they made her;
They made her smoother than a fairy.
God's hand kept on correcting them.
Though dark in complexion, she out-classes a glow worm in beauty.
Her abounding beauty has cleared all scandal;
She is as tall as the secretary bird of the grassy plains.)

4.1.3.3 In all the above quoted excerpts from various authors, one is not only able to comprehend and appreciate the beauty that is being described, but also able to put his finger on the various aspects of the beauty that appealed to the author. It should, however, not be forgotten that according to the Northern Sotho cultural belief, the

beauty of a woman lay in her ability to beget children and also her ability to perform the duties of her own household efficiently. Hence the proverb: "mosadi ke tšhwene o lewa matsogo" (A woman is a baboon, she is eaten the hands). Bodily beauty or ugliness were irrelevant to the indigenous Northern Sotho marital system: young men and young women married their cousins irrespective of the presence or absence of facial beauty.

4.1.3.4 Ramaila excels in depicting the bravery and physical prowess of his characters. In the story, "Tšhelete ya sepoko", for example, he describes the bravery of the Mamabolo man, a nameless character, as follows:

"... Bjale yo mongwe wa bona, mogale wa Mamabolo, a beta pelo a boela sepoko sela. Erile ge se buduloga ka mola mašeleng, a se leka ka thoka. Aga-ga-ga! A betha senna, a be a boeletša. Ge a leka la boraro, a kwa a betha phata le dikgorogoro.

Banna ba bangwe bale ba bararo, ge ba bona yo a namile a tsošitše ntwā, le bona ba boa ba thika sepoko sela ka mešo e go fela. Monna yola wa Mamabolo a batamela gape, a se betha a be a kwa go golola motho. Bona ba ne go fšeganyana le ge ba se thikile.

Monna yola wa Mamabolo yena o gafile bophelo bja gagwe. Ga a fšege, ga a raloke, o namile o dio se betha a sa se fe sebaka Mošimane wa sekolobeng ge a ekwa se lla ka mokgwa wo, a nama a se betha ruri, sa be sa wela fase sa homola".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.8)

(Then one of them, the brave Mamabolo man, plucked up courage and returned to the ghost. When it waxed big in the rags it had round its body, he tried it with a knobkierie. Alas! He struck manly and even repeated. On his third attempt, he heard himself striking a staff and tins.

When the other three men saw this man seriously engaged

in fighting, they also returned and helped him in giving the ghost a thorough beating.

The Mamabolo man neared the ghost once more. He struck and even heard a person bewailing. The other men were a bit timid although they were helping one another in the fight. The Mamabolo man had sacrificed his own life. He was not afraid, he meant business. He thrashed unrelentlessly and gave it no chance When the Mamabolo boy heard it crying in that fashion, he thrashed it hard until it fell down quiet.)

- 4.1.3.5 In the story, "Moloi ga a na mmala", Ramaila describes the strong and brave Simson as follows:

"Yena ke monna yo motelele, yo mokoto, wa maatla

Molala, magetla, diphaka ke mabadibadi a a bonatšago gore ke monna yo a tlwaelanego le dintwa"

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.19-20), "go iša pele o re erile mo a rego o a fapanya, yo mongwe wa banna bale a lahla paesekele fase, ba mo kgorogela ka babedi. Oho! Ba tšhela noga ka mabu. Ge ba re gadia, ke ge ba šetše ba wetše fase ka babedi, Simson a ba latswa ka kubu kgafetša-kgafetša."

(He is himself a tall, hefty, strong man

The neck, shoulders and the upper arms are full of scars which indicate that he was a man who was fond of fighting ... furthermore he says that as he was passing, one of those men threw down his bicycle, and they both attacked him. Alas! They had pressed a wrong button. When they regained consciousness, they had both fallen down and Simson was belabouring them time and again with a sjambok with all gusto.)

- 4.1.3.6 Another interesting aspect of Ramaila's short stories is his ability to use suitable language which identifies his various characters e.g. in the story "Lepolantane le thuša mokgalabje wa mosotho ka setimeleng" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.127), the tsotsis use their cryptic language: 'Ara Sani le dopi! Ara!' (Watch boy that old man)

or 'Ag, jou domkop, jy moes my nog bietjie geslaat het. Ek het nog nie die goed gekry nie'. It is when reading such words that one begins to realise that one is confronted with people who speak their own self-made language, and in this case the tsotsi language. Further on in the very same story, the Blantyre man uses a strange tongue and challenges the tsotsis by saying: 'Wena, yeka lo khehla (p.129) (you, leave that old man alone) ... and threatening the tsotsis by pointing a gun at them, he says 'Umama wakhu lo?' (Is this your mother?). The tsotsis in great consternation and submissiveness remark: 'Oo! Uthembile!' (Oh, you rely on that!). In this way the tsotsis were intercepted in their attempts to rob an old man of the bunch of paper money they saw him putting into his pockets after he had taken out money to pay for his rail fare.

4.1.3.7 In the story "Swarang mong wa kuane ye!" (*Molomatsebe*: 1974, p.95) words such as 'kepa' (speak), 'sivalekile, sivule!' (we are penniless, give us money) occur, and all these words are used by the tsotsi element alone. Whereas the tsotsis can speak an admixture of languages which is understood by them only, the man from Nyasaland (Malawi), the Blantyre, remains consistent with his 'fanakalo' - a typical language lying between Tsonga and Nguni, and spoken by all Malawians in the Republic of South Africa.

4.1.3.8 Again, in the story "Mojatshweswane yabo motho, o lefa ka noni yabo" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.56), Ramaila characterises the amaNdebele with their proverb "Umhlaba awukhulumu kukhuluma umuntu" (The ground does not speak, only a person speaks), and the Makgamatha clan of Botlokwa near Zoekmekaar, with their Tlokwa characteristic

dialect in the words: 'dibetoni' (where people carve), 'Maubeni!' (to the Bauba* people), and 'Leitho' (an eye) - all of which add humour to the Northern Sotho readers whose dialect is not necessarily Tlokwa. This type of identification of a character through his language is also found in the book, *Taukobong* (1968, p.58) where Nkanyesi's plight is characterised in Zulu as follows: "Unkanyesi, uzakukhala izinyembezi" (Nkanyesi will shed tears) and his daughter's sadness in her own words: "abanye bazakusala benoyise lapho mina ubaba engasekho (p.59) (Some will remain having a father, whilst I will be having none).

4.1.3.9 So, in this portrayal of character, by letting him speak in his own particular or characteristic way, Ramaila succeeds in making his characters, though briefly sketched, memorable to the reader. Their reactions to the particular situations which confront them lend colour to his short stories so that the reader is in no way bored by the dull sequence of facts - and about this Prof. Groenewald (U.P.: 1975, p.13) says:

"Die verteller is natuurlik 'n noodsaaklike komponent van so 'n taalgebruik situasie, en sy persoonlikheid, sy houding teenoor die sake onder bespreking, sy houding jeëns die gespreksgenote, sy bedoeling met die aanwending van taal, dit alles kleur sy styl, die wyse waarop hy onder die besondere omstandighede die woord hanteer".

* The people who stay South of the Olifants river in the Transvaal are referred to as Mauba.

Taukobong (1968 edition)

4.2.0.0 *Taukobong* is another collection of Ramaila's short stories. Literally translated, the title of this book means "the lion under a blanket". Most of the stories in Ramaila's second volume of short stories are shrouded in mysticism and are insoluble. They can rightly be termed "the insoluble mysteries of Bantu life". They reveal Ramaila's propensities as a sleuth; propensities which are also found in some of his stories in *Molomatsebe* (1974 edition) in stories like "Moloi ga a na mmala" (p.18).

4.2.0.1 Being a deeply religious man, Ramaila had a message to impart. The message is that where man failed to administer justice, there was a super-human power that would always want to see justice done, and that super-human power is God or ancestral spirits. To support this fact let us consider the story entitled "Mo batho ba hlaeditšego kahlolo, e phethega ka noši" (*Taukobong*:1968, p.35) (where people lack judgment, it comes of its own accord). It is a story in which Ramaila employs a nameless character, "mošimane wa ba Rampane" (a Rampane young man). One late afternoon, this young man was footing from town (Pretoria) to Bantulia location with other workers who were also returning home after work. On his way home, he found four strange young men waiting for him. These young men quarrelled with him, fought him and eventually killed him for no tangible reason. The murderers were consequently arrested but, owing to lack of sufficient evidence, only one of the alleged murderers was convicted and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. The accomplices were cautioned and discharged. But Ramaila does not approve of such solution of

human problems. To him the above solution was incorrect because some time after the return of the murderer who had been sentenced to one year in jail, the young man who had attacked the deceased with a knife, fell ill and at the end of the third month died. The two young men who had also attacked the deceased with iron bars died in succession - one after six months of an unknown illness and the other, after a twelve months' illness. The murderer who served a year's prison sentence, fell ill for a period of two years, after which period, he recovered. The illness had so much sapped his vitality, that it left him invalidated for the rest of his life. This was the justice which the supernatural forces inflicted beyond human understanding and which is in accordance with Ramaila's law of retribution: "Modimo ka noši o hlokofatša ba kgopo" (God himself punishes the wicked).

4.2.0.3 On the same topical arrangement are stories like: "O rerešitše" (you have spoken the truth) (*Taukobong*: 1968, p.10), where Maphuthe accosted Raditshweu because Raditšhweu was not happy at Maphuthe's intention to marry his widowed sister-in-law. Raditšhweu subsequently fell ill for a short time and died. His children who were at that time left orphans, went to remind Maphuthe of his threat to their father - "Ge o sa ntsebe o tla mpona gabotse" (If you do not know me, you will see me properly). On hearing Raditšhweu's children accusing him saying "O rerešitše" (You have said the truth), he scolded them. After a few days Maphuthe fell ill and died. Other stories of the same pattern are "Tša Maweng" (*Taukobong*: 1968, p.7) and "Ga bo a bona" (he has not been aware) (*Taukobong*:1968, p.67).

4.2.0.4 In some stories, Ramaila introduces another version of the cultural life of the Bantu. It is embedded in the saying "Molomomoso wa monna ga o bolele se aketšago, sa wona ke go iša kgole" (A man's black mouth does not tell untruths, its utterances are far-reaching) (*Tsakata*:1962 edition, p.2). When looked at from the religious point of view, one could say, whatever evil foreboding one is cursed with generally takes effect. Many of the second group of stories in *Taukobong* centre around the devastation caused by lightning after threats such as "Ba tla mpona gabotse" (they will see me properly) as in the story "Ngakane" (*Taukobong*:1968, p.28); "Lehlabula le etla, o tla mpona gabotse" (Summer is coming, you will see me properly) in the story "Ba bakile namane" (They quarrelled over a calf) (*Taukobong*:1968, p.23); "Lešira le diaparo tša lenyalo Ntina a ka se ke a di apara, di tla swela ka ngwakong di sešo tša fihla mmeleng wa motho" (The veil and the wedding gowns Ntina will not put on, they will burn in the house before anybody puts them on), from the story "Phakamaseme" (*Taukobong*: 1968, p.32); and "Ga se legadima ke Ditshego" (*Taukobong*: 1968, p.2) (It is not lightning but Ditshego).

4.2.0.5 In *Taukobong*, very much like in *Molomatsebe*, some stories are based on proverbs such as "Go gola go hlogola, go bona digolo ga go fele" (No.I); "Foko la mohu ga le tshelwe" (No.IX) (The dead man's instructions are not transgressed); "Mošimane moroga monna, sešego o loga hlwaela (No.X) (A boy that scolds at elderly men never succeeds in life) and "Di sa tsebanego di a welana" (No.XI) (Those that do not know each other, attack each other ferociously) - and all these stories carry a didactic message revealed by the incidents described in them. For example, in the story "Foko la mohu ga

le tshelwe" (No.IX), Job Komanyane who had fallen ill after his last visit to his place of birth during one Christmas day, instructed his wife from his death-bed never to agree to his corpse being taken to his home for burial. Indeed, after his death, his younger brothers defied what their sister-in-law told them when they demanded the removal of their brother's corpse to their home, and this resulted in the mishaps of lorries breaking down when they attempted carrying the corpse away and ultimately one of the brothers dying in the ensuing accidents. Had they listened to their elder brother's instructions through his wife, they would not have fallen victim to the hardships mentioned above.

4.2.0.6 There are also stories based on mere statements e.g. "Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa" (*Taukobong*:1968, p.49) (If you are not married by me, you will remain unmarried), where a lady called 'Mmapekwe' fell in love with a Zulu young man from Durban. She kept on fleecing him of his money to buy furniture and clothing, whilst at the same time dodging any attempt at negotiation of marriage. The Zulu boy finally told her that if she failed to marry him, she would not marry any other man. Some time after she had got this threat, she decided to disappear from Johannesburg. She left for home with all the goods the Zulu young man had bought for her. While she was at home, any young man who tried to marry her, died on the eve of their wedding, until she ultimately remained a spinster. The Zulu boy's threat proved true. To all these queer incidents in *Taukobong*, the incidents to some of which Ramaila had been an eye-witness, a big question is posed: "Bathong! Taukobong ye ya Maafrica ke eng?" (People! What is all this mysticism amongst the Africans?).

4.2.0.7 The above question asked by the author regarding the episodes in *Taukobong*, underlines the insoluble mysteries of Bantu life. Many stories are based on the Bantu cultural beliefs. A threat such as "O tla di bona" (You will see things) in Bantu, is not just an empty threat. It is a curse uttered by a victim of a maltreatment of some kind. According to Bantu tradition, it means that the wrongdoer will be punished or suffer severely as a result of his misdeeds. There were renowned medicine men who would make the wrongdoer suffer by using their efficacious charms against him. So that the threats of some of Ramaila's characters in *Taukobong*, are in keeping with the Bantu cultural belief 'tit for tat' or 'an eye for an eye'. Hence each threat has its tragic follow up.

Aspects of culture

4.2.0.8 Ramaila commands a deep knowledge of his people and is well versed in their socio-cultural usages. His short stories in *Molomatsebe* and *Taukobong* depict a wealth of cultural beliefs and usages. This point can be illustrated with the story "Mojatshweswane yabo motho o lefa ka noni yabo" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.56). The reader learns in this story that it was taboo for Bantu travellers to rest and eat their food near a river before they could cross it. Should they do so, it would be an offence against the ancestral spirits. Some ill-luck of some kind would befall them, for example, being attacked or annihilated by an enemy. According to custom, even when the travellers were tired, they would cross the river, wash their feet and drink the water from the other bank of the river, and

finally look around for a good shade where they would enjoy their provision and then rest. By so doing, they would find themselves comforted by the fact that at least one section of their trip was accomplished.

4.2.0.9 In the same story, the Tlokwa people send the Masemola people not only the Makgamatha's son-in-law to claim the cattle of which he was robbed by one Masemola tribesman on their way back home from Potchefstroom and Kimberley respectively, but also two other Makgamatha tribesmen plus a "mokgomana" (a lord) of the Makgamatha royal kraal. In this way the Masemola people would not have refused them audience as they were with one from the royal kraal. Otherwise it would have meant that the Tlokwa people were despised and war would have ensued.

4.2.1.0 Again in this story, Ramaila gives the reader an insight into the African tribal jurisprudence. The manner in which the Tlokwa visitors were received and the way their case was tried and resolved in the presence of the Masemola people's chief, gives the reader a wholesome picture of the Bantu tribal administration of justice. It was unnecessary for the chief to have gone to the tribal kgotla as he is the acknowledged supreme head of the tribe and gives the final verdict to all cases; but in this particular case, he was over-punctilious because the Tlokwa deputation had in its company, a man from the royal kraal who deputised for their chief. The Masemola disciplinarian chief passed a severe sentence on his own tribal culprits by making them pay heads of cattle to the Tlokwa complainants and to the Masemola tribal kgotla.

4.2.1.1 Ramaila also describes another traditional usage of the Africans in the story "Le nna ngwanake o tla hwa!" (*Molomatsebe:1974, p.23*). And, that is, the washing of hands when returning from the cemetery after a funeral. According to the cultural belief of the Africans, death results from witchcraft. In the olden days, there was a practice of witch-catching. As soon as death had occurred, the bereaved family would visit a witch-doctor to find out who had bewitched the deceased. The witch-doctor's next duty was to prepare such charms as would catch or reveal the witch or wizard. These charms were usually put into a water container from which everyone was to wash his hands on returning from the funeral. As they washed their hands, they would actually mutter words indicating that they were not responsible for the death of the deceased. The culprit would be apprehended accordingly. Ramaila, however, wonders why this practice should still continue even during these Christian days. In reaction to this, one can say that it is meant for those who were busy at the cemetery. They are bound to wash their hands because thereafter food is generally served. They can, therefore, not eat the food with dirty and dusty hands. The element of witch-hunting has ceased; but the practice of the washing of hands still remains because it is hygienically proper.

4.2.1.2 In the same story (*Molomatsebe:1974, p.23*), Ramaila mentions another traditional usage of the Africans. It is the slaughtering for a funeral. Before the arrival of the white people into our country, coffins were unknown. So, when an elderly African died, a beast was slaughtered because the hide was used as a coffin and all the mourners were to eat the beef. When the deceased was an infant, then a goat was

slaughtered and its skin used as a coffin. Although coffins are used at present, slaughtering for a funeral has not stopped because the mourners cannot, or dare not be starved for the whole day. Hence the meat for a funeral occasion is obtained through the slaughter of either a beast or a sheep/goat depending on the age of the deceased. In some African tribes, some of the blood of the slaughtered animal is used as an offering to the gods to placate them. Ramaila's short stories are indeed a storehouse of culture.

Chapter V

HUMOUR IN RAMAILA'S WORKS

5.0.0.0 Another important aspect of Ramaila's works is the skilful use of humour by means of which he is able to captivate the interest of his readers.

5.0.0.1 Many thoughts have been expressed by various scholars on what humour really is, and all seem to agree with the summary given by the Chamber's Encyclopaedia that "... all that can be said is that 'wit' depends on a skilful use of the incidental properties of words and syntax and reveals its hidden implication suddenly, whereas 'humour' relies very largely on situations laughable in themselves ...". In *Limi* (June 1970, p.47), Mokgokong gives the definition of humour as "... the sense within us which sets up a kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life, and the expression of that sense in art ..." and adds also that "... the word humour thus means either something within ourselves, as when we speak of 'a man of humour', or something objective as in speaking of a comedy as 'full of humour'. In his *Anthology of Wit* (1948, p.viii), Guy Boas sums up his discourse on wit and humour as follows: "... hence humour has come to be applied to any freakishness, absurdity, whimsicality of character, conduct, or situation which causes laughter ... 'Humour', in other words, is the funny situation or object 'Wit' is the fun which a particular mind subjectively perceives in the situation or object". The Consolidated Encyclopaedia defines humour in literature as "that quality of a composition which tends to excite mirth". Mirth is aroused primarily by that which surprises us, which is to a

greater or less extent incongruous and therefore unexpected. For instance, there would be no humour in Dicken's description of the forlorn breakfast of the pupils of Dotheboy's Hall if he had likened Mrs Squeer's porridge to saw-dust and water. But when he says that it looked like diluted pin-cushions without the covers, the figure surprises us and makes us smile. The element of laughter pervades all above definitions of humour and Mokgokong quoted above further writes: "... but the test of true humour is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter, and must be founded on humanity and truth". The Concise Oxford Dictionary differentiates between 'wit' and 'humour' as follows: 'Humour' is the power of saying things so as to cause laughter; whereas 'wit' is the power of joining ideas in an unusual or humorous way.

5.0.0.2 To wind up this exposition on 'wit' and 'humour', reference will be made to the Consolidated Encyclopaedia which states that wit appeals to the intellect; whereas humour includes all forms that excite mirth and appeal to the feelings, the emotions and to the sympathies. Wit lies in words; either in the expression of some point of similarity between ideas hitherto unrelated or in the discovery that some word bears a double significance to the subject in hand. Josh Billings' statement "it is better to know less than to know so much that ain't so", is wit. As wit depends largely upon the significance of words, it is possible to learn to observe double meanings and unusual applications so as to acquire a habit of witty expressions. Humour pervades a composition and affects its every part as salt savours food. A man is born with humour or never has it.

5.0.0.3 Humour may be found amongst all people of all times.

In this way, it may assume a national character to the extent that we may speak of Dutch humour, French humour, American humour and so on. The cultural differences of the various national entities may make it difficult for one national group to appreciate the humour of another group. In Zulu, the word 'mfengwane' means a whistle made of a reed or a bone. A Zulu young man fell in love with a Sotho girl. The Sotho young woman was so much in love with the Zulu boy-friend that she pleaded: 'Nfe ngwana!' (please make me beget a child). The Zulu young man retorted 'Ndiyishiyile ebadjini lam i ekhaya!' (I have left it in my jacket at home). The girl was talking of a 'child', whilst the boy was talking of a 'whistle'.

5.0.0.4 Even in the same national group, individual differences such as personality make-up, intelligence and educational standard may enable one man to perceive a joke quickly, while another man may enjoy a laugh many hours later. In the same way, many primitive people might find amusement in occurrences which would be repulsive sights to the more refined sensibilities of a civilised age. To a child, a man with a wooden leg, a boy with a hump upon his back, the foolish, the drunken, the insane are laughable sights. The incongruity of these figures with his preconceived notions of human conduct excite his mirth. When he has learned that misery accompanies such conditions, they cease to be funny.

5.0.0.5 In its higher and more delicate forms, humour is closely akin to pathos. The writer who can successfully give a humorous touch to something which has stirred our sympathies or a pathetic turn in the midst of a laugh, is the

one who pleases us best. After giving a pleasant description of a gifted and highly intelligent girl called Miriam Molefe, Ramaila (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.116), gives a turn in her fortunes when she started living a reckless life which led to her downfall. He gives a humorous, yet pathetic description of her at the end of the episode in the following words:

"Motho wa batho ga se a tšofala, e sa le yo mofsa, eupša o onetše".
 (Poor person, she is not old, she is still a young woman, yet she is worn out.)

The words 'tšofala' (old) and 'onetše' (worn out) build up this pathetic humour in that Miriam Molefe is not 'old' in years; but is 'worn out' in youth, that is, 'old in youth'. How often has one not come across young men and young women who, because of their reckless way of living, become old though young. In her book entitled *A Christmas present for a lady*, Myra Kelley draws a comical picture of a little boy who, lacking means for another gift, brings his teacher the receipt for a month's rent of an humble tenement. Then with a swift and delicate touch, she makes the readers see that the bit of soiled paper meant home to father, mother and child. The sensitive reader is thus compelled to laugh and cry at the same time. In Kate Wiggings' *Timothy's Quest*, there is also a pathetic story told largely in humorous language; and in *The Necklace* by Maupassant, there is also an incident which is simply told, but in itself combining elements of humour and pathos.

5.0.0.6 Humour may be found in all forms of literature. To realise that the inclination to laugh is universal, one need but consider the columns of our daily papers and the

pages of Sunday issues given over entirely to this sort of writing. In the *Rand Daily Mail* (Tuesday, 8th March, 1977, p.14), for instance, Bob Connolly gives a humorous cartoon depicting the downfall of Ian Smith, the South Rhodesian premier, by means of a picture where Ian Smith falls down a cliff and on his way down finds 'Div', the leader of the South African United Party, who had fallen down the cliff long ago. As soon as he sees 'Div' below him, he remarks: "Fancy meeting you here, Div!" Nearly all magazines have their humorous sections, and many books are written with the sole purpose being to arouse laughter, although humour is more pleasing when it appears as a seasoning to something else. A comedy, though entirely of a light character, arouses laughter by the display of contrasts - the holding up of the peculiarities of men and manners ~~against~~ the background which sets them off. This gives pleasure to a cultivated taste than does a farce which is made up wholly of monstrosities and extravagances.

Humour of contrasts

5.0.0.7 Mokgokong gives types of humour which involve elements of contrasts and incongruity of ideas as in 'Ke monna, eupša o itiwa ka lekobe' (he is a man, but he is tied to the woman's apron strings) - the type of humour which is not in as high a general class as the humour of situation or still higher than the humour of character.

5.0.0.8 Humour as found in Ramaila's works such as *Tsakata* (1962), *Molomatsebe* (1974) and *Taukobong* (1968), covers all phases. A start will be made with the humour of

contrast and incongruity of ideas from the above three works and then reference will be made to the higher forms of humour. In the short story "Mo batho ba hlaeditšego kahlolo, e phethega ka noši" (*Taukobong*:1968, p.35) (where man fails to pass equitable judgment, it comes of its own accord), Ramaila relates of a Rampane's son who was confronted and murdered by four thugs on his way home to Bantulia location. Because only one of the onlookers to the incident was prepared to give evidence in court, only one of the assailants, the one who hit the deceased with a piece of iron from behind, was given a twelve months' prison sentence whilst his other friends were cautioned and discharged owing to lack of proper evidence against them. After the return of their friend from prison, the other three thugs organised a party to welcome him back home. Soon thereafter, the thugs got ill and died in succession. One got ill and died after three months, the next one after six months and the last one after twelve months. Funny enough, the murderer got ill for twelve months, but recovered. Ramaila's contrast of ideas comes when he writes about the murderer:

"Ee, o fodile fela ke segwahlana se se sa kgonego go itirela selo".
(Yes, he has recovered, but is an impotent invalid.)

The humour lies in the fact that powers beyond man punished him with a year's illness, after which he recovered. His recovery was no asset to him because the illness had rendered him impotent. In short, to punish the murderer further, he was made to experience hell on earth as he was changed into an invalid. To drive this type of punishment home, Ramaila further adds

"aowa, o sa phela, fela ga se bophelo bja selo".
(Nay, he is still alive, but his life is good for nothing.)

In the two quotations given above from *Taukobong*, humour is found coupled with pathos.

5.0.0.9 In *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.29), this type of humour based on the incongruity or contrast of ideas is found in the short story 'Mofori' (the cheat) in the words

"Le ge a e hlokle, ga a ka a nyama ge a hweditše leotwana".
(Even if he could not get it, he was not sorry because he got a bicycle instead.)

The story is about a certain young man, Dikudumelane, who visited Evangelist Hosea Mogale of Geduld to ask for a R2,00 which was to be used to release the evangelist Hendrik Tlale of Van Rhyne who had entered Springs location without a permit. When confronted by Ev. H. Mogale, Dikudumelane used the parable of the Good Samaritan to get money from the evangelist. But on discovering the trick, Ev. H. Mogale loaned the young man his bicycle to rush to Van Rhyne to get the money from Ev. H. Tlale's home. He failed to get the R2,00 he had wanted, but all the same, he went away richer with a bicycle which was never returned.

5.0.1.0 Similarly humour brought about by incongruity of ideas in the book, *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.13), is found in the story of a highly venerated man who craved for a chicken meal and decided to steal Rasebesho's fowl. When he became aware that Rasebesho was coming home, he lay near some logs of fire-wood. When Rasebesho realised that one of the logs was barring the path to the fowl run, he picked it up and threw it onto the other logs. It accidentally fell onto the thief who screamed but because of his status, he could not be revealed. Ramaila (p.14) writes:

"Khweše! Ka lahlela legong kua, bjale gwa lla motho, keng?"

(Alas! I threw a log of fire-wood there, and a person screamed, what is that?)

This is humorous because the thief had hidden himself beyond discovery. Had Rasebesho not thrown the log there, he would not have known of the presence of the thief. The thief was brave in his attempts at stealing; but when he became aware of someone coming, he automatically took to hiding. But as God would have it, he was compelled by the log of fire-wood falling on him with a heavy thud to scream. Ramaila's humour is intended not merely to delight; but also to instruct.

5.0.1.1 The humour based on the contrast of ideas is also found in Ramaila's book, *Tsakata* (1962, p.12) in the following paragraph

"Lona lebakanyana leo la ge mabone a sa tuka, ebile ke lona lebaka la go ntšhana kgang. Ge e sa tšwe ka lona leo, ga go na taba, e tla išwa pele le ge e šetše e le lefsifsing, go fihla ge e tingwa ke maphodisa ka meetse (p.12) ... sa bona ke go tsenya lethopo la meetse ka godimo, ba a bulela, ba nošetša lešata le (p.14)".

(At the time when the lights are still on, it is the opportune time for the prisoners to take out fine cheek from one another. If it is not taken out at that time, it does not matter, they will continue even in the dark until the police extinguish it with water ... theirs is to put in a water hose from above, open the tap, and water the noise.)

This is humorous because 'go ntšhana kgang' (to take out fine cheek from each other) involves prisoners fighting savagely in their cells whilst the lights are still on. He adds

further humour to this by saying that if the fine cheek fails to be taken out at that time, it does not matter as it will be taken out even in the dark. The prison wardens have no time to shout at the noise makers in the cells to keep quiet, but merely react to the noise by pouring water into the noisy cells from above, an act which will silence the prisoners immediately because they dislike the idea of having their blankets soaked with water at night time. Normally a candle flame is extinguished; but when one thinks of noise being extinguished, one is left with no alternative but to laugh at the idea. Again, all plants are watered so that they should grow well; but to think of a noise being watered so that silence should ensue, one is also compelled to laugh. It is this contrastive way of using words and ideas which enables Ramaila to produce humour in his books.

Humour of situation

5.0.1.2 The next type of humour that Ramaila produces in his works, is the humour of situation. The story of the youth who robbed evangelist H. Mogale of his bicycle, and the venerable man who was accidentally discovered in the act of stealing Rasebesho's fowl are also examples of the humour of situation. Other examples of the humour of situation occur also in *Molomatsebe* (1974) and *Tsakata* (1962).

5.0.1.3 In *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.137), there is the story: "Di sa gahlanego ke dithaba, motho le motho ba a gahlana" (Mountains never meet, but one person does meet another in due course). The story is about Louisa Madipola

Molapo who became an orphan at the age of 5. She grew up in her uncle's home, that is, in Bertha's father's family. She was badly treated by her aunt and hardly had all the school requisites, until she was compelled to leave school at the age of 16 to work in Johannesburg. She worked in Johannesburg until she was married to Joseph Kgau. After their marriage, Joseph left her at his home near the Magaliesberg mountains where she stayed with her mother-in-law who was a widow and Reuben, her younger brother-in-law. Her in-laws also treated her so badly that she was left with no choice but to follow her husband to Johannesburg. She stayed amicably with her husband until they eventually bought three stands in Alexandra Native Township and two in Sophiatown. Ultimately, her in-laws were forced by circumstances beyond their control to leave the rural areas for Johannesburg where Louisa catered for them humanely and forgot how badly they had ill-treated her in the rural areas. Louisa did not change her disposition towards them because of her orpulence; but was kindly disposed towards all people. It is how she earned the title of "Mmamogau", that is, 'mother of mercy'. The humour of situation is produced where Ramaila narrates about how Louisa was whacked by Reuben, her younger brother-in-law, in his mother's presence. Louisa's nameless mother-in-law would assume two portfolios: one, as a peace-maker; and the other, as an instigator. With one breath she would shout at the top-most of her voice:

"Hee! Tlang le mpontšheng mohlolo.
 Le kile la bona kae motho a itia mogatša mogolowe?"
 (Hey! Come and unravel this mystery to me.
 Where have you ever seen one beating his elder
 brother's wife?)

and in another breath, she would whisper:

"Ke re o mo rialo. O mo rialo hle, ngwanyana yo a sa utlweng yo".
(I say, thrash her like this. Thrash her like this, please, this disobedient girl.)

It is this double role played by Joseph's mother to her bride, which produces the humour of situation.

5.0.1.4 Another story in which Ramaila creates the humour of situation, is the story "O ipolaile" (he murdered himself) in *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.146). It is the story of a very beautiful woman who was married by a very dark complexioned husband, Joseph Legukubu. After their marriage, Joseph was transferred to the Kgomotswala School as headmaster. Because Joseph was an intelligent and diligent principal, he was soon loved by the community, the staff and the pupils of the Kgomotswala School. To supplement her husband's income, Mmapeu started brewing beer for sale. Her house began to be visited by men who wanted to buy and drink beer. Surprisingly enough, even those who did not take beer were regular visitors to the principal's house. One such teetotaller was the handsome Mr Raphiri. As time went on Mr Raphiri visited the principal's house only with Mr Noko. These regular visits made the principal so suspicious that he immediately stopped the brewing of liquor for sale at his house and from that time, he was not well-disposed towards Mr Raphiri. The principal strongly suspected the teetotaller to have had an affair with his wife. On one Wednesday, Raphiri and Noko talked publicly of their intentions to leave on Thursday morning for a weekend in Pretoria and, indeed, they were seen moving towards the station on the Thursday morning. On

Thursday night, the principal jumped out of his bed to respond to a knock at the door. When his staff arrived at school on Friday morning, they were surprised that their ever punctual principal was not at school. They made enquiries at his home, only to be informed that he went to respond to a knock in the night and never returned. The staff organised a wide search with the pupils. When news came that he was found lying dead in a small mountain pass towards the station, the whole staff scampered to the scene of murder. Ramaila paints a pathetic humour of situation with the words:

"... Ge ba fihla mo sekolong, ba bega gore 'Principal' o rapaletše mola sefataneng, o hwile. Bafahloši ka moka ba ile ba ragoga, ba phalalela ka lebelo kua sefataneng, mo ba ilego ba hwetša 'mokgomana emoso' a ipolaile, a ithipile mogolo ka thipana makgwakgwa, ye e bitšwago 'kgwadi ya šeleng".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.151)

(When the pupils arrived at school, they reported that the principal was lying dead in the small mountain pass. All the teachers scampered towards the pass where they found the black principal had killed himself by nicely cutting his throat with a small rough knife which at that time cost one shilling.)

5.0.1.5 Ramaila goes on to describe the pathetic situation as if it involved no pain when he describes the skill with which it was done. He says that the principal even had the guts to turn the knife and thrust it between the base of the skull and the neck into the medulla oblongata and then died whilst still clutching the knife. Though the description is hard to believe, Ramaila ably paints this pathetic picture humorously and adds more humour to the story by sounding that husbands should be careful not to allow their wives to traffick in liquor lest they kill themselves as neatly

as the 'black prince' - the black principal - had done. Ramaila endeavours through the vehicle of his humour, to expose and extirpate out of the world those follies and vices which prevail in African custom and way of life (*Limi*: June 1970, p.48). Almost all the other stories in *Molomatsebe* (1974) have an element of the humour of situation. Time and space do not allow the treatment of every story individually in order to spot this element in it; but from the examples given above, the readers will be able to detect this humour of situation when reading the other stories.

5.0.1.6 In *Tsakata* (1962) can also be found instances with the humour of situation. From the many instances appearing in the book, only a few of them will be considered. The first is found in the words:

"Sejo sa mohuta o tee se a tena. Nna ke lwele le batho ba mehutahuta e mentši eupša e seng 'matitšhere'. Ga ke tsebe gore 'titšhere' ke sejo sa mohuta mang. Hle a nke o nkwiše yona. Ge a hlalletšwe, a nama a thoma mofahloši yola a mo ruta gore 'mmušo ke wa kgomo'.

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.13)

(One type of food all the time is boring. I have fought with many kinds of people; but not teachers. I do not know what type of menu a teacher is. Please let me taste him. As soon as he was given the green light, he wasted no time but pounced viciously upon the poor teacher and taught him a good lesson.)

The humour of situation in the above quotation lies in the euphemistic manner in which Ramaila describes the lack of mercy in the prison cells. He has just informed the reader that the poor teacher was a weakling and that he had been given a thorough beating the previous night; but on the following night another prison hog asks for him. No sooner has he been

given permission than he preys on him mercilessly. The hog might not have previously had confrontations with teachers because he feared and respected them. In prison, he now meets a learned and a venerable man who condescended to the level of a brute by swindling an innocent man of his race-course moneys. Having witnessed the teacher's thorough beating by the cheated man on his first night in jail, the jail hog still asks for his share of assaulting the teacher in order to teach him better manners. The jail hog consequently used the given privilege with all gusto as the poor teacher was unfortunately also a weakling. Further, the fact that the brutes delight in having their prey victimised for two successive nights, as if all these beatings involved no suffering, is also humorous.

5.0.1.7 As an instance of the second type of humour of situation from the book, *Tsakata* (1962), the following words will be considered:

"Ka baka leo eile ya re tšatši le go tsebišwa gape pina e kgolo ya mantšiboa ye e tlang go ba kua 'Paleis de danse', a itiya Flora a be a mo tswalelela ka ngwakong ..., a apara diaparo tša basadi le jase ya Flora, a ya a ema mo a kweleng gore Flora o ema gona ge a tla ya pineng. Ka bjako gwa ema motorokari wa sebakabaka kjojana. A sa lebeletše a bona go fologa monna, a etla a mo lebantše. Ke yena Mr Davidson. A sa re ke re: 'Hallo Flora!' Monna yola a bata Mr Davidson ka molamo, a be a mo lahla fase. Mola a bonang a wele, a nama a mo itia 'semakgoweng' e leng go bolaya".

(*Tsakata*:1962, pp.16 & 17)

(For that reason, it happened that one day when a big dance was announced to be held that night in the 'Paleis de danse' hall, he beat Flora and locked her up in the house ..., he donned female attire and even Flora's coat, and went to wait where Flora usually waited when she went to the night dances. No sooner had he

waited there, than a big posh car stopped a little distance away. Whilst still looking, he saw a man alighting and moving towards him. It was Mr Davidson. Just when he said: 'Hello Flora!', he was knocked down with a staff. When the man realised that Mr Davidson had fallen, he beat him with the intention of finishing him off as is done in the urban areas where people beat to kill for fear of being killed by their victim instead.)

The above passage is rich in the humour of situation. Flora's husband's dislike of dancing is portrayed very well. He first thrashes her when he hears that there is going to be a big dance. A thing he dislikes with all he is worth. Hence Ramaila (*Tsakata*:1962, p.16) says

"... ebile yena ka noši ga a tsebe le go emiša leoto mo pineng tša mohuta wo wa sekgowa, ka baka leo o a di gana".

(... Even he, himself, cannot raise his foot for these types of European dances. He, therefore, does not like them.)

What a contrast! Flora is adept at dancing, whilst her husband dislikes dancing because he cannot even raise his foot. It is why he thrashes and locks her in the house for fear that she might abscond once more to the big dance.

5.0.1.8 Another humorous aspect of this passage is found in Flora's husband's disguise, namely wearing Flora's dress and overcoat before he confronted the culprit. The readers have here, a picture of a man disguised completely in female attire. One wonders how he looked like. It cannot but be remembered how some blacks in the past, the tax defaulters, tried to evade arrest by putting on female attire and pretend to be doing female chores, whilst forgetting their goatees and moustaches which were easily detected by the police.

Apparently, the impression one gets from Ramaila is that Flora and her husband were of the same stature; otherwise her dress and overcoat would not have fitted him, and her boy-friend, Mr Davidson, would have been scared of her awkward appearance that fateful night. With all that, "now was the woodcock near the gin" (Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*:1939, p.35).

Mr Davidson moved towards the waiting person whom he mistook for Flora. One can picture him moving there with the usual excitement and just when about to caress her, receives a stunning blow which was followed by a thorough beating.

Humour of Character

5.0.1.9 It is not easy to isolate the humour of situation from that of character which is now going to be discussed. The humour of situation in the last incident just discussed, has also elements of humour of character. This humour of character lies in the fact that although Flora's nameless husband is unable to raise his foot to dance, he is, however, able to wield his stick to restore order in his family. Read very closely, most of Ramaila's narratives in *Molomatsebe* (1974) and *Taukobong* (1968) have this humour of character. In the short story "Moloi ga a na mmala" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.18), Ramaila gives a humorous description of Simson Riba and his two adversaries, namely, Elias Mokgomo - a man from Lesotho, and Theodor Mokwena, a resident of Johannesburg. Simson Riba, who came from Sekhukhuneland was a strongly built man whose body was full of scars, some of which he sustained whilst still a boy at his place of birth and others which he got in Johannesburg: and the devil alone knows where and how he got them - he was just belligerent by nature. He says that one Saturday

night between 23h00 and 24h00, as he was travelling from Springs to Brakpan, he met two men, one of whom was pushing a bicycle near the junction of two roads, that is, the one leading from Springs to Brakpan and the other from the Far East-Rand Hospital to Nigel. No sooner had the two men neared him, than Theodor Mokwena threw down his bicycle and with his friend, attacked him as they spoke in Zulu. It was a terrible blunder they had committed by attacking a veteran fighter. Within two shakes of a duck's tail, they were sprawling on the ground as he was beating them with his sjambok. The humour is felt when Ramaila says:

"Le yo a ilego a kgona go tsoga pele, ge a re o a ema, ke ge e le gore bjale moesa 'a Bopedi o mo otl'a sentsokela. Monna o ile a ba a riboga a hlanola direthe a yo emela kua kgole, e le gore kubu e sa mo hlohlonga bjalo ka tšhašabogopa".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.20)

(And the one who was able to rise up first, when he tried to stand, it was when the chap from Bopedi was hitting him right and left. The man had to jump up and even take to his heels to stand at a distance, and by then the aftermath of the sjambok was itching him like one rubbed with an itching plant.)

5.0.2.0 The humour of character lies not only in Simson's agility in outwitting his adversaries, but also in Elias Mokgomo, who by a stroke of luck jumped up first, stood at a distance and never thought of returning to the battle-field because he had had the best of it. He shouted: "mo hlabe ka thipa!" (stab him with a knife). An admission that, rather than return to help the friend, he had been so vanquished that he could only advise his friend from a distance to employ the services of a knife. In actual fact, he could have done the stabbing himself; but because he was so scared by Simson's

prowess and cruelty, he could do nothing more than advise his friend who was receiving a thorough whacking, to use his knife to free himself from Simson's brutality. Simson was a real brute and a veteran fighter because he overpowered his two adversaries and even left with their bicycle. Theodor Mokwena received such a hiding that he had to be admitted to the Far East-Rand Hospital. Ramaila's heroes are real heroes who brave the winds of opposition with all their might.

5.0.2.1 Again in "Tshelete ya Sepoko" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.7), Ramaila tells the story of two nameless men who impersonate a ghost and a witch-doctor and, thereby making a fortune out of credulous people by promising to lead them to a spot where a large sum of money lay buried. Many people became victims of this guile. After they had paid their fee to the witch-doctor, they would be led to the spot. As soon as they started digging, a ghost wrapped in a white sheet and flickering a torch would appear. This would lead to the witch-doctor as well as the fortune seekers running away for their dear lives. It continued for a long time until one day, one nameless Mamabolo man and his friends paid a fee of R8,00 to be led to the spot. No sooner had they started digging than the ghost appeared. And, according to plan, the witch-doctor disappeared. The other men could not stand the risk of being mauled by the ghost. They ran away; but the brave Mamabolo man confronted the ghost. When his friends realised that he was fighting in earnest, they returned to assist him. The Mamabolo man hit it with a kierie until it even groaned like a person before it collapsed. They went on digging until they found an iron box which they took away; but alas, when they opened it, they found no money but pieces of iron and screw washers. It is in this manner that Ramaila endeavours with

the greatest force of his humour, to expose and extirpate out of the world, those follies and vices which prevail in African custom and belief. There is amusement in the words

"Erile ge se buduloga ka mola mašeleng, a se leka ka thoka. Aga-ga-ga! A betha senna, a be a boeletša. Ge a leka la boraro, a kwa a betha phata le dikgorokgoro".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.8)

(When it waxed bigger in the white sheet, he tried it with a kierie. Aha! He hit like a man and even repeated. When he hit for the third time, he hit a staff and odds and ends of tins.)

The humour here lies in the Mamabolo man's bravery in waging a war against a ghost, the most feared spectacle. He was so resolute that he was not satisfied with hitting it once. His determination to fight to the bitter end is embedded in the words 'he struck like a man'. For someone to resolve to fight with a ghost is in itself humorous as ghosts are not expected to be living beings.

5.0.2.2 On the same page, Ramaila adds

"Monna yola wa Mamabolo yena o gafile bophelo bja gagwe. Ga a fšege, ga a raloke, o namile o dio se betha a sa se fe sebaka Sepoko sa tabogana se re se dira mehlolo ... se golola e ka re ke motho. Mošemane wa sekolobeng ge a ekwa se lla ka mokgwa wo, a nama a se betha ruri, sa be sa wela fase sa homola."

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.8)

(That Mamabolo man sacrificed his own life. He is not afraid, he is not playing, he is just hitting it without giving it chance ... the ghost jumped and tried to perform all sorts of miracles ... bewailing like a human

being; but when the Sekolobeng^{*} boy heard it crying like that, he continued to give it a thorough beating until it fell down quiet.)

What an apt description of an incident! Ramaila adds further humour to the fight by saying that the Mamabolo man had "sacrificed his own life" - but for whose salvation was it done? When Ramaila writes "he is not playing", one gets amused by the seriousness with which the Mamabolo man takes things. The picture which the author draws of the ghost's vain attempts to scare the Mamabolo hero away from it, is humorous as it annoyed the hero more because he struck it until it fell down quiet. It is only Ramaila with his eloquent pen and his penetrating eye who could give a full description of a fierce fight so briefly and yet so convincingly. That the ghost, like an animate object, collapses as if dead and the assailants are not keen to diagnose it but leave it to continue digging for the most coveted treasure is also humorous. Even the carrying away of their cherished treasure only to find pieces of iron and screwwashers is not only disappointing but also humorously disgusting. The role played by the Mamabolo man in the whole confrontation with the ghost, gives the climax of Ramaila's humour of character.

5.0.2.3 Another instance of the humour of character is found in the short story: "Lešoka, Mphe Batho!" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.64). The story centres around Mmonadibe, an intelligent young man who was expelled from Lepellane High School because of his having been a ringleader of a strike. On leaving the school, he was employed as a servant in a bar

* Sekolobeng means at Mamabolo's location about 40km east of Pietersburg in the Transvaal. The Mamabolo people have a 'kolobe' (pig) as their totem. So the word 'Sekolobeng' is a locative formed from the totem kolobe (pig).

of an hotel and in this congenial environment he had occasions to taste, and gradually to develop a craving for 'the good waters that satisfy the restless soul'. This craving made him tired of the tots which he was given after washing the glasses. He thus devised a plan whereby he could have full satiation. He therefore planned to be locked in when others knocked off. Having succeeded in his plan, he put the lights on, opened any bottle he wished to taste, and indulged in a merry drinking spree. Gradually the toll of liquor began to tell on his mind and limbs and, remembering his old flame at Lepellane High School, he burst out in a voluptuous solo:

"Madonna dearest maidens,
Fairest in all the town.
Down, down, down,
Derry, derry, down, down, down, down."

The above stanza is humorous in its being a malapropism on:

"Madonna lovely maiden,
O, listen to my prayer.
Dong, dong, dong,
Derry, derry, dong, dong, dong, dong."

A solo sung at its rightful place will always be welcome. The solo described above had its demerits. It raised the alarm to the proprietor of the bottle store, who, on realising that it was his servant who was involved, manhandled him before handing him to the police. Ramaila uses this incident to indicate how unpredictable the character of a drunken person is. He had remained in the bar unnoticed; but drink betrayed him and brought him under arrest.

5.0.2.4 It was when Tsakata, alias Davidson, found life

dangerous for him in the Reef (Johannesburg), that he decided to migrate to the East Rand. It is here in the East Rand that Ramaila paints ludicrous escapades of Tsakata and his confrontations with the police. Only two of these incidents will be outlined. They concern Tsakata's roguery when he trafficked in illicit liquor with the shebeen queens of the East Rand. He undertook to collect money from the shebeen queens daily, get to town, buy liquor and then deliver it to them. The police caught wind of the illicit liquor traffickers and thus organised themselves to apprehend the law-breakers.

5.0.2.5 On one occasion, after Tsakata had bought the liquor, he decided to hide it in the abandoned mine dumps so as to collect it in the early hours of the morning when the coast was clear. As he was hiding his booty, a worker at one of the flats saw him from the fourth floor, and after his departure, went to the spot and removed all the liquor. When Tsakata arrived there very early in the morning, he discovered that his booty was removed. Ramaila uses the humorous idiomatic expression "a itia diphuru" to indicate that Tsakata found nothing. He was dejected when he returned home to the Benoni location empty handed. On his way home, he was surprised by a police net. But, because his pass was in order, and because he had no liquor in his possession, he became very insolent to the police. When they searched him after he had produced his pass, he had the fine cheek to tell them that

"ge eba ba timeletšwe ke bommabo mo bošegong bjoo,
yena ga a ba swara".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.28)

(should they have lost their mothers that night,
he did not have them with him.)

The above is humorous because had the thief not saved him by stealing his liquor, he would, definitely, have been arrested by the police.

5.0.2.6 The second incident concerns Tsakata's habit of using a fawn coat daily. This rendered him a strong suspect to the head of the police. He gave strict instructions to his assistants to waylay and arrest a chap who used a fawn overcoat. Ramaila gives the instructions of the head of the police in the following humorous way:

"lena lokologanyang dibeke go fihla ge le bona motho yoo, le mmotše ke rata go mmona".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.33)

(You should waylay him for weeks on end until you see him and tell him I would like to see him.)

Tsakata was named 'Vaaljas' by the police. From his careful study of the police nets, he had decided to go for illicit liquor during the day as he had discovered that it was dangerous to attempt it during the night or in the early hours of the morning. So, one day, when he left to buy the liquor, he somehow left the money at home. He appealed without success to his fellow illicit liquor traffickers, until he decided to return home to fetch the money. On his way home the police, who were on his trail, shouted at him with excitement as they had met their 'Vaaljas'; but found him with no liquor. Ramaila creates humour by

"Moo ke ge Tsakata yena a eme a maketše gore jase ya gagwe ye tshehla ba kwa ge e reng".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.36)

(Tsakata was then standing and surprised at what could have been wrong with his fawn coat.)

His comrades who were following him were, however, not so lucky.

5.0.2.7 In his humour, Ramaila also includes comical characters who are full of mockery. In *Tsakata* (1962), we find such characters impersonated by 'Mahulo'. Mahulo shows disrespect for teacher, Albert Nape, with the words:

"Gapu, gapu, phaša"

the words with which he was deriding the crocodile's gait and its splashing into the water. The crocodile was teacher Nape's totem and because Mahulo hated him, he also hated his totem which he regarded as unimportant. As teacher Nape was a 'Mokoena' (one whose totem was a crocodile), and belonged to a different clan from Mahulo's, he was bound to be in the disfavour of conservatives such as Mahulo. So that whenever cases affecting teachers were to be tried, the teachers who were foreigners to the clan, were always at a disadvantage. Nepotism seems to be one of the greatest weaknesses of man.

5.0.2.8 Another instance of satirical humour is found when the same Mahulo mocks at one of his tribesmen, Kgano, who boasts of the trapping of wild game. Mahulo first derides him with the words:

"Monna te! Re fo bolawa ke tsela e kaakaa ye re tllilo kwa tša gago? Colonel Silver o re bolaišitše naga lehono gona. Rena ke kgale re tseba gore Komišinare yo mogolo wa kua Mašišing, Major Brand, o a go tsoma ka baka la mahlajana a a gago a. Le bjale ge o fihla kua Mašišing o tlo gorogela go yena".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.55)

(Poor man! We just travel such a long distance to come and listen to your misdeeds? Colonel Silver, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, has punished us by making us travel a very long distance today. It is long that we knew that the Chief Commissioner at Lydenburg, Major Brand, wanted to see you about these monkey tricks of yours. Even now the first thing when you arrive in Lydenburg, will be that you report to him.)

The above is an instance of mockery mixed with pathos. There was a prohibition on the trapping of wild game, the prohibition which Kgano defied and instead boasted of enjoying the flesh of wild game. Now that he has been arrested, Mahulo feels he has to rub him a little in order to indicate to him that his vain boasting was coupled with unpleasantness as he now has to suffer for the misdeeds in which he had so much delighted.

5.0.2.9 Mahulo does not just end up as stated above. He continues to mock at Kgano by trying to sound an advice to him in the words:

"Taba ya bobedi ye rena e lego kgale re e tseba, ke gore mo wena le Major Brand le tlogo gahlana ntshe, yo mongwe wa lena o tlo lla. Ee! O re le ka re tsomane ka mokgwa wo mokaaka wo, ya re mo le gahlanago ntshe gwa fo re 'tuu!?' Aowaa!
Rena boMahulo re šetše re fo rapela gore go mpe go lle Major Brand

Go tlo rata gore ge o tsena ka ofising ya gagwe, o mo lebelele ka mahlong, le gona o diše molomo wa gagwe gore o seke wa ahlama. Ge a thoma a re 'ha', wene o fo mo tšea ka ditsebe. Gona o tlo kwa a lla"

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.55)

(The second point which we know from long, is that where you and Major Brand meet, one of you will cry. Indeed! Do you think that after you have hunted each other for so long, you can just meet quietly? Oh no! We, Mahulo and others, just pray that it be Major Brand who will cry.....

It will be better that when you enter into his office, you look at him squarely in the face, and also watch that his mouth does not open. Just when he starts saying 'ha', clutch at his ears. You will then hear him crying.)

5.0.3.0 The above mockery is humorous because, apart from the ludicrous way in which the advice is given, when implemented to the letter, it would aggravate Kgano's criminal malpractices. The reader is made aware here, of the fact that Ramaila made Mahulo speak in this strain just to poke fun at his fellow man, Kgano, and also to arouse laughter in the reader. The last sentence of the same paragraph reads

"Ramatome a se we, ka tatane ka Tšhweu ya Magasa, kgano e tlo golola".
(The cat failing to fall, I swear by my father, the white of the Magasa age-group, the smeercat will cry bitterly.)

There is also pun, which is also part of humour, in the last phrase of the above sentence "kgano e tla golola" (the meerkat will yelp bitterly). The pun is embedded in 'kgano' as a man's name; and in 'kgano' as a meerkat. It is by employing this stylistic feature of humour that Ramaila, not only succeeds in keeping his readers alive throughout his narrations; but also enhances their suspense as to what happens next - the very essential elements of a well-laid out story. "... His characters have relation to ordinary life and also live in their own surroundings, there are incidents which keep us excited" (*Aspects of the Novel*:1949, p.123).

Chapter VI

REVOLT AND PROTEST IN RAMAILA'S WORKS

6.0.0.0 When Ramaila's writings are viewed very closely, an element which forms part of his commitment as a writer is detected. It is the element of revolt or protest. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, protest is defined as 'a formal statement of dissent and disapproval'. Ramaila's protest emanates from his deep knowledge of human relationships in the life that goes on around him, that is, human relationships arising from the nature of society in which he finds himself immersed and the quality of its life. In this sense Ramaila is "the voice of the people beyond any glib political connotation of the phrase". (*The Black Interpreters*:1973, p.11). Ramaila thus becomes a testifier of social change in human relationships. He chooses no sides. He protests and demands change of the misdeeds which his own people commit amongst themselves. Similarly, he protests and demands change of the injustices that are done to the blacks by the whites and vice versa.

6.0.0.1 Generally speaking, protest and revolt in literature are like blood pressure which exists in varying degrees in all human beings, ranging from high to normal and to low, with the accompanying physical comforts and discomforts. So, like blood pressure, protest or revolt are found in varying degrees in all types of literature. In *Charles Machaba* (1957, p.9), Charles Machaba II mentions how his father, Charles Machaba I, was severely walloped by the Voortrekkers at their Schoemansdal chapel, near Louis Trichard, after he had peeped

through a hole on one Sunday morning, in order to see the white man's God. Machaba further complains of the Voortrekkers making them work, look after cattle, plough the fields and chop the wood for no pay at all. He also mentions the atrocities perpetrated by the blacks to the whites by killing them brutally and destroying their waggons and tents with fire. He ends up the description of all these grievous incidents with this heartfelt appeal:

"Go kaone ge Babaso le Babašweu re ka lebalelana tša mehla yela me tša fela; gwa kgona go tšwelela bophelo bjo bofsa."

(It will be better if, the blacks and the whites, could forgive each other of things of the past and have them ended, so that new life can develop.)

6.0.0.2 It is how Charles Machaba bewails the conditions which prevailed when the Voortrekkers came into contact with the Bantu tribes of the South African interior. He protests gainst the maltreatment that the blacks and the whites levelled at each other and he, as a pastor and a messenger of peace, pleads that 'the dead past bury its dead' and that peace reign supreme amongst all the South African races. E.M. Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel* (1949, p.44), rightly points out that

"since the novelist is himself a human being, there is an affinity between him and his subject matter which is absent in many forms of art".

6.0.0.3 Charles Machaba's alarm on what was actually afoot in South Africa because the whites killed the blacks and the blacks killed the whites, is allayed by the remark:

"... ebile makgowa a naga yeno ke batho ga ba swane le makgowa a kwa ga gabo rena".

(*Charles Machaba I*, p.17)

(... and the whites here are human they are unlike those at my place.)

Machaba's change of heart is noticed in the above remark. He has come across good and respectable white people, as against the brutal and callous whites of his home area. Carefully considered, this is another type of protest. Machaba warns and teaches the reader that people are not all alike. In every community under the sun, the good and the bad shall always be found - irrespective of differences in colour, race or creed. There are some whites who have arrived at an erroneous conclusion that all blacks are wicked and bad; just as some blacks have come to an erroneous conclusion that all whites are wicked and bad. In the above quoted remark, Machaba pleads for racial tolerance. According to him, the whites and the blacks will not co-exist as long as they do not tolerate, respect and love each other.

6.0.0.4 In Ramaila, protest and revolt can be noticed even in his first book, *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote* (1935, p.13). He writes:

"... batho ba baso ba bantši ba filwe dineo tša mehutahuta; eupya ka xobane ba sa hwetše thuto ye e tletšexo, ye e ka budušaxo dineo tšeo xore di palexe di tšwele molaleng, ba hwa natšo"

(... many blacks have been endowed with various talents; but because they do not receive enough education, which can ripen these talents to be more manifest, they die with them.)

Very much like Thomas Gray in his "Elegy written in the Country Churchyard", Ramaila was also singing

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness in the desert air."

6.0.0.5 At the time of Ramaila's writing of his first book, education was still at its crawling stages amongst the South African blacks. The above quotation from Ramaila's book can be regarded more as a prophetic protest. It was prophetic in that he was pleading for more schools and educational centres for the advancement of the South African blacks as a nation. This protest can be regarded as a prayer which was well-answered because since schools were taken from Mission control, almost all tribal villages have their own schools. Education can be regarded as having reached a relatively high point amongst the South African blacks. At present existing schools are being extended and more new schools and educational centres are being built all over our country. Ramaila can thus be regarded more as a philanthropist than an ordinary evangelist because he was pleading for the educational advancement of all blacks irrespective of language, creed or geographic location.

6.0.0.6 Ramaila was a champion of justice and a great lover of his country, South Africa. To him South Africa was like a paradise onto which God had placed all the South African races to live amicably together. Not for a moment would Ramaila ever approve of the ill-treatment of a black man by another, not for a moment would he ever approve of the ill-treatment of a black man by a white man, and not for a moment

would he ever applaud the ill-treatment of a white man by a black man (see *Molomatsebe*:1974, p.92). He regarded the South African people as a group of people chosen by God to build a tower as big as that of Babylon, here in South Africa. And it is at this point that co-operation and collaboration are essential to enable the group to accomplish its task.

6.0.0.7 Ramaila's protest can further be observed in his report in the Lutheran church bulletin *Tšhupa-Mabaka a Kereke* (1957, p.43). It is a report on his visit to Marangu for the World Lutheran Conference in 1954. About Moshi, the airport of Tanganyika, he writes:

"Taba ya pele ye re e lemogilego ke tšwelopele le khunologo ya Bathobaso ba naga ye Ge re tsena ka pankeng, re makala re hwetša makula le Babaso fela. Khweše! Baesa ba ke bona ba dišago moraka wo mokaakaa wo? Go tloga moo ra ya posong ra ya go reka tša go sepediša mangwalo. Fao le gona ra hwetša yona merafo e mebedi yeo, gagolo Babaso. Morago ra itloša bodutu ka go sepelela kua go emago setimela, ra hwetša le gona go le bjalo. Go thoma ka "station master" le basepediši le ba ba tšipago dithekethe ke Maafrica beng ba naga ye, ba tswakilwe ke ba India diofising tše dingwe. Go sepela ke go bona".

(The first thing which struck us was the progress and freedom of the blacks of this land When we entered into the bank, we were surprised to find Indians and blacks alone. Alas! These fellows are the ones who look after this big building? From there we went to the post office to buy articles for posting letters. There also we found the two races, especially the blacks. Thereafter we whiled away our time by strolling towards the station, and found the same. From the station master, to the drivers, and the conductors were all Africans, the owners of this land, and they were mixed with Indians in some offices. Travelling broadens the mind.)

6.0.0.8 Ramaila is a keen observer with an ability to report

his observations with remarkable precision. He never cuts half pictures of what he describes; but always gives the reader detailed pictures of his impressions in his descriptions.

6.0.0.9 Some remarks can be levelled against the expression

"ba ba tšipago dithekethe ke Maafrika beng be naga ye".
(Those who clip the tickets are Africans the owners of this land.)

With this remark, Ramaila reminds the reader of John Mander's conclusion:

"It follows that there is no criticism of life that does not have both 'social' and 'political' implications".

(The Writer and Commitment:1961, p.14)

Ramaila compares his observations in Tanganyika with that which obtains in South Africa. At the time of his writing, there were no Africans who were occupying such high positions in the public life of the country. Hence his deep impression about the Africans manning such posts effectively. When he says "beng ba naga ye", (the owners of this land), the reader finds Ramaila complaining that the Africans particularly the South African Blacks, have been relegated to such a junior position that they count for nought in the occupation of responsible positions, when in actual fact South Africa is their own native land. He would have liked the South African Blacks to have been privileged to drive trains, ships, aeroplanes and to man such big business concerns such as banks, big post offices and building societies.

6.0.1.0 The above quoted passage can also be regarded as a prophetic protest. Ramaila is deeply impressed by the freedom and the progress made by the blacks of Central and Northern Africa in that they take charge of banks, drive trains, run the postal services with their fellow Indian citizens. The protest is prophetic in the sense that, although in a smaller measure, the blacks in South Africa are today also serving their own people in the post offices and in the banks. Relevant to the above passage, one might ask: What has happened to the white citizens of Tanganyika? Have they all emigrated as a result of Tanganyika gaining her independence? If not, have they been made so subservient that all employment in key positions is denied them except perhaps only when they have to serve in their ambassadorial capacities? According to Dr. James K. Aggrey, Ramaila's point of view is unsound. On a piano, the 'black notes' alone produce a monotonous type of music; whilst the 'white notes' alone also produce their own monotony. It is only when the 'black notes' and the 'white notes' are played together that a sumptuous, if not voluptuous, melody can ever be produced. In *The Black Interpreters* (1973, p.9) the interdependence of the blacks and the whites is emphasised in the following words:

"the African hero despite his disaffection and bitterness ... wants the whiteman's skills and political systems, his philosophies and his arts, his transistor radios, his whisky and his malaria prophylaxis"

In a multi-racial society, a healthy co-existence should be the ideal aimed at. The members of the various social groups should enjoy similar rights and privileges. Ramaila's plea is that what he found the blacks doing in Tanganyika should also obtain in the Republic of South Africa despite the fact

that South Africa has a heterogeneous community. If the blacks in Tanganyika can occupy such high positions in their society, there is no reason why the South African blacks can fail because what one fool can do, another can. Furthermore, Ramaila pleads for human freedom in South Africa as John Mander writes:

"Respect for human freedom ... is a commitment the writer assumes in the very act of writing".

(*The Writer and Commitment*:1961, p.9)

6.0.1.1 It is this aspect of protest which Breed (1956, p.85) failed to observe in Ramaila's writings. Breed writes:

"In plaas van dat die skrywer sy verhaal nog verder tot 'n hoogte punt te voer, voeg hy 'n hoofstuk elf 'n verhaal in wat feitlik niks met die van Tsakata te make het nie".

The Chapter XI which Breed regards as irrelevant to the story of Tsakata, has unfortunately been misconstrued by him. When one reads this chapter very closely, one finds much of Ramaila's protest and revolt in it.

6.0.1.2 Ramaila is not happy about the adoption of European names and surnames by the black community of the Thabadimo mission. In like manner, the changing of names by Tsakata from Mr David Sebatane Monare to Mr S.M. Davidson is unwholesome to Ramaila. Ramaila also writes of a certain Rev. G. Schweigenberg who was tooth and nail against this malpractice of unwarranted changing of names. This reverend gentleman subsequently made them revert to their original

surnames so that 'Oom Lukas Müller' became 'Lukas Dlamini', 'Oom Jakob Schoeman' became 'Jacob Mokoena' and 'Tant Sanna Buitendag' became Susanna Mashilo (*Tsakata*:1962, p.80). So that our today's 'Mr. Charles Sons' will become Mr. Charles Sono. Ramaila finds this type of unwarranted changing of surnames both immoral and unethical. He contends that the blacks should not throw away everything that is theirs and try to usurp European traditions in toto; but that they keep that which is good and beautiful in their own culture and only take from the whites that, which is beneficial to them. Hence Rev. G. Schweigenberg's remark

"... Le dirwa ke gore le sa godiše semelo sa lena, la rata maina a segageno le mekgwa ya Sesotho".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.82)

(It is because you do not respect your culture, and love your traditional names and customs.)

6.0.1.3 In the above quoted Chapter XI, Ramaila further nudges the reader to change with the times and not to remain unnecessarily static. The evangelist Titus Chiloane, Tsakata's uncle, was a very good old man. He was an obedient and a devout servant of the Lord. He worked with Rev. Gustav Schweigenberg peacefully for many years. He was the type of man who would never question anything from his superior. All the orders from his superiors were received with implicit obedience. Contrary to the healthy co-operation between Titus Chiloane and Rev. G. Schweigenberg, Ramaila brings in the young-blooded Tsakata who was obsessed with ideologies of revolt and change. Very much unlike his uncle, he would always question whatever he found arbitrary. In a heated confrontation between Tsakata and Rev. G. Schweigenberg, Tsakata reacted as follows:

"Re a tseba gore wena o moapostola yo mogolo wa kgatelelo".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.83)

(We know that you are the great apostle of oppression.)

6.0.1.4 The word 'kgatelelo', which means oppression, is written in inverted commas. It marks the climax of the verbal war between Tsakata and Rev. G. Schweigenberg. Tsakata's attitude towards Rev. G. Schweigenberg should have shocked the reverend gentleman. Rev. Schweigenberg was a dedicated man. He was the spiritual and the educational father of his congregation and consequently exercised much control over them. He catered for their educational needs by building them schools, appointing teachers to their posts, ministering to them at church, and did not hesitate to correct them whenever they were at fault.

6.0.1.5 The war of words described above, emanated from Tsakata's adoption of the surname 'Davidson' - the very thing which Rev. Schweigenberg would not tolerate. When he rubbed Tsakata over the knuckles for it, Tsakata got infuriated and reacted as indicated in the quotation above.

6.0.1.6 Rev. G. Schweigenberg's dealings with the members of his congregation cannot be totally regarded as blameless. His policies seem to have been tainted with dictatorial malpractices to the extent that people of Tsakata's calibre came to regard them as super-paternalistic. Hence the revolt or protest against them. Perhaps Rev. G. Schweigenberg might have been a benevolent despot; but this disposition would not have stood the test of time. It was successful with Titus Chiloane's group only; but would not succeed with

Tsakata's group. With the latter group, it only engendered protest which resulted in the enmity of the highest order. That is why in his extreme bitterness, Tsakata terms Rev. G. Schweigenberg "the great apostle of oppression".

6.0.1.7 The observant and well-travelled Ramaila is aware of some malpractices which obtained at some mission stations during the classical period of the evangelisation of the black man. Some of the ministers stretched their hands too far in the control of their congregants and converts. They would make men and women who attended confirmation classes do manual labour in their homes, gardens and fields for no pay whatsoever. When their students graduated in the confirmation classes, they would encourage them to leave school for work in the towns and cities so that they could be able to pay their church dues. As time went on, the confirmation age was so lowered that after confirmation, the graduates were still so young that they had to continue with schooling. The compulsory free labour has by now been tremendously minimised, and at places, even discarded as the youth is also no more keen on this type of labour.

6.0.1.8 At some places some missionaries also extended their control too far by requiring every man or woman, boy or girl from college or from the cities to report his/her return. Failure to do that was viewed very seriously. This type of control was bound to meet with opposition from youths. At other places also, some ministers prescribed that all brides buy their wedding gowns from ministers' wives only. This type of over-control would also not stand the test of time as it would consequently become the subject of protest by the youth.

6.0.1.9 Ramaila's plea is, therefore that we should not underrate the zeal and intelligence of youth in all our dealings. What their forebears accepted with implicit acquiescence may not necessarily be so with them. Youth is dynamic and not static. We should always accommodate the thinking of youth in all our plans and schemes. Perhaps Alfred Tennyson was referring to them when he wrote:

"The old order changeth yielding place to new
And God fulfils himself in many ways
Lest one good common custom corrupts the world".

(Morte d'Urther)

Youth is fidgety, virile and rebellious in temperament and thus cannot stand any form of overbearing authority.

6.0.2.0 The verbal war between Tsakata and Rev. G. Schweigenberg ended up with a terribly dehumanising rebuke to the reverend gentleman when Tsakata bade him farewell with the words:

"Ke duma gore re seke ra bonana gape mo lefaseng le".

(Tsakata:1962, p.109)

(I wish that we do not see each other again on this world.)

By this rebuke, Ramaila indicates that once unfairly handled, youth neither forgives nor forgets.

6.0.2.1 Ramaila's protest is at times latent and yet incisive. With the words:

"Bomotswala a Nape ba ile ba boela Kgautšwane bošego,
'me ba tsoga ba le moo, bjalo ka ge eka ga se ba ka
ba ya felo"

Tsakata:1962, p.100)

(Nape's cousins returned to Kgautšwane at night time,
and woke up from there, as if they had never been
anywhere)

Ramaila hits very hard at that which is rife amongst the blacks even at present. The clash between the teachings of the missionaries with the traditional way of living of the blacks is responsible for this revolt of Ramaila's. The whites call the medicine man amongst the blacks a witch-doctor; but until today, the blacks speak of him as a doctor. The missionaries refer to him as a wizard, an apostle of Satan and one who labours in visible darkness. The missionaries will not tolerate any of their converts who visit these medicine men. Culturally, the so-called witch-doctor is a spiritual and cultural leader of his people. All the Bantu royal kraals whether civilised or uncivilised, have each its own medicine man to care for the lives of the chief, his family and his warriors. He protects the chief and his family against witches, he prepares the warriors for victory with his charms, and during the times of pestilence, vermin or drought, he intercedes with the gods on behalf of the whole tribe. Apart from the medicine man of the royal kraal, there are also some medicine men and women who need not necessarily have contact with the royal kraal. Their main duty is to look after the health of the tribe. They are the doctors of the tribe.

6.0.2.2 Although some of them are mere quacks, others are so gifted and specialist that they are able to cure serious diseases. Some are also gifted in protecting their

clients against witches. Because the missionaries regarded them as the vassals of the devil, they discouraged all their Christian converts from visiting the medicine men. But because the medicine man is so culturally embedded in the lives of the blacks, enlightened people such as pastors, teachers, nurses, clerks and other people of all walks of life visit them privately in the night for fear of being seen, identified and perhaps even retributed by their fellow Christians and their pastors. Alternatively, they visit those that stay far where the clients are not known by the members of the community there.

6.0.2.3 Ramaila like all ministers of religion and pastors, strikes this serious note again in the words

"... Bontši bja ba sa dumeleng, ba sa rutwang ba be ba botile yena"

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.96)

(Many uneducated non-believers had confidence in him.)

This is a protest in which Ramaila insinuates that all those who have been christened and also those who have been educated lower themselves by their nocturnal visits to the medicine men - the apostles of the devil. The big question remaining is whether they are as Satanic as they are painted, despite the quacks who are a feature of every community?

6.0.2.4 In the same light, and yet deep vein, Ramaila makes another protest which appears innocent and yet penetrating. He gives it in the words

"Morago ge Monere a tšwela le badiši bale ka ntle, ba hwetša pere ya Nape e sa kgokilwe kgorwaneng ya ka morago"

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.95)

(Thereafter when the minister went out with those church elders, they found Nape's horse still tied onto the back gate.)

Considered literally, one understands Ramaila to be saying that the reverend's office, according to the plan of the house, was placed at the back, next to the back gate. But on thinking deeply of it, one finds Ramaila protesting against the use of two gates for different purposes by the venerable missionary. The practice is generally that the front gate is used by whites whilst the back gate is used by the blacks. Ramaila protests against this type of practice. This is so because where the black pastors reside, the office is always situated in the front portion of the building. In this case, the pastor's office is accessible to all visitors by means of the front gate. Even up to the present time, politicians still reiterate this protest of Ramaila's vehemently. In the *Rand Daily Mail* (1976.10.14, p.1), Mr S.J. Lesolang says:

"Concessions at this time are irrelevant. All we need is the scrapping of all forms of discriminatory laws."

6.0.2.5 Ramaila's protest on racial discrimination in *Tsakata* (1962) is again found where a black student, Tšhungwane, came into some misunderstanding with his white teacher, Mr Brown. As a result of this misunderstanding, Mr Brown always drove out the student from class, whenever he had a lesson in that particular class. On seeing that this process continued, the student felt himself a loser in the end. Because the student felt that he was right, he went to the superintendent, who was also a white man, to report. In extreme annoyance, the superintendent shouted:

"Hee! Lena masogana! Nna ke bjalo ka motho wa mohumi yo a ruileng dikgomo, dinku le dikgogo. Se ke se hlologelang ke gore diruiwa tše ka moka di phedišane ka khutšo. Fela ge kgogo e sa kgone go phedišana le kgomo ka khutšo le ka boikokobetšo, gona nna ke tla tloša kgogo. Ga ke rate go hlwa ke tshwenyana le dikgomo tša gešo ka baka la tabana tša kgogo".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.4)

(Hey! You young men! I am like a wealthy person who rears cattle, sheep and fowls. My desire is that the animals should live in peace. But if a fowl cannot live peacefully and respectfully with a head of cattle, then I will remove the fowl. I do not want to keep on quarelling with my fellow cattle because of the trivial matters of a fowl.)

6.0.2.6 The above is a symbolic representation of the set-up at the Teachers' Training College. Ramaila gives to the readers the set-up in the following descending order: The Superintendent (a white man) whom he calls 'mookamedi'; the white teachers whom he calls *dikgomo* (cattle); the black teachers whom he calls *dinku* (sheep); and the students whom he calls *dikgogo* (fowls). In his symbolism, Ramaila compares the disparity in the market values of the animals used in the superintendent's illustration, with that of the various groups at his establishment. Cattle cost more than sheep, and therefore white members of staff cannot be equal to black members of staff; sheep cost more than fowls, and therefore the black members of staff cannot be equal to the students. Ramaila would have appreciated if all the teachers were on the same plain; but that they are not, seems paradoxical to him. The superintendent's remark

"Ga ke rate go hlwa ke tshwenyana le dikgomo tša gešo ka baka la tabana tša kgogo".

(I do not want to keep on quarrelling with my fellow cattle because of the trivial matters of a fowl.)

is disquieting. Ramaila means that, right or wrong, the superintendent dare not quarrel with a fellow white member of his staff because of a black student. By this Ramaila brings the reader into a controversial situation which requires time and goodwill to solve.

6.0.2.7 Viewed at from another angle, Ramaila's protest is prophetic. He is against the post-primary schools for the blacks being headed by white head-masters. He is further protesting against the junior positions to which the blacks have been relegated in such schools. Ramaila would have liked that, in his great fury, the superintendent should have rather talked in defence of both *dikgomo* (cattle) and (sheep) *dinku* - in short, in defence of all his members of staff to indicate that they formed one unit under him. One can say that Mr Brown was also wrong by not reporting the confrontation he had had with his student to the superintendent. He punished him in the quiet and thus took the law into his own hands. It was incorrect because the superintendent would have been embarrassed if he had discovered the anomaly after a very long time. Because the student felt and knew that he was unfairly dealt with, he went to report the matter to the superintendent and, to his utter dismay, was greeted with the politically charged affront

"I dare not quarrel with my fellow white member of staff because of a black student".

- an irrevocable insult to the poor student. An official who occupies any high post should fight hard to avoid being ruled by his emotions. He should always strive to treat each case on its merits. To allay the sting of the above political

effusion, Ramaila tries to explain in the subsequent paragraph that the superintendent was otherwise a reasonable man who was at that time still worried by having expelled one of his favourite students. Ramaila fails to lure the reader into the belief that an angry man is like a mad man. A discerning reader will view Ramaila's explanation more as a pretext.

6.0.2.8 The above protest was prophetic in that today, very few post-primary schools for the blacks are headed by whites. The secondary schools, the high schools and some teacher training colleges are headed by blacks. It is only the primary, secondary, high schools, technical and trade schools and colleges with specialised training that are still headed by white principals. Indeed, Ramaila's eye saw very deep into the future by this protest. The black principals of the post-primary schools occasionally meet exactly with what Mr Brown, quoted above, met. It is, therefore, an error that is general amongst teachers of all races and of all times - an embarrassment to heads of schools.

6.0.2.9 Ramaila served the teaching profession for a 44 years continuous period. He is thus the rightful man to remark

"... Ee, ke 'titšhere', o hwetša moputso wa ge a ruta mo sekolong. Gomme hleng 'matitšhere' a mangwe ke badiidi ba ba phelelang ganong fela? Hleng moputsonyana wa bona ka moka o felela diaparong le dijong, go sena selo se se yang polokelong? ..."

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.133)

(Yes, he is a teacher, he receives a wage for teaching at the school. But why are the other teachers poor and live from hand to mouth? Why is their wage consumed by clothing and food without anything left for banking? ...)

The above remark is a protest in which Ramaila complains bitterly about the meagre salaries paid to teachers, especially the black teachers; and yet they perform such an invaluable task of enriching all communities with learned men and women in all walks of life. The cogency of Ramaila's protest cannot be doubted because he is one of the old teachers who started with very low salaries. But because by then commercial articles were still cheap and durable, it can be very interesting to find out, through statistical comparisons and evaluation, whether there has been any betterment in salaries in comparison with the present escalation in the cost-of-living and the accompanying inflation. Ramaila rightly complains that the meagre salaries are responsible for some teachers indulging in criminal malpractices in order to augment them. Ramaila remarks

"Ee! Re a tseba gore bomantsho ba ba sepelang ka dikoloi tša mohuta wo, ba rwala lebake kua Swaziland ba ye go le rekiša kua meepong"

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.134)

(Yes! We know that blacks who travel in posh cars carry dagga from Swaziland and sell it at the mines)

An affirmation that, because of the meagre salaries, teachers cannot afford to buy cars and those that do buy them, must have committed some malpractice of some kind, which in turn brought them a higher income. The higher income which made it possible for them to own cars.

6.0.3.0 Because of his meticulous observation and a penetrating eye, Ramaila's protests hit at all facets of life as far as the blacks are concerned. With the remark

"Ga re rate ngwetši ya gaTsolo"

Tsakata:1962, p.116)

(We do not want a Zulu bride)

Ramaila is found attacking the cultural set-up of the black races where some sort of inbreeding was practised in their marriages. In the past, a young man would always marry his cousin. Inter-tribal marriages were taboo. Although polygamy was practised with wives from other families, the first wife would always be the husband's cousin and would consequently always remain the chief wife of the family. She would always divide whatever was to be shared by the wives amongst them. Hence Tsakata's parents were tooth and nail gainst his wanting to marry a Zulu girl. He eventually married her very much against their will. Ramaila's protest on the traditional African marital system appears in the words:

"Tsakata ke motho wa mehla yeno, wa megopolo ye e bulegileng. O tseba gore motho yo mongwe le yo mongwe yo moso ke wa gabo O bona Afrika ka bophara".

(*Tsakata*:1962, pp.116-121)

(Tsakata is a modern person with an open mind. He knows that every black is his fellow man He has a broader view of Africa)

Ramaila's protest is that the blacks are one nation and that all the family or ethnically orientated marriages are unwarranted and dangerous to the nation as a whole. Today inter-ethnic marriages occur. This indicates that youth has successfully revolted against the old cultural usages. Ramaila's Tsakata seems to have opened the door for youth because today marriages between a Xhosa and a Venda, a Zulu

and a Coloured, a Tsonga and a Sotho and vice versa are a common feature. "Youth sees Africa as a whole and it regards itself as one."

6.0.3.1 Another interesting feature related to the above paragraph is that the orthography and the vocabulary used in *Tsakata* (1962) are not pure Northern Sotho, but an admixture of Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho and Tswana. In the 1930's and 1940's, there was a school of thought which suggested that there be one written language called 'Se-Afurika'. This school of thought originated in the Transvaal African Teachers' Association (T.A.T.A.) and had Dr. Nhlapo as its spearhead. Because of practical difficulties with regard to a common orthography and vocabulary for the many and diverse African languages, it later suggested that at least the three Sotho languages adopt one written form. This suggestion resulted in Ramaila's orthography in *Tsakata*. The orthography essentially accommodates Northern Sotho and to some extent, Tswana. The vocabulary, however, accommodates all the three Sotho languages. So, like *Tsakata*, the T.A.T.A. of that time "saw Africa as a whole and regarded itself as one nation".

6.0.3.2 The last protest which will be considered from the book, *Tsakata*, is given in the words:

"Melao e mebe e senya batho, le gona e tšweletša basenyi ba ba hlalefileng".

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.134)

(Bad laws spoil people and produce wise criminals.)

In his earnest desire for fairness and justice, Ramaila had to make this other protest. With this protest, Ramaila pleads

for salubrious laws which affect all sections of the South African community equally. In *Tsakata*, he remarks that laws which are meant for blacks only, are not respected by the South African blacks and whites. In the same way, the pass laws which are directed towards the blacks only are also not respected. Hence his remark

"Ge e le ye e beetšwego ba mmala wo moso fela,
yona ba a e nyatša. Molao wa pasa le ona ba a o
nyatša"

(*Tsakata*:1962, p.7)

(As for laws promulgated for the blacks only, those are despised. They also despise the pass laws.)

The fundamental basis of the pass laws is good and is, to facilitate one's identification when there is need for such. It is the practical application of the pass laws which is at times disconcerting. The black and white police sometimes use the pass laws to degrade and humiliate the carriers of the passes. At times, even when there is nothing materially wrong, a black walking along a street may be asked to produce his pass just to dehumanise him. Ramaila feels that if such a practice were something equitable, then it ought to apply to all the members of the South African community without any exceptions.

6.0.3.3 Ramaila mentions another dangerous aspect of the pass laws. It is that there are some people, both black and white, who have found in the pass laws, a means of acquiring money illegally. Such pass racketeers issue forged night passes, special passes, reference books, exemption certificates and sell them for sums ranging from R2,50 to R50,00. In so doing, they make large sums of money. Ramaila

protests that whilst the South African government is enforcing the carrying of passes by the blacks, it is not aware that it is strengthening the market of the white and the black pass racketeers. He quotes a pertinent example of Tsakata who, on finding himself jobless, took to the issuing of night passes illegally. In that way, he saved many people from arrest by the police at night, while at the same time, he was able to feather his own nest illegally. It is why Ramaila protests that *bad laws make people bad and also produce very cunning criminals*. How many times before and after this dictum of Ramaila's, have we not had groups, organisations and associations demanding the scrapping of the onesided or sectional pass laws. Even the extension of the pass laws to the black women was not achieved with all the smoothness which could have been expected, as in reality the blacks are not in favour of the pass laws at all. Hence the statement by Mr S.J. Lesolang: "all we need is the scrapping of all forms of discriminatory laws" (*Rand Daily Mail*:14/10/76, p.1).

6.0.3.4 Concerning the laws, Ramaila further points out the dangers of the unfair liquor act which did not permit the blacks free purchase of spirituous liquor. This prohibition produced two dangers. The first danger was that some poor whites infringed the segregation laws of the land and allowed blacks to enter into their homes to purchase and even consume liquor there. This practice brought the white criminals good sums of money and the rate of immorality also escalated. The second danger was that some blacks, especially those from the urban locations, obtained spirituous liquor illegally from such whites and removed it into the locations where, after doping it with methylated spirits, snuff, tobacco or tea, sold it to their clients at very high prices whilst

forgetting about the health of their clients. To substantiate this fact, Ramaila quotes Tsakata, a man who would collect money from the shebeen queens and bring them liquor illegally from the whites in town. Ramaila also mentions Tsakata's narrow escapes and escapades with the police. The main aim of the shebeen queens and men of Tsakata's calibre, was to obtain money no matter how illegally their money was procured. Their adage was the wicked saying 'crooked money also buys'. In his protest, Ramaila not only points out the gravity of the unjust pass laws and the discriminatory liquor laws; but also alerts those in authority on the maintenance of law and order, that there are many wise people amongst the whites and the blacks who make a fortune by violating both the pass and the liquor laws of the land. The protest on the unjust liquor laws can be regarded as prophetic because today the position has changed tremendously. The blacks have been granted free access into the bottle stores and some of them even have their own bottle stores. Consumption and purchase of liquor is now free to all. It is greatly surprising that with all the concessions made, the black market sale of liquor is still rife amongst the blacks all over South Africa.

6.0.3.5 Another little protest which one finds is in *Molomatsebe*. This protest is implied in the short story: "Ba laotše kobo ya morwediagwe (p.11)". It is expressed in the words:

"Ge e ba go kile gwa be go be go le therešo dikgagareng kgale, mo go tša bjale ga e sa le gona. Dingaka tše ntši tše tša masogana re di bonago di tletše naga, di ithutile maaka fela a go hwetša ditšhelete go batho ba ba sa tantšwego ke lefsifsi".

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.12)

(If ever there has been any truth in the divining bones in the past, in today's, it is no more there. These many young witch-doctors abounding in the land, have taught themselves lies by which they obtain money from people who are still caught by darkness.)

The above is a revolt on the young men who collect divining bones and thereby pose as witch-doctors when they have just learnt tricks of robbing or cheating people of their hard-earned money. Ramaila protests against such impostors and alerts his fellow blacks against such quacks. This is fully substantiated in the very short story because after the witch-doctor had worked on the mentality of the old woman who was frightened by the sight of an odd wild animal's embalmed skin in her daughter's kist, he ascribed this incident to the witches who were bent on destroying her. She then called Salome, her school-going daughter, to go and call her uncle at Rietkuil so that he could be witness to her impending destruction. But when Salome learnt of her mother's fears, she laughed heartily and explained that it was the lapel of her sister's overcoat that was removed from it and left in the kist. It had nothing to do with witchcraft. Ramaila feels that it is only the less educated who can believe in such things. But as stated earlier in this chapter, the so-called witch-doctors are a cultural heritage of the blacks because even enlightened people still pay nocturnal visits to them. Ramaila, like his fellow pastors, regards the witch-doctors as the emissaries of the devil. The paradox of all this is that at present, some of these witch-doctors are full-fledged church members. It should not be forgotten that even some white clients, who should be regarding the witch-doctors as the vassals of the devil, also go to them for charms or for the divination of their fortunes e.g. the late

famous Khotso Sethuntsha of the Transkei had such white clients. How then are the witch-doctors to be discredited effectively?

6.0.3.6 Ramaila's protest is also veiled in the short story:

"Moruti ke moruti kae le kae" (A pastor is a pastor everywhere) (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.30), where one of the fellow travellers in a railway coach lit his cigarette and threw the burning matches into the window crevice of the coach. It caught up with some bits of paper and fire ensued therefrom. Whilst the inmates of the coach were busy agreeing that the burning should be ascribed to some passenger who alighted at the Germiston station, an elderly reverend gentleman refuted what they were agreeing on and reiterated that he would not, under any circumstances, tell lies. He was prepared to tell the truth always. What a disposition! Although the conductor of the train later confirmed that the fire would do no harm to the coach, some passengers admired the uprightness of the reverend gentleman that, "anywhere and at any time, one should always stand for the truth". Though didactic, the protest in this story is significant in that it encourages one to have one's mind amidst any form of wayward opposition. About this, John Mander says:

"... Any criticism that is not purely preoccupied with technical matters, must be concerned to bring out the basic moral concern, the implied valuation of human attitudes and activities".

(*The Writer and Commitment*:1961, p.23)

6.0.3.7 Again, in the story "A timela" (He got lost), Ramaila's protest is clearer than in any of the short stories in *Molomatsebe* (1974). The protest is embedded in the words:

"... Taba ye nngwe ye bohloko ke go nyatšana le go ilana ga dilete le merafe le ditšhaba ka baka la mmala le tšwelopele le phenyano. Yona yeo e nnoši e šešerekanya tše ntši"

(*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.40)

(Another painful thing is for the races to despise and to shun one another on the basis of colour, progress and conquest. That alone confuses many things.)

Ramaila's protest here, is centered round a white farmer's family which dehumanised a Mo-Holla, a traveller who had lost his way on his trip to the dedication of a church at Frankfort in the Lydenburg district. As he strayed, he arrived at the farmer's house. With all humility, he tried to ask for his route there. But both the white lady of the house and her husband had nothing to do with the lost traveller. They were both so disinterested in him that in his frustration, he did not know what next to do. Their indifferent behaviour was so dehumanising to him, that it engendered bitterness in him. It is the type of behaviour to which Gerald Moore in an article entitled *The Politics of Negritude* refers to as 'racial snobbery - that is, an idea of hierarchy based on colour with the blackest at the bottom and the whitest at the top'. With this protest, Ramaila pleads that all the people of South Africa should learn to treat one another as fellow citizens of one land. The very family that showed such an unbecoming behaviour, would not have been happy if the same type of behaviour was meted out to it in its moment of dire need. Ramaila feels that colour, trimness and education should never prejudice a black in the eyes of a less educated white. The traveller (Ramaila), was travelling on horse-back, was well-dressed and had received some education (teacher-evangelist); and all these led to his dehumanising undoing. It is why he pleads for racial tolerance

amongst all the members of the South African community. He commiserates the preponderance of colour in our evaluation of values even in moments of great need. He is indirectly preaching God's law 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' (St.Luke 10:27). This is a great lesson and an appeal that Ramaila makes to all races in South Africa. It is therefore fitting that all South Africans should bury the hatchet and regard each other as bonafides of this beautiful country and consequently treat one another in a brotherly spirit.* In an article entitled *Protest against Apartheid*, Dennis Brutus has this to say about a writer:

"... a writer is a man who lives in a particular society and takes images and ideas from that society. He must write about what he sees around him and he must write truthfully about it"

(*Protest and Conflict in African Literature*:1974, p.100)

and this is true of Ramaila. Ramaila narrates of true incidents that he witnessed or about which he was told.

6.0.3.8 The evaluation of Ramaila's protest or revolt will be concluded with the short story "Oorlee Outa" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.42). In this story, Ramaila is not happy about the tenant conditions of the Commissie Drift farm people. He protests against their working very hard year in and year out, but remaining poor. These are the effects of the cheap labour system about which Cosmo Pieterse in an article entitled *Conflict in the Germ* remarks as follows

* See also *Bophelo bja Moruti Charles Machaba I*:1957, p.9.

"... That Union (1910) really can largely be seen as a kind of entente which was to make sure that henceforward the non-white population would remain a source of cheap labour, as cheap as possible, as mobile as possible in many ways".

(Protest and Conflict in African Literature:1974, p.2)

In this revolt, the reader feels that in the softest portion of his heart, Ramaila would have liked that the tenants be given such wages as would make them better people. This is implied in the words:

"... Commissie Drift ke felo ga thabo le khutšo ya dipelo, le ge batho ba ntshe ba swerwe ke bohloki le mediro e mathata. Motšwagošele ke yena a bonago gore ba phela tšhaparegong"

(Molomatsebe:1974, p.42)

(Commissie Drift is a pleasant and peaceful place even though its inhabitants are poor and hard-working. It is a stranger who will realise that they live in great need.)

The prophetic aspect of this protest lies in the fact that today, there are many farmers in South Africa who make their farm labourers work very hard, but at the same time pay them living wages, feed them well, and care for their health. This humanitarian attitude of some farmers has made their tenants not only obedient, but also responsible because the tenants admire the fact that their landlords really care for them as people and not as animals. They consequently delight in improving the harvest of their landlords and even in looking diligently after their pigs, cattle, sheep and poultry. They thus form a healthy community with their bosses. The last sentence of the above-quoted lines has a terrible sting. It reflects that they (the tenants), are so conditioned to their

poverty that they are happy in being poor and that it is only a casual visitor there, who will find their farm conditions abhorrent. Surely to live in such munificence when one's workers, irrespective of race or colour, live in abject poverty, is sinful according to humanity and Christianity. In such circumstances, there is nothing truer than the adage 'live and let live'.

6.0.3.9 In the very same story is found another protest on p.43 where Ramaila concludes his description of the beautiful Wagenspruit Native School with the words

"... o bilego o rona ge o le mo dipolaseng,
mo bodulo bja batho bo se nago medu"
(... which fits badly by being on the farms,
where there is no security of land tenure.)

Here Ramaila protests against the insecurity of the life of the blacks living on farms. The Wagenspruit Native School was a beautifully built school because of the humane disposition of the farmer towards his tenants who worked for him honourably. Here one scents that Ramaila knew of incidents where, with the change of farm ownership, the next owners would have nothing to do with the schools. They would close them down and convert the school buildings into barns or sheds, and this would consequently lead to a great trek of all the parents who liked their children to attend school, to the next farms where education was provided for. It is why Ramaila revolts in the above quotation: "... mo bodulo bo se nago medu ..." (where there is no security of tenure). The new farm-owner in revenge would pull down the huts and plough over the graves of the beloved children, spouses, parents and relatives of the people

who trekked from his farm - an indication of a gross behaviour of an uncivilised human being. In this protest, Ramaila indirectly suggests that conditions on the farms can improve tremendously if the farm-owner co-operates with his tenants. The farm-owner will also realise that his tenants are a valuable asset towards the development of his farm. Thanks to the humane farmers who, through their kind disposition towards their tenants, have ably won their hearts by catering for them widely and in so doing, have succeeded in making them respectful, responsible and diligent.

6.0.4.0 In conclusion it should once more be emphasised how important it is, for a student of literature, to form an idea of the man behind the book, that is, the author. The book is nothing else but the expression of the man; the book is nothing else but the man trying to impart to the reader some of his feelings and philosophies about life. Ramaila, the pastor, teacher and philosopher, wrote to point out the injustices done by man to man. His aim was to make his readers spot the incongruities in life so as to strive for fairness and justice in all their dealings with one another. Hence John Mander says

"In imaginative fiction the subjective element, the reflecting, the judging mind of the author, is certainly present".

(*The Writer and Commitment*:1961, p.17)

Chapter VII

POETRY

7.0.0.0 In addition to his contributions to the Northern Sotho literature on biography, historical narrative, the novel and the short story, Ramaila also tried his hand at poetry. Ramaila's poetry can be divided into two categories namely, traditional poetry as found in *Seriti sa Thabantsho* (1961) and modern poetry as found in the poem 'Mmutla' and a few hymns found in the Lutheran hymnal.

Seriti sa Thabantsho (1961) (The dignity of Thabantsho)*

7.0.0.1 It is an anthology of praises and historical narrative poems on the tribes and clans found in all the Northern Sotho speaking areas of the Transvaal. In the poems, the chiefs or heroes of a particular tribe or clan are being praised. About praise poems W.H. Hudson says:

"Their themes are furnished in the deeds of heroes ..., and vast bodies of immemorial traditions provide the basis of their structure".

(*Introduction to the study of Literature:1940, p.138*)

Inspiration towards the writing of the poems

7.0.0.2 In January 1931, Ramaila left Botšhabelo (in the

* Maleewskop = A place in the Middelburg district where Thabantsho mountain is found.

Middelburg District) for a visit to Thabantsho (at Maleewskop).^{*} It was during his visit there that he walked to the foot of Thabantsho, a mountain at the foot of which the Bakopa tribe was almost annihilated in a pitched battle with the Swazi warriors on 10th May, 1864. Rev. A. Serote sang the lamentations of this tragic battle in the poem "Sello sa Thabantsho" (*Tša Bophelo bya Moruti A. Serote:1935, p.7*). It was while Ramaila was relaxing under a morula tree at the foot of this mountain, and from the reminiscences of Rev. A. Serote's poem on the atrocities committed on his people at the mountain, that he started pondering over the praises which he knew of some chiefs and heroes of some Northern Sotho tribes. This generated in him a yearning for the collection and restoration of more such praises of other chiefs, indunas, tribes and heroes - a project which is still carried on by Radio Bantu today.

Method of collection of the material

7.0.0.3 Ramaila had to move from place to place in order to gather praises of the various chiefs, heroes and tribes from those who still remembered them. At times he had to get the praises from the various tribesmen who had been economically lured into the urban areas. Apart from getting the praises from various consultations with individuals from different places, Ramaila also discovered that wedding feasts provided a fertile ground where one could listen to praises freely given. The wedding couple was showered with praises as it entered into the home of the bridegroom or bride. Ramaila would then write down the poem of that tribe or clan

from the reciter. In this manner, Ramaila was able to collect sufficient praise poems which led to the appearance of the anthology, *Seriti sa Thabantsho*, 1961.

7.0.0.4 From the above description of Ramaila's method of collecting the poems the reader is made aware of the fact that the poems are not his own composition. Ramaila does not reveal his philosophies in them. They do not express his nostalgia, his emotions or his desires. They are not similar to poems like those of Bopape and Ratlabala in *Ithute Direto*; Mamadi's in *Mekgolokwane*; Emma Ramaila's in *Direto*; Matsepe's in *Molodi wa Thaga, Todi ya Dinose, Molodi wa Mogami, Phalafala ya Koma* and *Kwela Pele*. What Ramaila did was to collect them, arrange their words into various lines and stanzas, and also give footnotes on the meanings of obscure, semi-archaic words and phrases, and obscure references. About the recording of praise poems, A.J. Moloi remarks as follows:

"But some recorders of praise poems were not faithful. They interfered with the original poems in order to allow room for stanza divisions - and at times rhyming! They were giving what they thought was the correct form of these traditional praises. Instead their revised praises sounded hollow and monotonous".

(*A Comparative study of the poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla*:1968, p.10)

7.0.0.5 The above remark accounts for the differences that obtain in the poem on Chief Sekwati in *Kgomo 'a tshwa!* by D. Phala and in *Seriti sa Thabantsho* by E.M. Ramaila: e.g.

"Ke nna Sekwati sa Mmaboforohlo,
Sekwatakwatiša motho botlakala".

(*Seriti sa Thabantsho*)

and

"Ke nna Sekwatikwati-sa-boMaforohlwe
Bokgomo, sekwatiša-motho-botlakala".

(Kgomo 'a tshwa!)

These two praises are not identical; but their general content is basically similar.

7.0.0.6 Traditional praise poems refer to that type of poetry which was carried orally from one generation to another. This was caused by the fact that before the arrival of the missionaries from overseas, writing was unknown to the Northern Sotho people. Their poetry had to be perpetuated orally as there was no other means of restoring it. A hero would, for instance, accomplish a deed of valour and be praised for it. Should he accomplish another deed, the second praise would be composed and added onto the first one. More such deeds would eventually lead to a long praise poem on the hero. Breed (1956, p.34) remarks

"... die pryslied, ... is ook die grootste digterlike prestasie van die Sotho, waarop hulle ook met reg baie trots is".

What should not be lost sight of is that the praise poems were meant for the *ear* and not for the *eye*. Hence the complete absence of rhyme about which Breed (1956, p.39) remarks

"By die tradisionele poësie van die Noord-Sotho ontbreek rym en rymsisteem heeltemaal ... hieruit lei ons af dat rym geen noodsaaklike vereiste vir goeie poësie is nie".

To make up for the absence of rhyme, the Northern Sotho praise poem obtains its beauty from the employment of stylistic features such as rhythm, chiasmus, parataxis, repetition, alliteration and imagery, especially the metaphor.

Contents of *Seriti sa Thabantsho* (1961)

7.0.0.7 The poems in this anthology are centered around chiefs, tribes, clans and heroes of the various Northern Sotho speaking tribes in the Transvaal. There are, for instance, poems on the Bapedi tribe, and under them are included poems on chiefs such as Thulare, Sekwati, Sekhukhune, Mampuru, Legadimane and Ntwampe. Still under the praises of the Bapedi tribe are included poems on the heroes such as Dikotope, Ramphelane, Morewane, Mamarege, Nkw'amasogana, Ntšana and Motodi, and finally that of the Magabeng clan entitled "Moukangwe". In this manner are given praises on some inhabitants of Lydenburg, and on the Batau, the Mapulana, the Matlala, the Tisana, the Bakopa, the Bantwane, the Bakgatla, the Bahwaduba, the Mphahlele, the Molepo, the Mamabolo, the Dikgale, the Letsoalo, the Banareng, the Phalaborwa, the Balobedu, the Batlokwa, the Matlala-a-thaba, the Moletši, the Mashashane, the Bahananwa, the Bakhudu, and the Baphiring. This anthology has variety in its universal interest. There are the best and richest praises in each tribe. An interesting feature of this anthology is that it enables the reader to learn through the similarity of totems which tribes are related and which are not, irrespective of geographical location.

7.0.0.8 Praise poems are popular in the Northern Sotho

literature. Almost every author tries his pen on praise poems and the younger generation even choose, though wrongly, to name their collections on poetry, praise poems. Examples of these are found in *Ithute Direto* of Bopape and Ratlabala; *Khungwane le direto tše dingwe* of J. Khaas; *Meeno le Direto* of Emma Ramaila; *Direto tša Mang le Mang* of H. Lentsoane. The atmosphere of some of Segooa's poems inclines more towards the traditional poetry. In Machaka's volumes of poetry such as *Therešo*, *Mehlodi ya Polelo* and *Naledi* and in Mamadi's *Mekgolokwane* are found poems composed on the traditional mould. Changes in poetic composition are noted in E.K.K. Matlala's *Manose*, in Khaas' *Khungwane le direto tše dingwe*, in some of Mamadi's poems in *Mekgolokwane* and later also in O.K. Matsepe's volumes of Poetry.

7.0.0.9 Mention has already been made of the fact that the poems in *Seriti sa Thabantsho* were not meant for the eye; but for the ear. When writing down these praises, Ramaila made errors which may impair the reader's comprehension. Some common nouns are written with a capital letter as if they are proper nouns, whilst some proper nouns are written with a small letter as if they are common nouns. For example, Chief Thulare praises himself as follows:

"Ke nna seithotledi sa gaRakau,
Rakau a Modise a dihlašana".

(p.11)

(I am an adventurer of Rakau,
Rakau of Modise of Dihlašana.)

The above is a typical example of parataxis as the two lines are joined without the employment of a conjunction. The error

in the above is that the word *Dihlašana* is a person's name and should, therefore, be written with a capital letter. Chief Thulare goes on to say

"Ke wa sepitla 'a Mangana
 Sepitla Mmabatome 'a Makwa
 E a pitlilego mpa tša mogolonkwane ..."
 (I am of sepitla of Mangana
 Squeezer of Mmabatome of Makwa
 Who squeezed the elder Nkwane's tummy.)

The first 'sepitla' is a name and should begin with a capital letter and 'mogolonkwane' is wrongly written. It should be 'mogolo Nkwane', for the elder Nkwane. There is also a pun between the name 'Sepitla' and the deverbative 'sepitla' meaning the squeezer. Chief Thulare prides himself on the fact that he has been able to defeat (squeeze) the enemies, a feat which had not been achieved by his elders.

How the praise poems have to be recited

7.0.1.0 The traditional bard would adorn himself with ostrich feathers on the head and legs, arm himself with an assegai and a shield; and around his waist dorn a G-string (stertriem) made of some animal skin and between its belt and the body thrust a knobkierie.

7.0.1.1 He would stand at a place where he would be seen by all listeners, then recite his praise fast with a highly-pitched voice whilst moving this way and that, 'brandishing his spear', and occasionally stabbing the ground to indicate the number of his enemies who succumbed to his

spear. An act which a coward would not perform lest he be killed by his 'comrades in arms', for he would be mocking at the heroes as none succumbed to his spear. In the words of Cook (1931), he must begin "like a fire-engine". As he proceeds with the praise, he will go on making deliberate rests after the completion of each 'thought unit'. A technique where a thought is introduced, developed, expanded and completed; then to be followed by another which is different but similarly treated. The deliberate rests were made to allow the audience to cheer the reciter with ovations and ululations. This poetic feat is what made Prof. C.M. Doke remark

"they revel in smart sayings and witty turns of expression, for they had the germ of literary criticism in their blood".

The Basis of Bantu Literature:1948, p.284)

7.0.1.2 When a chief or a hero praised himself, he would start first with his name by way of introduction. Then would follow the names of his parents, his clan or leniage and then the heroic deeds that he committed. Chief Thulare (p.11) says:

"Ke nna seitlhotledi sa ga Rakau,
Rakau a Modise a dihlašana".
(I am Seitlhotledi of Rakau,
Rakau of Modise of dihlašana.)

Chief Sekati (p.12) says:

"Ke Phaahle a Bauba,
Kgatswatswa a Mabjana".
(I am Phaahle of the Bauba,
A hero of the Mabjana age-group.)

The Masemola people (p.30) say:

"Re ba Masemola a Poo le Mokwene,
bana ba nong e kgolo Matlebjane".
(We are the people of Masemola of Poo and Mokwene
the children of the big bird Matlebjane.)

And Chief Podile (p.77) says:

"Letsoalo la Mmatau a Magaša"
(The Letsoalo of Mamtau of Magaša.)

7.0.1.3 After the introduction as given above, follows the heroic deeds or names of places at which he fought. Chief Sekwati (p.12) says:

"Ka molamo wa tshipi ka hlatlogela Leolo"
(With an iron kierie, I ascended the Lulu mountain.)

From the following, it is evident that Chief Sekhukhune (p.15) at one time fought against the Bakgatla tribe near Pienaars-rivier in the Warmbaths district. He says:

"Nokan'e ya Bakgatla ke nokana mang?
Ke nna. Ke Moretele a noka ke retetše"
(This Bakgatla stream, what type of rivulet is it?
It is I. I am Moretele of a river I am defiant)*

In the same manner, Chief Thulare (p.11) informs the readers that he has been to Moletlane (Zebediela), Dikgale (Eastern

* Chief Sekhukhune was worried by the arrival of Sir T. Shepstone's troops, which defeated Gen. Joubert's troops. He had feared that they would join hands against him. Hence his defiance "Ke retetše" (I am defiant).

Pietersburg) and deep in Vendaland. This can be inferred from the words:

"Ge ke yo bona Sethele Moletlane,
Sethele ke hwetša a tšhabile.
Wene ngwanana a ga Dikgale tša ga Molapo!

- - - - -

E a pitlilego mpa tša mogólo Nkwane
A gobelanya le tša Ramapulana Tswetla".
(When I went to see Sethele at Zebediela,
I found Sethele had fled.
You daughter of Dikgale of Molapo!

- - - - -

One who vanquished the elder Nkwane's warriors
And brought even those of Ramapulana of Tswetla to their knees.)

7.0.1.4 Since in almost all the poems in this anthology, each chief or hero praises his own bravery and compares it with that of the various objects found in nature, it is not surprising that the poems are rich in metaphor. A chief or a hero compares his bravery with that of a lion, a tiger, an elephant, a buffalo, a river or a mountain. Of this Guma (1967: p.145) says:

"Praises were composed for wild and domestic animals, thus indicating that the praisers were intrigued by them and their habits"

Metaphor is, therefore, the cornerstone of the traditional praise poem. The copulative construction "ke nna" (I am) is the key phrase to the metaphoric expressions. In many instances only the copulative prefix "ke" (I) without the proper personal possessive pronoun of the first person singular is used to introduce the metaphor. Chief Sekwati (p.12) compares himself to a flat sharp instrument used in the scraping of hides, skins

and blocks of wood as follows:

"Ke phalo 'a mmasefala 'a mathoko,
E ba rego gare ke šio thula kobô maroba".
(I am a scraper which scrapes at the fringes
Of whom it is said in the middle I fear to
punch holes in the garment.)

Chief Mabowe II (p.32) says"

"Ke thelele phuur'a nawa ga ke butšwe"
(I am a cunning hard bean which never gets well-cooked.)

by which he indicates that he is cunning "thelele" and very headstrong as a hard bean that defies being well-cooked, by which he implies that he never gives in. Chief Mabelekwa Mabowe (p.31) says:

"Ke Mmakgati ya mafarafara Kumodi,
Kgati itiya bagwera ba rrago"

by which he compares himself to a lash which is able to lash even his father's mates. By this he indicates to the audience that he defeated tribes which his father had failed to defeat; and last but not least, the Nchabeleng people (p.36) compare their bravery with a sharp axe as follows:

"Ngwana 'a selepe gomela mere o remile,
O se tl'a ba wa rema mehweletšana thabeng,
Wa rema le mehwele-tshipi,
wa se kukubatša malootšo"

by which they express that their warriors should stop their plunder as they had already murdered many of their opponents

and should they continue, they would find themselves having killed a chief, an act which is not in keeping with their custom. A chief is rarely ever murdered in the battle-field, but is taken captive. Their sharp axes knew no bounds and could lead to their breaking of tribal etiquette.

Relationship amongst tribes

7.0.1.5 Traditional praise poems are valuable in that they indicate the relationship that exists amongst the various Northern Sotho tribes. The praise on the Bakgaditsi, whether they are in Botlokwa near Zoekmekaar or in Sekhukhune-land (Lydenburg District), indicates that they originated from the same place. Their praise poem assumes the same form

"Re Bakgaditsi se meetse monepenepeng,
 Batho ba boago thetelego 'a bodiba,
 ba boago Kgaditsi meetse-magakwe,
 mogobe nkego noka-hloka-boelelo"
 (We are the Bakgaditsi of the cool waters under the
 huge trees,
 People who come from the round expanse of water,
 Who come from Kgaditsi's abounding waters
 and expanse of water like a river without an end.)

Similarly the Bakgaga of Mphahlele's location in the Pietersburg district, are related to the Ntwampes. This is arrived at by comparing the praises on Chief Ntwampe (p.20) and Chief Mmutle (p.64), where we get the words:

"A gona Magadimana kua tlase Magakala,
 Gabo Ntwampe Mokgatle e mohubedu"

(There are the Magadimana* down at Magakala,
At the home of Ntwampe, the light-complexioned Mokgatle.)

The Bakgaga are also related to the Ndebele. Chief Mmutle I
(p.64) says:

"Hee! Wena setšwamadi morw'a Mokopana 'a hlogo tša Matebele,
O botše morwa'go a se hlwe a fotla,
A kgabutla tebele seuwe sa gagwe.
Ke ngwana wa go tswalwa ke Kekana a boritša-a-borofa."
(Hey! You Setšwamadi son of Mokopana, the leader of the Ndebele,
Tell your son to discontinue his rudeness
By talking his slang Ndebele.
I am a child born of the venerable Kekana.*)

That the Molepo people are also related to the Ndebeles can
be inferred from Chief Molepo's praise (especially on p.68):

"Ke babo Maiša Letebele
Mokidikitla a ga Mmatshwaane
Maiša ga ke Lekgatla ke Letebele"
(They are of Maiša, the Ndebele,
The plumb one of Mmatshwaane
Maiša I am not a Kgatla but a Ndebele)

Another feature which indicates relationship amongst tribes
is the totem. The Letsoalo around Tzaneen have a 'buffalo'
as their totem; but the Modiba near Pietersburg and the
Bahwadubas near Pretoria also have the same totem. The
Modjadji near Duiwelskloof have a 'pig' as their totem; whilst
the Mamabolo near Pietersburg and the Mukhavhuli near Sibasa
also have the 'pig' as their totem.

- * Magadimana is an age-group name. Those who were circumcised together.
- * Kekana is a prominent chief of the Ndebeles who stay at the Zebediela area.

7.0.1.6 When studying *Seriti sa Thabantsho* (1961), students should not lose sight of the fact that the praises were not meant for the reading public; but for the listening public. Hence the auditive decorations of the praises through repetition of sounds and employment of ideophones as in

"Ke nna Sekwati sa Mamboforohlo,
Sekwatakwatiša motho botlakala"
(I am Sekwati of Mamboforohlo
A hard nut to crack)

where the syllables 'Se-kwa-ti', 'se-kwa-ta' and 'kwa-ti-ša' immediately after 'sekwata' make a beautiful sound play to the ear. The hero of *Tisana* (p.45) praises himself in the words:

"Lekgaru, lekgarumela nkwe,
Nkwe le yona ya mo kgarumela,
Gwa dula lekgakgaru-kgaru-kgaru"
(Lekgaru, the dauntless attacker of the tiger
Whom the tiger also attacked, and
There developed a frantic battle)

where the first two lines give a beautiful example of an anaphora. The first line ends with the word 'nkwe' (tiger), whilst the second line begins with it. Further the rhythm brought about by the syllables 'kga-ru' and 'kga-kga-ru' in the above stanza produce a very beautiful alliteration.

7.0.1.7 The traditional praise poems have a poetic beauty of their own as in them are found the repetition of the same meaning in different words, parallelism, parataxis, chiasmus and an elegant use of imagery, especially the metaphor. Their rhythm is superb and adds up to the stirring up of emotions. The praise poems, 'unlike Western poetry which

depends on rhyme and metre; depend on a balance of thought, conveyed by a corresponding balance of sentence, which is accompanied by rhythm'. The quotations given under 7.0.1.5 are good illustrations of this fact. For the prosodic analysis of praise poems, the readers are referred to Prof. P.S. Groenewald's *Die Struktuur van Verssistees van Noord-Sotho*, 1966.

Modern Poetry

7.1.0.0 The sub-heading 'modern poetry' as used above, does not presuppose that Ramaila ever wrote any volume of modern poetry as poets such as Machaka, Lentsoane, Matsepe and others did. Here reference is made to the poem "Mmutla", which Ramaila contributed to Dr. P.E. Schwellnus' *Padišo* series Std.I and the four hymns found in the Lutheran hymnal. The hymns are: "Khutšo e teng, 196" (There is peace), "Jesu swika la mehleng, 271" (Jesus rock of ages), "Lešego le le nthabišang, 293" (A blessing that pleases me), and "Ge le hlabile, 310" (When the sun has risen).

7.1.0.1 Concerning the composition of the poem, 'Mmutla', and the four hymns, the reader should not underrate the influence which Dr. P.E. Schwellnus and the other German missionaries had on Ramaila. Dr. Schwellnus was a keen writer of music and prose. That was in addition to his occupation as a minister of religion.

7.1.0.2 Life at the Botšhabelo mission station was completely different from the life in the tribal areas. Apart

from the religious atmosphere prevailing there, Botšhabelo was also a seat of learning. Anything tribal and traditionally orientated, was bound to clash with the precepts of the white missionaries and their black converted community as it would be regarded as tainted with heathenism. Little wonder then that Ramaila's poem and the hymns were based completely on the western pattern of rhyme and metre.

7.1.0.3 The first stanza of the poem, 'Mmutla', reads as follows:

"Lešokeng, lešokeng, (a) (8)
 Mmutla o be o le teng. (a) (9)
 Mabjanyeng a matalana, (b) (9)
 Moriting wa dihlašana, (b) (8)
 Me o khutša segoleng, (a) (8)
 Me o khutša segoleng. (a) (8)

A closer look at the above stanza makes one aware of the simple yet logical arrangement of facts which can be comprehended easily by the Std.1 pupils. The poem is further made memorable not only by its flowing rhythm, but also by the repetition in the first line of each stanza and the couplet which constitutes a refrain at the end of each stanza. Further, each line consists of eight syllables on the average, with the longest line containing nine e.g.

"Le-šo-ke-ng, le-šo-ke-ng, (8)
 M-mu-tla-o-be o-le-te-ng. (9)

Together with these lines of approximately equal length, the reader also observes the rhyme scheme which is aa,bb,aa for each stanza as indicated between brackets above, and a feature

about which Breed (1956, p.100) says

"Rym is 'n inherente kenmerk wat deur die digter maklik benut kan word."

The employment of liquids such as "ng, ny, m, n and l" gives the poem its mellow beauty; whilst the ejectives "k, tl, t, p, and tš", give the poem its jerks and staccato. The interplay of the quoted speech sounds results in a melodious piece of work which has been facilitated by the impeccable choice of words.

7.1.0.4 The development of the story in the poem, 'Mmutla', is well-arranged and properly graded for a Std.1 class. The hare is resting peacefully in its lair under some shrubs in the veld. There come hunters with their hounds. It jumps out of its lair, is chased and is eventually caught by the hounds. Ramaila creates pathos in the very last couplet of the poem

"Bjang bo sa le mogolong,
Bjang bo sa le mogolong".
(The grass still being in its throat.)

The above couplet is pathetic because the hare, like some other wild animals, normally hunts for food during the night; whilst during the day, it rests and ruminates. It was just when the poor hare was still resting and chewing the cud, that the vicious hunters disturbed it, chased it with their hounds and caught it. The poem gives a beautiful description of how hunters catch hares. It gives a Std.1 pupil a logical sequence of facts which can be used in an essay on the hunting for hares.

7.1.0.5 The hymns quoted at the beginning of this sub-heading on 'modern poetry', have one underlying trend - a sort of choral reef that permeates them all. It is this that Ramaila, a devout Christian and pastor, has entrusted his life exclusively to Jesus. To him, life without Jesus is worthless and empty. Hence his strong assertion that peace can only be found in and through Jesus (Hymn 196) and that Jesus is an everlasting rock from which comfort and protection can be got (Hymns 271 & 293). The repetition of "Khutšo e teng" (There is peace) at the beginning of all the verses of hymn 196 emphasises the security a Christian gets in Jesus; and the refrain "Khutša fa!", singles out Jesus as the only fountain of peace. The last Hymn (310) is more on man's association and communion with God, the saviour and maker of all things. In the last stanza of this hymn, Ramaila pleads

"Ge ditlalelo le komelelo
Di ka re wela ke sa kgopela:
O be le rena go iša lehung"
(If distress and drought
can beset us I still plead:
be with us until death.)

Briefly, Ramaila's hymns constitute an outpour of his philosophies and religious fervour towards God.

7.1.0.6 In his composition of music and verse, Ramaila was influenced by the missionaries to use rhyme and metre. It was the current method on authorship of hymns which was approved of by the Lutheran missionaries. Hence all the hymns in the hymnal *Difela tša Kereke* (Church Hymns) are characterised by rhyme and metre. As in the poem "Mmutla", Ramaila followed the rhyme scheme aa,bb, or aa,bb,cc, with

variations as in hymn 310 verse 3:

"Tšona kwanyana le dinonyana, a
 Le dihlašana le mabyanyana a
 Di reta mmopi ge di le thabong. b
 Dijo le pula le bjona bophelo c
 Le thušo yohle go se na bofelo c
 Di tšwa go yo a leng kwa godimong..... b
 (They the lambs and birds,
 And shrubs and grasses
 Praise the creator when in jubilation.
 Food and rain and life itself
 And all the help without end
 Come from the one in heaven above.)

It should be noted that in the hymns, the first letter of each line is capitalised irrespect of the syntactic structure. It should further be noted that the rhyme scheme is similar to aa,bb,cc, with only this difference that the "b" occurs at the end of the third and the sixth line.*

7.1.0.7 Serote and Ramaila have been pioneers in the composition of Northern Sotho poetry on the Western pattern of metre and rhyme. Younger poets like Machaka, Lentsoane, Madisha, Matsepe and many others followed this convention of writing down Northern Sotho poetry.

* Refer also to Prof. Groenewald's remark given under 3.0.1.5 in this work.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

8.0.0.0 The foregoing is an exposition on the various works that came from Ramaila's pen. The readers are now able to realise that Ramaila tried his hand on the various Northern Sotho literary genres. He had also wanted to publish a manuscript on the *Book of Moses*, but his mentor, Dr. P.E. Schwellnus,* discouraged him.

8.0.0.1 The publication of the book, *Tša Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote* in 1935 has been recognised as marking the dawn of the Northern Sotho secular literature. After it, followed works such as *Tša Bophelo bja Moruti Charles Machaba I* (1938) by Charles Machaba II, *Tsiri* (1942) by M.J. Madiba, *Motangtang* (1943) by Phalane, *Kgamphuphu* (no year) by P.M. Mamogobo. Biography does not seem to have been popular amongst the Northern Sotho authors because since Ramaila's book, biographies have been appearing sporadically e.g. *T.P. Mathabathe* (1970) by C.P. Senyatsi and *Kgoši Sekwati Mampuru* (1973) by H.M. Nkadimeng.

8.0.0.2 With the publication of *Setlogo sa Batau* (1938), Ramaila did pioneering work in the field of historical narratives. A field through which Ramaila aimed at the restoration of tribal histories which heretofore existed orally. This field also had an impact on some Northern Sotho

* Dr. P.E. Schwellnus in a letter dated 20th August, 1938 advised Ramaila not to publish the manuscript on the *Book of Moses* as it would have been too big, too expensive and too difficult for the pupils who were by then not yet avid readers.

authors and led to the appearance of works such as *Ba gaMphahlele* (1942) by Phatudi, *Batau ba a tšitlana* (1973) by M.M. Makgaleng, *Mokone wa Mabula* (1974) by M.C. Boshielo, and *Lešiko la Baaparankwe* (1976) by D.P. Sekhukhune.

8.0.0.3 In the novel, *Tsakata* (1962), Ramaila describes the life in the urban and rural areas convincingly. The exposition of the chicanery which obtains in the life in the urban areas has been well-laid out, and in contrast, the calm life in the rural areas, together with its problems, has also been convincingly unfolded. *Tsakata* is not the first novel that appeared in the Northern Sotho literature; but the impression it made on the Northern Sotho reading public, resulted in H.Z. Motuku's *Dithomo* (1961) and E.R. Dolamo's *Mahlale* (1961). The appreciable heights reached by the novel in the Northern Sotho literature today, from its humble beginnings in the 1940's, is attributable to Ramaila who spurred younger authors with his *Tsakata* to undertake novel-writing. The greatest among the young authors was O.K. Matsepe with his eight novels: *Sebatakgomo*, *Kgorong ya Mošate*, *Lešitaphiri*, *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, *Letšofalela*, *Kgati ya Moditi*, *Tšhelang Gape*, *Tša ka Mafuri*. Matsepe is the most prolific writer Northern Sotho has ever had. From Ramaila, Matsepe has learnt many things amongst which can be mentioned: allusions to the Holy Scriptures in his writings and the mixture of prose and poetry in some of his works. About this manner of writing, Breed (1956, p.107) comments as follows:

"..., byvoorbeeld in Ramaila se *Tsakata*, waar hy die verhaal op 'n paar plekke met 'n pryslied of 'n jaglied afwissel".

The above is one of the stunts that Ramaila used in *Tsakata* and *Setlogo sa Batau* to captivate the interest of the readers.

8.0.0.4 The short stories in *Molomatsebe* and *Taukobong* reflect Ramaila as a precise and ponderous author. Although they are didactic, the moral does not loom large but is skilfully weaved into the narratives so that Ramaila ably avoids boring his readers with didacticism. The skilful use of language, the flowing style, apt characterisation and the beautiful description of milieu, make Ramaila's short stories the best ever written in the Northern Sotho literature. Younger authors such as Dolamo, Ramokgopa, Maditsi, Matlala, Makgakga tried their pens on this genre but their works fall short of Ramaila's.

8.0.0.5 Ramaila has to be thanked greatly for his invaluable attempts at the restoration of the praise poems in his *Seriti sa Thabantsho*. In this regard mention can also be made of D. Phala with his *Kgomo a tshwa* and Ramokgopa with his *Mofolletšhi*. *Seriti sa Thabantsho* was of such a high standing that it won a first prize award in the Union-wide Bantu Literary Competition which was organised by the Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel in October, 1953. The delay in the final circulation of the book was caused by Ramaila himself as he had wanted to add more praise poems. Today determined efforts are being made by Radio Bantu to visit the various Northern Sotho speaking areas with the sole purpose of retrieving the traditional praise poems which might die in the mouths of the old folk together with the indigenous culture that is embedded in them. In one of his letters to Ramaila dated 25th April 1955, Mr J. Breed writes from the University of Potchefstroom

as follows:

"... Dit is net baie jammer dat vandag se Sotho-kindere dit nie meer hoor nie. Hulle verloor baie, want dit is die rykdom van die nasie ...".

It is what will happen to the traditional praise poem if it is allowed to die unrecorded.

8.0.0.6 It is unfortunate that Ramaila could not leave the Northern Sotho literature a legacy of a volume of modern poetry, apart from a few poems one of which is 'Mmutla' (The hare) and the four hymns in the Lutheran hymnal. Ramaila's modern poetry has already been discussed in Chapter VII.

8.0.0.7 Certain facts stand out prominently when one evaluates Ramaila's style. Compared with Serote whose reckless characters usually end up in death, Ramaila always looks forward to the reform of his characters. Very often he goes into a beautiful and exciting description of a villain's life. To make this point clear, reference will be made to "Letšoba le le ponnego" (A withered flower - *Molomatsebe*:1974, p.113). The lovely Mirriam's life is traced from her gracious youthful days

"mola a kgokološa dipesalema tše ntši ka hlogo go tloga mathomong go iša mafelelong a tšona ka lentšu le le natefago".

Molomatsebe:1974, p.117)

(When she recited many psalms from memory from the beginning to the end in a sweet voice.)

The end is not death; but simply an observation

"o šetše a kile a phela le banna ba bararo ka ntle ga Lepolantane lela la methomo, mme ka moka bao ba mo onaditše ba lahlile (p.117)

... se kgaetšedi a se dumago ke gore ... a nyake tebalelo. Ga go tsebje ge seo se tla be sa direga. Fela ge motho a lebelela Miriam, a šetša mekgwa le go ela dipolelo tša gagwe hloko, gona ga a bone selo, ge e se letšoba le le ponnego".

(She has already cohabited with three men besides the first Nyasa man, and all those have ruined and thrown her away ... what her brother wishes is that ... she should hunt for forgiveness. It is not known whether that will ever happen. But when one looks at Miriam, observes her behaviour and listens carefully to her talks, one sees nothing but a withered flower.)

It is in this way that Epaphras avoided the heart-rending and tragic style of his uncle's.

8.0.0.8 A commendable aspect of Ramaila's style is the eloquent flow of his narratives and his masterly use of words and idiom. In the words of Breed (1962, p.62), "hy is 'n baasverteller". He knows and uses beautiful Pedi as is evident in his short stories. The rich idiom used appropriately and balanced with gripping description, makes him a very pleasant writer to read. Any story is a treasure to enjoy. A case in point is the story: "Mojatshweswane yabo motho o lefa ka noni yabo" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.56). In this story one gets a variety of expressions, basic idioms, proverbs and improvised idioms such as 'lehono ke lehono' (today is today), 'soka badimo' (disobey the gods), 'ke tlo re tho! ka lobela dintši' (I will deliver a death stroke so that flies can feast), 'dilo di sa bonwe' (reluctance to see things which frighten), 'pula nkgodiše ke je maraka' (rain make me grow so that I eat vegetable-marrow) and many others including the Zulu expression 'umhlaba awukhulumi kukhuluma umuntu' (the

ground does not speak, only a person speaks).

8.0.0.9 His use of idiom is not only vivid but is also enriched by praise in brief form e.g. 'moruleng wa pholo' (the big marula tree), 'thole sa boLeihlo le-bona-kgomo' (the cow of Leihlo and company, which sees a beast), 'lenyakorela mokaka' (the cow the udder of which waxes big), 'ke naso ya matima-diša' (the black cow whose milk quenches the fire), 'tšhipane 'a mahomotša dillo' (a small genet which allays wailing). In all Ramaila's stories, there is a wealth of language and vocabulary. In this very story are given several types of vegetable relish (merogo) e.g. 'lehlanye, thepe, lethotho, setlawa, leroto, mphodi, monawa, and motšhatšha' (p.59).

8.0.0.10 Another feature of Ramaila's writing is his ability to use words and idioms in rich style without carelessly repeating the same word. The way he does it is absolutely graphic. His use of words in a special fashion like the word 'kgokološa' (make roll) and 'mola Katekisma le diema tša Bibeledi "bitšwa" hlogong ya gagwe' (*Molomatsebe*: 1974, p.117 - when the Catechism and the proverbs of the Bible were called on her head) in the story "Letšoba le le ponnego" enables him to use words differently where synonyms are scarce. His description of the Mohlakeng village in the story "Mona" (jealousy) in *Molomatsebe* (1974, p.32) is another good example. The description is vivid and is enriched with rare words like 'Boputlatšatši' and 'Bosokatšatši' for north and south respectively. In order to avoid the dull monotony of over-using the same word where synonyms are available, he uses 'mona', then 'tseba', then 'lonya' and finally, 'lehufa'

- all of which mean "jealousy".

8.0.1.0 But when he handles a scene in which a tool or an instrument is employed, he makes sure to find various ways of referring to the same thing. A fine example is the story "Moloi ga a na mmala" (*Molomatsebe:1974, p.18*). His description of Simson's fight with two thugs is very absorbing indeed. Simson uses a sjambok which is called 'kubu', 'sampoko' or 'tolotolo', and the thrashing avoids the word 'itia' and prefers 'latswa', 'otla' and the description as a whole is the work of a master-writer.

8.0.1.1 It is not only in the limited scope of a paragraph where he avoids boring repetition. Even in a full story, a key word is at times used once only and a phrase seldom repeated for the same action. A case in point is the story of Mmapekwe in "Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho" (*Taukobong:1968, p.49*). In this story, a lady called Mmapekwe cheats her Zulu lover and is cursed by him. Consequently all the young men who try to marry her, die shortly before marriage. Ramaila knows and feels the language here. He will not say 'a hwa' (he dies) for all these men although each death is separated by a substantial section of the narrative. He knows the phrase 'a hwa' four times will jar and break his style. So for the first he says 'ka la boraro a bitšwa mohu' (on the third day, he was termed the deceased); for the second, 'ga a sa phela' (he is no more alive); for the third, 'a neela moya' (he gave up the ghost) and for the fourth 'bolwetši ... bja feta ka yena' (the disease passed with him). To crown this story, Ramaila ends with a fifth idiom in case Mmapekwe dies before she marries 'le yena a ile ka tlase ga

mobu' (her also having gone six feet underground). It is the style of a master-writer, plain and simple, yet effective.

8.0.1.2 Where Ramaila does repeat, he does so for the sake of emphasis. To illustrate this fact, a quotation from the story on "Moruti wa Bohlabela" (*Molomatsebe*:1974, p.81 - first sentence) will be relevant:

"Gare ga baruti ba *bantši* ba dikereke tše *ntši* tša maina a *mantši* le mehuta e *mentši* mo Johannesburg, go na le moruti yo mongwe wa Springs yo baruti ba gabo ge ba kgobokane ba mmitšago 'wa Bohlabela'".
(Amongst the many pastors of many churches with many names and many types in Johannesburg, there is a certain pastor from Springs who is termed 'of the East' by his fellow pastors when they have congregated together.)

8.0.1.3 The enumerative qualificative stem 'ntši' (many), which is class-bound, is used with several nouns from different noun classes for the sake of effect or emphasis. This stylistic feature of repetition is also employed by O.K. Matsepe in his later works e.g. *Letšofalela* (1972), *Kgati ya Moditi* (1974), *Tšhelang Gape* (1974) and *Tša ka Mafuri* (1974). As all these works are novels and not short stories, Matsepe repeats his phrases after substantial portions of his works.

8.0.1.4 Ramaila, therefore, upheld the interests of the Northern Sotho literature, mainly by contributing valuable material to the various literary genres which have been discussed in this work. His contributions are invaluable to the development of a good Northern Sotho literature for

"A good book is the precious life-blood
of a master-spirit,
embalmed and treasured on purpose
for a life beyond life.

(Sir Francis Bacon)

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SUMMARY

The above literary appraisal on Ramaila and his works has acquainted the readers with

- (i) the various Northern Sotho literary genres to which E.M. Ramaila has contributed, and
- (ii) the influences that Ramaila's works have had on the Northern Sotho literature as a whole.

It has further been observed that Ramaila wrote not only to increase the number of the Northern Sotho literary publications, but also to entertain and to instruct. His didacticism has been so skilfully fused with his narrations that the reader is only aware of it after reading the whole narrative. It is the technique which Ramaila employs for the reform of the waywardness that exists amongst man.

The protest in Ramaila's works can only be observed by a discerning or mature reader. A casual reader can easily miss the element of protest or revolt in Ramaila's works. The effect of Ramaila's protest is that it makes the reader aware of the serious state of affairs that goes on around him, and attempts to make the reader think of an effective solution to the problems that confront him daily in life.

Ramaila's humour is double-edged in that it can entertain the reader, and at places even make the reader shed a tear after pondering over its serious implications.

The remarks on praise poems attempt to facilitate their study and to help school masters to improve their approach to the teaching of praise-poems.

It is hoped that with the aid of the appraisal given in this dissertation, the readers will be able to read Ramaila's works with greater alertness.

OPSOMMING

Bostaande waardering van Ramaila se werk bring die lesers op die hoogte van

- (i) die literêre genres in Noord-Sotho waartoe hy sy bydrae gelewer het,
- (ii) die invloed wat sy werk op die Noord-Sotholiteratuur as geheel gehad het.

Daar is aangetoon dat Ramaila nie slegs geskryf het om die Noord-Sothopublikasies te laat toeneem nie, maar ook om te vermaak en te leer. Sy didaktiese oogmerk is so behendig geabsorbeer in sy vertellings dat die leser eers daarvan bewus word nadat die verhaal deurgelees is. Dít is dan ook die tegniek wat Ramaila aanwend om die mens van sy eiewysheid te genees.

Die protes in Ramaila se werk kan net deur 'n skerpsinnige en 'n volwasse leser opgemerk word. Sy protes het dié uitwerking op die leser dat dit hom bewus maak van die erns van die toestand om hom en poog om die leser aan 'n doeltreffende oplossing te laat dink vir die probleme waarmee hy in sy daaglikse lewe gekonfronteer word.

Ramaila se humor is tweesnydend in dié opsig dat dit die leser vermaak, maar ook 'n traan laat stort na bepeinsing van die ernstige verwikkelinge daarvan.

My op- en aanmerkings oor huldedigte is 'n poging tot die meer toeganklik maak daarvan en om onderwysers te help

in hul benadering daarvan.

Die hoop word uitgespreek dat, aan die hand van die waardering in hierdie studie, lesers in staat gestel sal wees om Ramaila se werk noukeuriger te kan lees.