



## Socio-Onomastic Traits in Basotho Racehorse Names

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### ABSTRACT

Racehorse names are popularly known for being poetic and creative with loaded meaning. In a similar pattern like other names in their diverging categories, they communicate society's experiences in which namer's live. Generally, one way of offering the public attributes of the namer and the bearer is through naming. In This study the horse owner is the name giver while the horse is the name bearer. Positive and negative experiences of a society cannot be taken lightly: they worth documentation. One of the simple but practical ways of documenting social experiences is through naming. Naming is a social activity. This fact is evidenced by naming of entities which is done by the society. As names are the products of linguistic aspects, and they are capable of conveying a message, this study's interest is to find out the meaning, history, culture and function behind each racehorse name. The researcher acted as a research instrument therefore collected data as a primary tool and used tape recording and video as secondary tools to back up the primary method. Through the Socio-Onomastic approach this study discovered that: first, some names discussed in this paper indicate the experiences and philosophy of horse namers. Secondly, they are communicative devices to the society as they are a platform used to avoid confrontation. Thirdly, racehorse's names are used as techniques to advertise racehorse business. Bettor's also belief good names have power to influence the racehorse's positive behaviour. Therefore, this study recommends that racehorse names should be preserved.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Horse naming is a common phenomenon across societies. Like many other societies, among the Basotho animals such as cattle, dogs, donkeys and horses are given names. Horse names are expressive of the horse namers attitude. According to Suzman (1994) names can be defined within a social framework that marks namer's significant history. Many of the names given to horses are suggestive of what the namers experienced, believe and suggest what should be the behavior of the horse in the race that it is hoped to run. According to the collected data, names of racehorses are picked from different viewpoints such as already existing people's names, words in Sesotho language and other languages, sentences constructed in Sesotho language, names emanating from the Bible and Basotho proverbs. For Molefe (1999) nicknames as part of names are statements. It is in this instance that sentence names contain facts mandatory to understand the namer as well as the bearer. It is through the names that public

understands both the namer and the horse bearing the name.

Among the Basotho like in other many nations there are animal sports. Racehorse sport is the most popular and loved sport. The Basotho in all ten districts of Lesotho engage in horse race. The racehorse as a sport is also used to mark important days such as those marked for the royal family members. In the races, His Majesty Letsie III, Queen 'Masenate Bereng Mohato Seeiso and the prince and princesses attend. The Basotho also in general attend these events: women dressed in their *Seshoeshoe* and *doeks* (cultural dress), men in their variety of colourful blankets. They make their bets.

The Basotho have also formed registered associations to formalize this sport. In this sport before the game starts, races horse owners come to the grounds already shouting the praises for their horses. Horse praises extracted from Matlosa (1965:21) will serve as an example:

<i>Mabina-bina oa lipere, Tobaka</i>	The heartedly wanted of the horses, Tobaka
<i>Phakoe ea selomong ha Ramarou.</i>	Hawk of the cliff of Ramarou,
<i>Le e bone ha e ubella maeba?</i>	You have witnessed it when it seized Quickly on the doves
<i>A phasa-phasis, a tlala maralla,</i>	They fled, and were scattered on the hills
<i>Ea ba mehoula tlas'a lifate</i>	They were fleeing in rows under the trees
<i>Beng ba lipitsi ha ba nonopele,</i>	Horse owners do not recover from disease
<i>Ba khitloa ke thabe, lesokolla.</i>	They hiccough [suffer from] heart-burn
<i>Tobaka ke sehlabi har'a lipere,</i>	Tobaka is a pain instiller among the stallions
<i>Baehopoli ba fothoha matsoalo.</i>	Those who recall it become strangled by fear
<i>Mepukunyane ea sala ka nokeng,</i>	The misfit [horses] were left behind down the river
<i>E setse ka nokeng ka Tukulo....</i>	They were left behind in the Tukulo river...

[Adopted from Matlosa 1965]

In the cited horse praises above, the horse name is mentioned, *Tobaka*. The general message in the above praises is that the extolled horse has skills beyond those of other horses. These qualities make it to supersede the other horses. Those qualities that it has are muscular physique, strength, thick neck, agility and speed. This proves the fact that racehorse owners are forced to create praises for their horses. In their horse praises, the names of their horses are prominent. The name given has to appeal to the racehorse competition lovers and also be familiar to the horse itself. Before the sport begins, horse owners register their horses by the horse's names. This makes it more interesting that the horses to compete are announced by their names to go to the starting barrier. According to Rantletse (2019), the announcer is also carefully chosen. It should be a person who has a high dignified voice: a person whose voice makes the names sound vibrant as he pronounces them and has ability to recite general praises to entertain the audiences. The racehorse names start tapping on the hearts of the bettors and the spectators when they are announced. Therefore, racehorse names become very important before, during and after the game hence the need for a study to unpack them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the study reviews related literature: first, to shoulder on, second to identify the gaps. It is crucial

for a research work to avoid duplication. This study found scholars who dealt with animal naming in general. However, it could not find studies specifically on horse naming among the Basotho. This endeavor shows that racehorse naming as a concept goes unnoticed among the Basotho. Scholars such as Matee (2006), Borkfelt (2011) and Babane and Chauke (2017) have explored issues of naming. Matee (2006) explores issues of naming among the Basotho with special focus on different groups of people. She finds out that naming among the Basotho is done by knowledgeable elders in every clan though there are special cases where parents of a child can be allowed to bestow the name of their choice. She also indicates that naming is a socio-cultural process among this society. Matee (ibid) study is important in that it informs the present study on who has liberty to naming among the Basotho. However, Matee's study focuses on people naming while the current study is basically on animal naming.

Borkfelt (2011) works on specific and generic names to people's relationships with the non-human attempts to find out the importance of both. Through a blend of history, philosophy and representational theory, he explores naming of animals in Genesis to the names given and used by scientists, keepers, media etc. He finds out that naming of animals has consequences such as reflecting the worldview of the one who names

rather than the view of what is named. Borkfelt (ibid) study is crucial in that it informs the present study on origin of names as far back as from Genesis and covers diverging areas of names. However, it touches on different areas of names in passing. The present study focuses attention on racehorse names among the Basotho. Borkfelt employs history, philosophy and representational theory to analyze data, the present study employs Socio-onomastics approach.

Babane and Chauke (2017) scrutinize dog's names among the Xitsonga society. Their argument is that Xitsonga dog names do not only serve as identity but they are extended to their ability to display meaning. They also observe that some dog names are like those of human beings. Apart from that they observe that dog names are also used to communicating social problems in this society. They suggest that dog naming should continue as it is a platform through which social unacceptable behaviour can be reprimanded. The present study finds Babane and Chauke (ibid) study significant in that it focusses on animals though on a different society which is Xitsonga while this study focuses on Basotho. Their study is only interested in the name bearer not in the name giver. The present study is interested in both the name giver and the name bearer. The present study is also extended to find out if the racehorse names entail commercialization in the racehorse business.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical basis for the present study is that of socio-onomastics. According to Hough (2006:613-620), the description of names comprises a logical perspective in a social context. Without a social context such a study shows a significant miscalculation of such a concept. Subsequently, the relevant field of socio-onomastics informed the researcher's exploration of the subject under discussion with an objective of achieving a better comprehension of the concept in question thereof. Among the Basotho, animal naming is a social practice. For Borkfelt (2011:117) naming is the first and most basic act of language. The researchers focus is mainly on socio-onomastic function of a name, its history, culture and the racehorse name linguistic aspects. The application of this theory in this study pertaining to racehorse names helped the researcher to apprehend:

- creativity behind different names given to racehorses
- the origin of each name
- the history behind each name
- cultural insights of each name
- linguistic characteristics revealed in a name
- how the community utilizes names

- how the community changes some of the names
- underlying processes at work

### 4. METHODOLOGY

Methodology for this study is informed by Socio-Onomastics approach as a theoretical framework for the present study. Socio-Onomastics as a framework for this study was used to discussing the creativity, origin, history and the cultural insights of each name, linguistic characteristics revealed in each name as already specified in the theoretical framework. The use of this theory was extended to the understanding of how the Basotho as a community use the racehorse names.

The analysis in this study was from the content point of view. According to Kerlinger (1973) content approach is a method of observation in the sense that instead of asking people to respond to questions, it "... takes the communications that people have produced [and] ask questions of communications." This study considers racehorse names as communications on their own right. By endeavoring to ask the namer's on the names they have given to their horses, content analysis becomes relevant. Besides, content analysis provides an opportunity for a researcher to make inferences. Las Das and Bhaskaran (2008) indicate that the content analysis user has an opportunity to:

- develop categories in the process of analyzing data
- sample relevant content for analysis only

Guided by the above two principles of content analysis, this study developed categories of collected data and sampled relevant content for analysis to make the work easy to handle. There were too many horse names collected over a period of seven years. Therefore, the researcher did not use all data collected and as such employed sampling technique. As a result, content analysis is appropriate for this study.

For data collection, the researcher attended the *Pitsi mphepe ke o fepe* racehorse competitions from 2012 up to present where she was able to collect data. Seale et al (2007) states that in a qualitative research a researcher is a research tool. In this research, the researcher followed this procedure: first, she declared her intention to the *Pitsi mphepe ke u fepe* committee where she was permitted to collect data. She made a tape recorder and took a video to complement data that she collected. She also listened to the names being announced through a loud speaker then made a record through writing. The reason for employing multiple data collection method was to supplement each mode of collection. The recorded data was transcribed later. The researcher also made informal interviews with

race horses owners to find out their intentions about the names that they have bestowed to their racehorses. The names collected were later classified. Classification of names is very crucial as it gives thematic associations of names. It is through distinguishing names with similar themes that the study gains focus. Therefore, classification of data is very crucial in any study.

## 5. ANALYSIS

This part of the study analyses racehorse names. To give the analysis focus, there are nine thematic categories for discussion: racehorse names that induce fear and sense of defeat in the competitor, names that imply victory, reflect sour relations, reflect prestige, stem from wild animal, Christianity, names of people,

names that reflect linguistic competence and miscellaneous.

### Racehorse names that induce fear and sense of defeat in the competitor

The names in this category are sentence names. Among the Basotho sentence names are common in the naming of anything including names of animals. These names are creative and poetic and capable of persuading the competitor to be filled with fear of defeat. Molefe (1999) states that nicknames are statements and as such contain all facts required to label the bearer. The same view is observable in racehorse name sentences. The names in the category below exemplify:

Names	Literal translation
1. <i>Koalang mamati</i>	Shut the doors
2. <i>Koalang hohle</i>	Shut every door)
3. <i>A nyoloha maru</i>	Clouds are coming up
4. <i>Le khethehile lehloa</i>	It has snowed
5. <i>Ha u oa lebona</i>	You have not seen it
6. <i>Taba li thata</i>	Difficult issues

What is the creativity behind these names? This question calls for onomastic approach response. The origin, history and cultural insights of each name when uncovered are capable of displaying the creativity in each name. According to Ricocur (2000) creativity is a social and cultural act. For instance, Name 1. *koalang mamati* (Shut the doors), name 2 *koalang hohle* (shut every door) are creative in that the names originate from a verb */koala/* ( shut) which ends with suffix */ng/*. The use of the suffix */ng/* extends this verb meaning into addressing many people forcefully and giving them the order to act by closing the door. In this case it is used to directly address opponents to take immediate action of closing doors to safe guard themselves against looming danger. If those who are given the order, whom in this case are the competitors, shut the doors, it means the one who has given the order has gained a point. Historically, among the Basotho, when danger is looming men would go out to face it while women and children would be left hiding behind closed doors. Kunene (1971:3) states: “[men] engage hand in hand with spear or bow and arrow, which bring a man physically close to adversity and as such reduce his margin of safety to the barest minimum.” Men who would shut doors and hide away from facing danger would simply be regarded as “women” which culturally means weak men or cowards. Therefore, this study defers that if the competitors would obey the directive and close the

doors as ordered, then they would show a substantial sign of fear hence fail to join the competition. The vibrant sounds of the words */koalang/* (shut) move the listeners to trust that the racehorse bearing this name is fit for the race and capable of winning. To the bettors, it is capable of moving them to bet for such a horse when it is announced. Name 3 *A nyoloha maru* (clouds are coming up) connotes that the clouds that the name alludes to is not the ordinary clouds. They are clouds which the people who see them can already postulate that those clouds will be followed by storm hence danger. The words that are used to construct these racehorse names induce fear on the opponent. *A nyoloha maru* (Clouds are coming up) is a sentence name that is carefully chosen in Sesotho. It has the verb */nyoloha/* which means coming up. Clouds in Sesotho are associated with rain. However, clouds coming from the west are usually dark and followed by storm. Then when they are said to be coming up, they signal danger to the people and induce fear of destruction in people’s property and nature. So the name serves the purpose of frightening the opponents while they communicate hope for bettors to win. Name 4 *Le khethehile lehloa* (It has snowed) is also carefully chosen to communicate that there is harsh weather. This name originates from the observation that during snowy season in Lesotho, people and animals die as most poorly constructed houses, fall on people and animals die from hunger as they depend heavily on

grazing. When it has snowed grass is covered by snow for days therefore there is no how animals can survive. Most farmers do not neither store grass nor supplementary food for animals. So, the name *le khethihile lehloa* is carefully chosen to implant fear upon competitors.

Name 5 *Ha u oa le bona* meaning one is facing extreme danger is a short form of the Basotho idiom *ha u oa le bona u le tjametse* denoting that one is not aware that s/he is facing death. This name will be understood by employing the onomastics aspect of scrutinizing linguistic characteristics revealed in a name. Linguistically, the /le/ between the Sesotho subjectival concords /oa/ and the pronoun /bona/ is a subjectival concord to the noun /lefu/ (death). The same happens with the second /le/ preceding /u/ and the verb /tjametse/. The /le/'s in this Sesotho idiom refer to *lefu* (death). This idiom in full, without the use of the /le/'s/, it could be */Ha u oa bona /lefu/ u tjametse /lefu/* that means one was not able to recognize extreme danger much as one was very close to it. The choice of this name is relevant in that it serves the purpose of infusing fear in the competitor before

engaging in the competition. The competitor might as well withdraw from the competition in the fear of the defeat he might be facing by trying to compete in a situation whereby he could already sense his defeat. Name 6 *Taba li thata* (difficult issues) is a racehorse name that alludes to problems that the competitor is soon going to face. Such problems could be losing his money that he paid for the horse to be legally registered to participate in the race. Therefore, this part of the study concludes that all the names in this category originate from the naming which is intended to inculcate fear on to the competitor hence feel a sense of defeat even before the game starts. Then the question is: how does the community employ this kind of names? The study postulates that these names are used for obvious reasons: inducing fear on the opponent and to advertise the race business.

#### Racehorse names that suggest victory

The name in this category is carefully created to reflect victory even before the competition starts. The analysis below clarifies:

Names	Literal translation
7. <i>La luma letsoele</i>	cheers are heard from spectators

The name in this category calls for scrutiny through socio-onomastic perspective with focus on the cultural insight of this name. Culturally, among the Basotho competitions call for many spectators. As there are generally no closed grounds where spectators are forced to go through the gates to pay for their entrance, many people find it easy to watch the racehorse competition among the Basotho in Lesotho. People come freely to the poor open areas and watch the games from wherever they wish to stand. For the race conducted in the Thaba-Tseka district in Lesotho at Mohlanapeng, the race ground is beneath the mountains where spectators just sit on the rocks as they watch the game. So, when the spectators get excited wherever they sit or stand they shout utterances positive or negative of the competing horses. Culturally, men, women and children are free to watch this game. When men roar with applaud and women ululate, it is supposedly that there is a winning horse coming up. Therefore, this name 7 *la luma letsoele* is carefully chosen to allude to the winning

atmosphere even before the game starts. Like names in the first category this name serves to induce fear on the competitors.

#### Racehorse names which reflect sour relations

The Basotho, like other societies name their animals based on circumstances around them. Babane and Chauke (2017) have the same observation. They state that Vatsonga name their dogs basing themselves on circumstances and those names provide magnitudes of meaning on the namer. Morgan (1979) concurs with Babane and Chauke (ibid) when he asserts that a fundamental distinction in all naming systems is between methods of formation where a name is generated by some feature of language. Among the methods he includes history, appearance, family relations and local culture. Basotho are not different in racehorse naming. The category below exemplifies:

Names	Literal translation
8. <i>Ke sehlabi ho batho</i>	I am extreme pain to people
9. <i>Tlohella ho bua ka batho</i>	Stop gossiping about people
10. <i>Tsooanyane</i>	Foolish one
11. <i>Ea nkokotelang</i>	The one who knocks on my door
12. <i>Ba e nka</i>	They took it

13. <i>Sehole se masene</i>	A fool is clever
14. Don't laugh	Do not laugh

The above category calls for onomastic perspective in as far as the origin of a name is concerned in order to establish rapport for the analysis. Among the Basotho direct talk to the neighbours is always avoided when relationships are sour. However, the communication of one's feelings is revealed in platforms like in animal names. The Basotho find it appropriate and use it to communicate to the neighbours whatever negative situation one is experiencing and has discovered that the neighbour is the root cause of his problems. Dog names like *ba mo hloile* (they hate him) and *ba phela ka thata* (they survive in difficult) are meant to address the circumstances that the neighbours live at especially when the relationships are sour. The same thing happens with the naming of racehorses. Some of their names originate from the sour relationships between the neighbours as well as the community members. They serve as "scorpion bites" to reprimand neighbours. According to Molefe (1999) names curb the unwanted behaviour of community members. The racehorse name 8 *Ke sehlabi ho batho* originates from sour relations of the namer and the community he lives at. By naming his racehorse this name he communicates that he is aware that he is bringing pain to people perhaps by rearing agile and strong stallion. So their jealous make them suffer. As the horse owner is not able to make a straight talk to the community to clarify their stand point towards him as well as towards his horse, he uses his horse naming to communicate his observation.

The analysis of this name can also be extended to find out what its linguistic characteristics reveal. *Ke sehlabi ho batho* is a sentence name which is constructed by employing first person subjectival concord /ke/+the verb /hlaba/ (pierce) + adverbial phrase /ho batho/ (to people). The prefix /se/ + verb /hlaba/ have come up with the noun /sehlabi/ meaning the one who is capable of instilling pain on others. The name 9 *tlohela ho bua ka batho* (stop gossiping about people) serves the same purpose as the first name discussed in this category: to address people who are fond of gossiping so that they can stop when they hear the name of this horse. The racehorse name 10 *tsooanyane* communicates that the one whom it is meant to address has a body which reflects unhealthy condition. Name 11 *Ea nkokoteleng* communicates that someone who is always at the namers door is troubling the namer; hence, he should stop. The name 12 *ba e nka* according to the namer communicates that the horse was once stolen by one of his neighbours but it was found later. So, this name like the other ones in

this category is meant to communicate to the community that it was once stolen by someone amongst them. For the horse namers this name will stop other people from stealing the horse. The name 13 *sehole se masene ntoeng* communicates that even if the community does not believe the horse is fit to be taken to a competition, they are not aware that in the competition it is capable of displaying the skills that it is not observed to have outside the competition. In Sesotho, situations like these are pampered by proverbs such as *u se halale bafali liholoholo*, *hobane ha u tsebe matla a liphalo tsa bona* (do not look down upon people by their unappealing appearance as it might be that they have super skills) which can be equated to the English proverb "do not judge a book by its cover." The name "don't laugh" is given in English tongue though it is meant to express the same theme. It is meant to address people who laugh at the horse owner when the horse failed to win. So the horse namer uses this name as a platform to communicate to everyone who mocked him. He is aware that it will not be possible to address all of them but this name will reach where he is not able to reach.

#### Racehorse names which replicate prestige

The Basotho are bilingual: Sesotho and English are languages which are generally used. The English language gains its popularity from the fact that it is taught as a subject as well as a medium of instruction in all Lesotho schools from primary to tertiary level. Much as some Basotho have not gone to school, they are able to pick some words from the Basotho who have gone to school as most Basotho mix both Sesotho and English as their codes. It is not surprising therefore to hear the uneducated Mosotho refer to an English word such as boy, girl, baboon or making simple sentences like "give me some sweets". It is through this given background that this study surmises that even the unlearned racehorse namers among the Basotho could give their horses English names. Besides, English is a language of prestige among the Basotho. By naming whatever they have using English names, they find it prestigious. Khotso (2014:84) when scrutinizing the Basotho on their village naming says: "When the inhabitants... wish to associate their way of life and the quality of their buildings with the kind of well-built houses that are encountered of these continents, they tend to believe that their life-style should be reflected in the name of their villages;..." Though Khotso's (ibid) argument is on the naming of villages, her argument can be translated in the racehorse naming among the Basotho. Their use of

English and other languages serves to reflect their prestigious attitude on their horses. Naming that is derived from other languages is not peculiar to the Basotho. Molefe (1999) has the same observation with the Zulu society in South Africa. He observes that Zulu nicknaming is derived from other languages such as English and Afrikaans. He illustrates his observation with both English and Afrikaans examples: in Zulu a

principal is nicknamed Rubber and in Afrikaans a Zulu man nicknames his son “*uBoer*” which is equivalent to Boer in Afrikaans. The use of different languages to name racehorse is evident among the Basotho. The category below exemplifies:

Name	Language
15.Silly girl	English
16.Moon lover	English
17.Syllabus	English
18.Rise-up	English
19.Long tom	English
20.Hollywood	English
21.Passport	English
22.Power flower	English
23. <i>Fanakaloko</i>	Fanagalo
24. <i>Kh'ololafa</i>	Fanagalo
25. <i>Kh'olomane</i>	Fanagalo
26. <i>Semantjemantje</i>	Fanagalo
27. <i>Semantjemantje</i>	Fanagalo
28. <i>Baterekane</i>	Afrikaans
29. <i>Baterepase</i>	Afrikaans

This category calls for onomastics approach which provides a researcher with the opportunity to unpack the origin of a name. For Molefe (1999) origin is a term which refers to manner and reason from which a nickname stems. Nicknames are a branch of names. The origin of nicknames is the same as the origin of names. As it is already indicated in this category, the names in this category originate from other languages that the Basotho associate with prestige and have the opportunity to mix with. For Molefe (ibid) names are a reflection of a social interaction of different people speaking different languages. Much as these names are in other languages, they still reflect the situations in which the namers live at. Name 15 Silly girl refers to the happy experience the namer had. According to Mphutlane (2019) this horse's agile and strength took time outcompeting other horses. This horse won many racehorse competitions throughout the country. For this horse namer, his horse ability to have won many races reflects “silliness” in a figurative sense. It has skills that other horses lack and therefore it is “silly”. What an irony? One would think that for this horse ability to win races it deserves a good name. According to Ashley (1989), society uses nicknames to have functions like being ironic. Irony is a poetic device. According to <http://literarydevices.net> irony is the expression of one's meaning by employing language that denotes the opposite, usually for

entertaining and ardent effect. The racehorse name Silly girl is ironic. It does not mean what one can think of at the face value. Among the Basotho, many words have shifting meanings. There are words with original positive meanings but with time they acquire negative meanings and the same thing happens with the words that have negative meaning with time they acquire positive meanings. Sometimes such words retain both meanings (positive and negative). For example, the word /dog/ in use has both positive and negative meaning in Sesotho. When someone refers to the other as a dog, it could mean that it is because the person referred to as a dog has bad qualities like those of a dog: eating too much, nasty smell and more. For Casalis (1997) Basotho confirm that dogs are observed as thieves and most filthy animals. Among others, they feed on human waste. However, they pride in the agility and courage of dogs. Casalis second observation can be seen to interpret the metaphorical use of this animal by friends. If friends are referring to the other as a dog it bears a positive connotation that the other is brilliant, responsive, courageous and capable of performing beyond what is positively expected by the other. Therefore, the name 15 “Silly girl” as picked by the racehorse namer is employed in a positive sense. For this name ability to display more than one meaning qualifies into poetic language.

The name 16 Moon lover also displays the fact that the horse namer is in “love” with nature hence the picking of this name. To some people different shapes of a moon are not only beautiful but they are meaningful. For example, when the moon is full it gives light. It could also be deferred that the horse namer liked his horse to shine in action just like a full moon not shaded by clouds. Name 17 Syllabus refers to the educational document that is used by teachers at school to extract topics to be taught in class. Among the Basotho it is popular to hear a teacher talking about the inability to finish syllabus when pupils are about to sit for national examinations. To the racehorse namer this was an interesting name bearing the opposite meaning to what he wishes his horse to accomplish. In literary terms words capable of providing opposite meaning are paradoxical. Therefore, the name syllabus qualifies to be poetically used. For the horse namer, his horse would win the race by finishing “syllabus” first. In this case syllabus refers to the finished race on time as opposed to teachers who complain of their inability to finish the syllabus. The namer is misleading competitors so that they can think the horse bearing this name would fail to finish the race. Name 18 Rise-up refers to the action of moving fast and exceeding the speed that it would be expected to show. Name 19 Long tom refers to a tin which was used to sell beer in the 1980’s. When compared to other cans used to sell beer and drink, this one was bigger in height and contained more. The horse bearing this name has a long body and high strides. The horse namer is attracted to these attributes of the long tom ‘can’ so he names his racehorse after it. He gives this name and wishes other people, like him, to see the beauty he sees in his horse, Borkfelt (2011:117) remarks “...naming of animals is not only on how the namer wants to represent that animal; but also how others are to perceive it.”

Name 20 Hollywood guest is a racehorse name which emanates from a town in the United Kingdom. According to <http://www.tripadvisor.com>, Hollywood has top attractions such as museum, Country Park, library Maypole and span at Culloden. Generally, among the Basotho, United Kingdom is known for wealth and luxury. This is evidenced in their currency which has a higher “weight” as against their currency Maloti. For instance, \$1= M16.00 currently. For them,

any name emanating from the United Kingdom says it all. The horse will be respected for its prestigious name. So, the name serves the intentions of the namer. Name 21 Passport communicates about a lawful document that is used to transit from one country to the other countries. Among the Basotho they commonly use it to transit from Lesotho to South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana and many other countries. As the name of the association communicates *Pitsi mphepe ke u fepe* (feed me I will feed you in turn), this name converses that if the horse wins the race the horse owner will be able to feed from the money he wins through the horse and also be able to buy grass for the horse to feed it. This means that the horse owner will use the money he won through this horse to transit from poverty to wealth hence the name passport. Name 22 Power flower communicates the positive attitude of the horse namer. The horse bearing this name is seen very beautiful by the owner. He loves it and expects it to exude power in the race. Racehorses are animals which are mostly loved by the Basotho men. Racehorses are a sign of wealth and status among the Basotho men as well as the community they live in.

Most Basotho men have worked in South Africa as migrant labourers hence learned the *fanagalo* language. Much as many have suffered the retrenchment phase in South Africa mines, they are still conversant with the *fanagalo* language and delight in using it to show that they once lived in the Gauteng in South Africa. They are usually envied by those who have no taste of being migrant labourers. They use this language sometimes to recall their experiences in South Africa. Examples can be in the horse naming through this language. Names 24 *Kh’ololafa*, 25 *Kh’olomane* and 26 *Semantjemantje* serve as an example.

**Names which stem from wild animals**

Names in this category reflect the knowledge that racehorse names have with the horses and the fauna and flora. The attributes that they so wish the horse to acquire are reflected in the name that the racehorse is given. Examples below are racehorse names analyzed to illustrate this mentality:

Name	Literal translation
30. <i>Mopheme</i>	species of small jackal
31. <i>Lengau</i>	leopard
32. <i>Tšase</i>	lark
33. <i>Kholumolumo</i>	fabulous monster (in folktales)
34. <i>Setsokotsane</i>	whirlwind



According to Khotso (2010) the characteristics of the fauna and flora attract the Basotho and so wish that their animals mostly racehorses to acquire them so that it becomes easy for them to win in competition. Name 30 *Mopheme* (small jackal) is famously known for its trickery. It escapes easily among its predators. Like *Mopheme*, a horse in a race is expected to outcompete its competitors easily hence the naming behind *Mopheme*. Name 31 *Lengau* (Leopard) is also famous for jumping and fighting its predators to death. Name 32 *Tsase* (Lark) is a bird known for fleeing from its predators. Name 33 *Kholumolumo* is known for swallowing all the community members in the Basotho folktales. This folktale unfolds the story of a boy who redeems all the people. This name is carefully chosen to communicate that all the horses competing with it will be “swallowed” just like the people in the folktale. Name 34 *Setsokotsane* (Whirlwind) is also chosen to communicate the speed of the horse that bears this name. *Setsokotsane* is famously known for high speed and destruction. Therefore, this name is appropriately chosen.

#### Names that mirror linguistic competence

The names in this category are coined from Basotho proverbs. Molefe (1999) asserts that proverbs are part of a language therefore they form part of space of creating nicknames by language speakers. He provides the following Zulu language proverbs and nicknames derived from those proverbs to clarify his view: ‘*uThokolathemba*’ stemming from the Zulu

proverb “*Thokolathemba amathunzi ayewukela*” equivalent in meaning to “hold onto your hopes, what you are experiencing is about to happen.” Another Zulu example provided by Molefe (ibid) is ‘*uMkhumlansika*’ stemming from the proverb “*Umendo ngumkhumlansika*” meaning ‘marriage tends to pacify even the most vicious ladies.’ ‘*uKhotheyikhothayo*’ stemming from “*Ikhotha eyikhothayoengayokhothi iyayikhahlela*” meaning help will usually come from the person you have always helped. The same observation in Sesotho nicknames is observable. There are idioms and proverbs used to nickname people. For example, ‘*ntja e tharisa lekoko*’ meaning food is scarce and as a result people survive on theft. This is a Sesotho idiom and to some people it is used as a nickname. The question may be why horses or entities are given idioms and proverbs as names? One simple fact is that proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and moral, Mokitimi (1997). Proverbs call for deeper thinking which is necessary in the racehorse competition. The language of proverbs has a rich vocabulary of words, phrases, combination of words, symbols, pictures, allusions, associations and comparisons, Mokitimi (1997). According to Steenkamp and Du Plessis (2016) toponyms are seen as a method for constructing collective memory. Though Steenkap and Du Plessis (ibid) view is in relation to toponym (place naming), the same observation can be translated into racehorse naming: they also bring collective memory of the Basotho. The category below exemplifies.

name	Literal translation
35. <i>Koli ea malla</i>	untranslatable
36. <i>Liabela lia hloeba</i>	They boil and cuddle (Mokitimi 1997)
37. <i>Morumuoa ha a na lonya</i>	The messenger has no malice, malice is with the initiator (Mokitimi 1997)
38. <i>Pelo e ja serati</i>	Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder

This category calls for onomastic perspective on the cultural insights of racehorse names. Name 35 *Koli ea malla* is a Basotho proverb used to address people upon a tragic death of someone. In the same society, if a man is late, her wife is made to sing a song called *Koli ea malla* (death lamentation). It is in this song that the women employ words which shows that the late husband is irreplaceable hence a need for open lamentation. The racehorse namer has carefully chosen this proverb to name his horse to

communicate to the competitors that they are facing their tragedy. His horse is unchallengeable therefore

they are going to lose. Proverb name 36 *Lia bela lia hloeba* (They boil and cuddle) according to Mokitimi (ibid) this proverb means that kingdoms wax and wane. In Sesotho, days are never the same: during other days one is happy while others one is sad. The same idea can also be expressed in antonyms: success and failure, big or small. In other cultures, it expressed in the different sizes of a moon in every month. Other days the moon shape is small, on others the size has increased. When this proverb is used to name a racehorse, it is capable of reflecting that on other race competitions, this horse will win while on others the horse will lose. The horse owner communicates that

when the horse has won bettors will merry but when it loses, they must accept. The proverb name 37 *morumuoa ha a na lonya* (The messenger has no malice, malice is with the initiator) means that blames should fall on those in authority and not on the subject, Mokitimi (1997). This name is carefully chosen to communicate that the horse has no fault if it does not win a race perhaps the fault can be addressed to the owner (authority). The proverb name 38 *pelo e ja serati* which can be equated to the English proverb beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, communicates that the horse owner sees his horse good irrespective of people who many have a different view on it. This explanation can be extended to the horse ability to perform to the expectation or its failure to do so,

however, the horse owner communicates that he will continue to like it.

Name	Literal translation
39. <i>Mosali oa lota</i>	Lot's wife
40. <i>Tempele</i>	Temple
41. <i>Saule</i>	Saul
42. <i>Sotoma</i>	Sodom
43. <i>Herota</i>	Herod

The names in this category originate from the Bible. Name 39 *Mosali oa Lota* (Lot's wife) is one popular story which comes from the Bible that she disobeyed the rule that she should never look back as they left the village called Sodom. Name 40 Temple is synonymous to altar in church. This is considered a holy place. Name 41 Saul is another prominent figure in the Bible whose popularity he gained from destroying God's people. However, he was converted and renamed Paul as he also changed his evil deeds and became a good man. Name 43 Sodom is a village that appears in the Bible whose inhabitants died in fire except Lot's family though his wife turned into salt due to disobedience. Herod is one of the kings in the Bible who ordered that all male children born by then should be killed. The order he made was out of his fears that Jesus was going to take his ruling power so he thought Jesus would be killed as boy children were all to be killed. The horse owner bearing the name 44 Herod indicates that he chose this name to represent his bitter experiences with his former employer. He indicates that as he was working in the farm in South Africa, his employer was extremely cruel and there was never a day he did not receive cruel orders so much that he equated his former employer's actions into those of Herod. Then he nicknamed him Herod behind his back. When he is back into Lesotho, he decided to name his racehorse Herod so that through this name he can remember these sour experiences. All

### Names which stem from Christianity

Inter textuality is common among the Basotho. Racehorse names are not exclusive. The names which can be traced back to the Bible are used by racehorse namers to name their horses. Most Basotho are Christians and familiar with the Bible and names which feature in the Bible. In Lesotho, church services are free and people attend them mostly on Sundays. This study surmises that this is where most Basotho learn names in the Bible and use them to express their feelings and experiences when they name their animals including racehorses. The category below exemplifies.

the names in this category are popular and significant in the Bible. Racehorse namer's have given their horses these names with a wish for the horses to acquire the popularity and fearful attributes such as those of Herod from these names so that they can also sound competitive in the racehorse competition.

### Names which stem from names of people

Among the Basotho naming of horses can be after people's names. Unlike in other societies where naming of an animal after a person's name is done after following a procedure: filling consent and receiving approval of the concerned person, among the Basotho names of people are named after animals without any authorization. Tšeane (2014) indicates that if a horse is bought from someone, it is normal to name it after the original owner among the Basotho. This kind of naming does not require the consent of the name owner as it is a usual practice. It is done to keep a record of where it comes from. Therefore, animal naming through people's names is a common practice among this society. For example, among the Basotho one will hear dog names like Charles, Peter and so on. The category below exemplifies:

Name
44.'Mamoshesha
45.Ramasubihlele

46.Sampo
47.Lisanto

Name 44 'Mamoshesha is a name of a popularly known old women whose home is in the north part of Lesotho. She is famously known by a scandal of visiting male initiates at the initiation lodge which is regarded as witchcraft among the Basotho. The initiation authorities made her stay in the initiation lodge up until graduation where she came from the secluded area with the newly initiated boys. When the initiated boys were given new blankets to wear so that they can join the ceremony prepared for them, she was not and she was left with her underwear's only. This story featured on media: both radios and newspapers. On newspapers, this old woman appeared naked, pictured with wriggled body and extremely emaciated down thread-shaped breasts. This study surmises that the horse naming behind this name takes it from the

popularity of the name owner. The horse owner wishes his horse to be as fearful and as popular as 'Mamoshesha for doing what is not expected and for featuring in media: newspapers, radios and in music. Some of the Basotho artists composed songs on 'Mamoshesha. Names 45 *Ramasubihlele*, 46 *Sampo* and 47 *Lisanto* are names of people at the nickname level. Ramasubihlele denotes the foolish character of a person nicknamed this way. Sampo and Lisanto are nicknames of boy-children among the Basotho. For Molefe (1999) nicknames are as serious as any item for they can make an individual a significant figure in the community. Though Sampo and Lisanto are names not taken seriously among the Basotho, when they are given to racehorses, they are meaningful as they are meant to mislead the competitors. The competitors may think these names signal to the foolish or weak character of the horse and only be surprised to observe the strength in that horse when it outcompetes horses which are given good names.

### Miscellaneous

Racehorse names under this category are names given with varying views of the racehorse namers.

Name	Literal translation
48.Habalasha	Untranslatable
49.Lesolo la nkomanya	The Zulu is angry at me
50.Khabang ka bocha	Be happy with you youthfulness
51.Seepa mokoti	Hole digger
52.Arola	Arola (title of Nqheku's Sesotho novel)

The name 48 *habalasha* originates from the Tsotsi tongue word *habalasha* which refers to that one who intrudes. It is given to a horse to denote that which enters with force, without being expected. It connotes the ability of the horse to intrude and win the race. Name 49 *Lesolo la nkomanya* (The Zulu is angry at me) denotes the anger displayed by a foreigner: the Zulu in particular. Among the Basotho Zulus are famously known by their deep knowledge of the medicinal concoctions, Mofolo (2000). Medicinal concoctions can neither be used positively or negatively, Possa and Khotso (2015). So, the Basotho fear and respect some Zulus for their popular negative use of the medicinal concoctions. The racehorse namer has chosen this name carefully to induce fear to the opponents so that his horse can win the race. Name 50 *Khabang ka bocha* (Be proud with your youthfulness) also serve the purpose of expressing beauty. It is in the name that the sense of beauty is rooted. Name 51 *Seepa mokoti* (whole digger) signals to the ability of the horse to make traps for the competitors as they run the race. Name 52 *Arola* is a title name of Nqheku's Sesotho novel relating a story of a Mosotho young man who worked in the Boer farm in South Africa during apartheid regime. Like the

Basotho the Zulu society's nicknames are derived from literature books. Molefe (1999) states that nicknaming among the Zulu stems from literature books. He indicates that the Zulu nickname "utweeling" is from *Malieselen die tweeling* by W.A. Hickey. In a similar manner, the racehorse name *Arola* stems from Nqheku's novel as already stated above. According to Nqheku this was a time of unfair discrimination against all black people in South Africa. They were inhumanly treated. The horse namer bearing the name *Arola* indicates that he choose this name as he considers himself having more or less similar experiences with the character *Arola* (main character in Nqheku's Sesotho novel) who suffered so much in his journey bypassing the Boer farms by then in South Africa. The namer also indicates that he worked in the farm in South Africa where he had bitter experiences. To keep his history unforgettable, using a horse name was most appropriate. However, in a similar manner the name is carefully chosen to instill fear in the competitors.

### 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that racehorse names are products of namers creativity, culture, history and

linguistic aspects of the Sesotho language. First, racehorse namers give names that are bouncing to the audience as pronounced by the announcer before, during and after the competition. Secondly, they give names which enhance their bravado, instilling courage when they enter into a competition as racehorse owners. Through this kind of naming, horse owners galvanize and excite themselves while they induce fear and a sense of defeat in the competitor. Thirdly, they give names resulting from popular books, events and popular scandalous figures so that the popularity of those events and people can be translated into the behaviour of their racehorses. Lastly, they give the names emanating from the Basotho proverbs to exercise their linguistic competence as they communicate to their opponents their courage and bravery. Finally, these names are wisely chosen to advertise the race business.

Given the results of this study, a number of recommendations for further research are suggested. It is recommended that:

- Animal naming including racehorse naming should be standardized so that when animals are given names of people, people concerned can authorize such exercise;
- Giving people's names to animals should be done in good purpose;
- Names of racehorse should be carefully chosen as besides the history and culture they contain, they can also be used to advertise the racehorse business;
- The government of Lesotho should standardized racehorse grounds so that it can attract the external body for competition and otherwise;
- Racehorse namers should also target the use of outstanding popular figures in their horse naming because as it stands now, they popularize negative figures and their scandals;
- Racehorse namers should revive the dying history and culture of the Basotho through their naming.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Palesa Khotso** is a Language, Linguistics and Literature specialist. She is an aggressive researcher. She is a fecund scholar of 21<sup>st</sup> century. She is an objective and outcome oriented professional with 20 years extensive experience in teaching Southern Sotho and English Language and Literature. She has contributed significantly in the training of versatile language teachers for a decade at Lesotho College of Education. Dr, Palesa Khotso joined National University of Lesotho in 2018 energetic and

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