

NAMING OF BASOTHO MEDICINAL PLANTS: SEMANTIC CONNECTION TO THEIR REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

The indigenous knowledge of the Basotho makes it simple for this speech community to name their traditional medicinal plants in such a way that they are meaningful; this could also be viewed as an empowerment technique, especially in the economic sphere. Their medicinal plants names seem to be idiomatic and to express certain philosophies of the Basotho society. Creativity is observable in this kind of naming, and many names allude to the kind of remedy that is associated with the medicinal plant. It is therefore the interest of this paper to consider the names of medical plants among the Basotho whose names allude to the remedy they provide. The names of Sesotho medicinal plants and the reasoning of the Basotho in general behind the name and the use of each medicinal plant will be discussed in this article. This paper will further preserve and promote the use of Basotho traditional medicines for the future generation.

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INTRODUCTION

In most African societies, traditional medicine plays an important role in the lives of many people who can and cannot access Western medicine. People usually think of traditional medicines in situations of medical emergencies or minor illnesses. The Pan American Health Organization PAHO (1999) states that in developed countries the use of traditional medicine is increasing because of better health care, while in developing countries the demand is due to economic issues and availability as the only source of health care. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2000), defines traditional medicine as the “the sum total of the knowledge, skills and practices based on theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in maintenance of health, as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illnesses. Herbal remedies are considered the oldest form of health care known to mankind. Prior to the development of modern medicine, the traditional systems of medicine that have evolved over the centuries within various communities, are still maintained as a great traditional knowledge base in herbal medicines (Mukherjee and Wahil 2006).

Traditional Basotho people believed that some ailments were caused by witchcraft, and those who still believe, are firmly convinced that most of their ailments are due to the evil influence of some persons. To avert such evil influences or to break their spells, the Basotho employ medicine and charms. These are administered in various ways, such as decoctions, lotions and powder, or whole plants are kept or smoked in the hut or in the courtyard. Some are used as raw products while others are mixed, burned, made into ash, mixed with water and boiled in order to be used (Motlamelle 1985, 77).

When discussing indigenous plants, Mokuku and Mokuku (2004) have among others looked into how indigenous plants can be preserved. Among those indigenous plants, consciously or unconsciously, their article included the medicinal plants. However, their article differs from the present article in that their article focuses on how indigenous plants in general were preserved in Lesotho from a biodiversity point of view. On the other hand, Moteetee and Van Wyk (2011) have provided a broad review of traditional medicine in Lesotho, focusing on cultural practices, traditional health care practitioners and especially botanical identity, vernacular names, uses and dosage forms of the plants that are used. However, the present article focuses on the meaning of medicinal plants names from the onomastic point of view.

‘Medicinal’ refers to something which has healing properties such as medicinal plants, herbs and drugs (Hornby 1995, 728). In line with Hornby, the present article understands the names of medicinal plants of the Basotho as the names of plants which are used to heal or cure certain diseases. Besides this, Basotho understand that medicinal plants can also be used to bring good or bad luck if it is used for or against

a person. Mokuku and Mokuku (2004) assert that some plants among the Basotho are believed to bring good or bad luck depending on the purpose of their use. The former use of medicinal plants is generally accepted among the Basotho while the latter is associated with evil: something which can be used to hinder other people's progress as it is used to make them dull and unable to think correctly. Some of these plants are believed to have the power to seal court cases. According to Moteetee and Van Wyk (2011, 210), medicines are not only used to cure illnesses but are used for almost any situation, including those that occur when a need for help in controlling natural or social phenomena is perceived.

For Basotho in general, both men and women, it is not surprising to hear that one uses medicinal plants either to cure or to protect oneself against any of the mentioned situations above. But above all, medicinal plants are used by traditional healers to help the community. Traditional healers are very passionate about the mountains where they get these medicinal plants. Knowledge of indigenous plants and herbs and their medicinal uses is critical for community health (Videos in Basotho People's Knowledge of Plants and Herbs).¹ In this society it is usually said that a real man uses medicinal plants to protect himself. However, this is not expected of Basotho women. A woman who is notorious for the use of medicinal plants to guard her like men is abhorred and usually considered a witch and a danger to children. Hence she is not allowed to be near infants for fear that they will die from '*ho oela phuoana*' ('sunken fontanelle').

The aim of the present article is first to find out what is really in a name and to investigate cultural insights, settlement history and linguistic characteristics revealed in medicinal plant names (Tulu-research 2009). Second, it is considered how the name's meaning is connected to the function the plant is believed to perform. Third, the article intends to find out how the meaning of Basotho medicinal plants can be viewed as an empowerment strategy for promoting the use of medicinal plants to heal or cure. Fourth, it should be noted that the present article is less interested in scientific proof of whether the medicinal plant can be said to truly remedy the situation or not. Lastly, the writers of this paper are aware that some of the medicinal plants, if not all, discussed in this paper, are known by different names and are used for various medicinal purposes by the Basotho. For example, some of the medicinal plants discussed in this article, for example, *Qhela*, are known to some Basotho as traditional/wild vegetables. Others are widely known to be used for healing purposes while on the other hand, there are those that are harmful. These two uses of medicinal plants are generally known by Basotho, though due to the influence of Christianity some Basotho prefer Western ways of healing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present article employed a sociolinguistic-onomastic theoretical base. The use of interdisciplinary theory is in order because onomastics is a theory that allows the use of other theories. Principles and methodologies of onomastics were employed for the present investigation of Basotho medicinal plant naming as it seeks to understand the history, culture and philosophy of the Basotho with regard to their medicinal plants.

According to Coates (2013), at its simplest, onomastics is the discipline which seeks to answer the semasiological question ‘Why is X called X?’ This fundamental question may be understood in two ways: as a linguistic and historical one, ‘Why and how did X come to be called X?’, and as essentially a historical or cultural one, ‘What does it mean for X to be called X?’ Coates first indicates that onomastics is a specialised branch of etymology, with which it shares its methods, but the second locks it into wider concerns about human history and conventions. He further explains that the answers to these questions typically intertwine, since knowledge of a proper name’s origin may be part of its present cultural meaning.

Naming displays a historical, cultural and social disciplines as a result names can be analysed using a mixture of theories. Neethling (2005, 2) asserts that names fall within the category of linguistic signs. This means that names could be investigated from a linguistic perspective as well. Semantics as one of linguistics’s domain of enquiry is employed to find the meaning of each medicinal name in relation to its function. The article goes on to further analyse the medicinal plants names to trace the history of such naming. Moreover, the article intends to find the socio-cultural meaning of these names. This is because names have a connection with the society which uses them.

Naming as a process seems to be very important to societies across world. This notion is justified by naming everything to make identification of people and items easy. According to Collins *Cobuild Student’s Dictionary* (2005, 548) “naming is the act of giving a name or a label to a person or a thing through which a person or a thing can be easily identified.” When naming Basotho are no exception. They give names to people, fauna, flora and everything besides. However, the interest of this article is limited to the naming of medicinal plants.

METHODOLOGY

This article employed open-ended questionnaires and individual interviews in Sesotho as the medicinal plant names required for this paper are in Sesotho. Open-ended questionnaires were used in order to give room to the respondents to add relevant information. Individual interviews were employed in order to provide privacy for the

interviewers and interviewees, as some of the functions of medicines are sensitive to most Basotho, especially Basotho women. However, some respondents indicated that the issue of medicinal plants and their use is sensitive among the Basotho, regardless of sex because some are dangerous and can be used to kill other human being; therefore it needs to be attended to with special caution. In order to maintain confidentiality between the interviewer and interviewee, individual interviews were preferable. Traditional doctors were also consulted to provide their knowledge in relation to medicinal plant names and their function as they were considered to be experts in the use of medicinal plants. The study leading to this article was also extended to modern health centres to find scientific medicinal names to make the paper accessible to people who do not understand Sesotho.

ANALYSIS

Among the Basotho a name is believed to be of vital importance. In most cases, Basotho believe that a name has power to influence a situation or that anyone or anything takes after its name: be it a person, plant or animal; hence they have proverbs like '*lebitso lebe ke seromo*' ('A bad name is an omen'). In support of this, Mills (1995, 103-104) maintains that 'names are a culture's way of fixing what is actually in a universe of overwhelming, chaotic sensations, all pregnant with a multitude of possible meanings'. Basotho medicinal plants names in this article serve to exemplify what Mills states.

The strategy of naming plants, medicinal plants for that matter to market them, is not peculiar to the Basotho society. Koopman (2009, 93) indicates that in 1960s Annique Theron discovered the healing powers of the rooibos plant. He further states that Annique founded the company Forever Young to market rooibos. The power of this company can possibly be connected to its name: People believed that by using the product of this company by the name of Forever Young they would remain physically young forever. Rooibos was also a medicinal plant used to heal the following diseases: insomnia, colic, allergies, eczema and more (Koopman 1994).

Small businesses survive due to the entrepreneurial skills of their owners, which among others include the choice of its name (Neethling, 2005, 204). Neethling states that, as with the choice of a brand name, careful consideration is paid to the choice of a business name because 'business owners realize the potential attention and power of names' (2005:204). Examples could be names like 'Cheap Supermarket' implying that the shop sells at more affordable prices than any other shop.

The sections which follow below illustrate first how Basotho medicinal plant names are associated with their medicinal properties and second what the Basotho philosophy is in as far as these plants are concerned. Names are given their literal translations and scientific names. However, it has not been easy to find scientific counterparts for some names.

Table 1: Basotho medicinal plants names associated with good luck giving/relationship maintenance

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
1. <i>Molomo-monate</i>	'sweet mouth'	<i>Lotononis eriantha</i>
2. <i>Khahla</i>	'attract'	<i>Gladiolus oechroleucus</i>
3. <i>Lemanamana</i>	'sticky'	<i>Aristida congesta</i>
4. <i>Sheba 'na feela</i>	'concentrate only on me'	*
5. <i>Seboka</i>	'that which clusters'	<i>Gerbera viridifolia</i>

Names in this category are medicinal plant names which generally mean that the users will experience good luck in various spheres of life such as in relationships or business. *Molomo-monate* is a name that means the user will be experienced to speak sense even if she/he does not. Users of this medicinal plant believed that it brought them luck and enhanced status in interviews and other situations where they had to speak and be listened to. Mateetee (2011, 210) supports this belief by indicating that *molomo-monate* is used to make its users be heard whenever they speak. The same belief is observable in *Khahla*. As the name states, the belief is that users become attractive when they have used this herb, and this happens no matter whether or not they have attractive faces. The name *khahla*, meaning 'to attract other people' is derived from this observation. *Lemanamana* is used for love relationships. The targeted lover will be intimate/sticky just like this plant which grows by spreading and sticking its leaves onto the ground. The use of this herb is popular among women. One of the female respondents said that women use *Lemanamana* when they want to keep their men. She said they believe that when they bath with this plant their men will stick to them all the time and not find other women attractive. Rapeane, Khotso, Mohlomi and Possa (2009, 116) define *lemanamana* as one of the names of HIV/AIDS. They surmise that the relationship between HIV and AIDS and this name is due to the fact that when one is HIV positive, Basotho say HIV will stick to that person the way *lemanamana* sticks to the ground. Rapeane et al. (2009, 116) observe that '*Lemanamana* is a plant which has probably acquired its name because of its quality of sticking to the ground.' The users of this medicinal plant believe that the relationship will be strong and last for a long time, if not for ever, hence the meaning of the name. *Sheba 'na feela* is a mix of medicinal plants that makes its users to have steady relationships as they believe that their partners will stick to them only. *Seboka* is medicine used for business. The name '*seboka*' means to cluster. This implies that the customers of the business owner who uses it call in in great numbers.

These five names above are derived from the function of each medicinal plant. The name is semantically connected to the cure.

Table 2: Basotho secret medicinal plant names associated with the power to seal court cases

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
6. <i>Leholo</i>	'roundabout'	<i>Aster filifolius</i>
7. <i>Polisa</i>	'that which decays'	*
8. <i>Sereleli</i>	'that which makes slippery'	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>

As the section title indicates, the names in this category are not used in public among the Basotho. However, the respondents showed that they know the names and some claimed to have used the medicinal plants to seal some court cases. According to one of the informants, *leholo* is the medicine used by whoever wants to win his/her court case. He indicated that in court the person who the medicinal plant is used against will not be able to relate facts or present his/her case logically. He/she will keep on going round in circles until the judge dismisses that case in favour of the plaintiff, as the defendant cannot make sense when relating the case or vice versa. Similarly, when one has used *polisa* for his/her court case, the case will never be heard. The court magistrate will postpone the case for many years until the plaintiff loses interest in the case. One respondent indicated that most of the criminals who are wanted by police use *sereleli*. He avers that when they have used *sereleli*, the suspect will 'slip' easily from the hands of the police even when they have arrested him/her. In general what this name alludes to is believed to have a connection to its effect.

Table 3: Basotho secret medicinal names associated with hindering progress

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
9. <i>Mohato</i>	'heavy step'	<i>Crassula/Bergenia Cordifolia</i>
10. <i>Maime</i>	'heavy to carry'	<i>Ipomaea crassipes</i>
11. <i>Boreba</i>	'makes forgetful'	<i>Pallidum</i>
12. <i>Mabophe</i>	'difficult to solve'	*
13. <i>Lesoko</i>	'difficult to solve'	<i>Alepidea amatymbica</i>
14. <i>Maputsoenyane</i>	'unsuccessful'	*
15. <i>Qhela</i>	'draw aside'	<i>Lepidium capense</i>

Mohato is a medicinal plant which is used to makes its user to be stronger than the opponent, by weakening the opponent. *Boreba* and *mabophe* refer to a medicinal plant which has more or less the same effect as *mohato*. One of the traditional doctors emphasised that the opponent is usually helpless or very weak to defend himself/herself when these medicinal plants are used. *Mabophe* refers to the medicine used

to stop the enemy so as to give people time to flee (Mabille and Dieterlen 2000, 217). *Lesoko* and *Maputswenyane* imply that the person who these medicinal plants are used against cannot succeed in his/her plans whatsoever. This is in line with the names of those medicinal plants among the Basotho. According to Mabille and Dieterlen (2000, 370) *Qhela* is a Sesotho word which has different meanings. It is best known to refer to a wild vegetable. However, for the purposes of the present article, the following definition is referred to *Qhela* means 'to draw aside'. It refers to the situation in which the person whom this medicinal plant has been used against will not have supporters or will always be excluded in important events or that in meetings he/she is not listened to.

Table 4: Basotho secret medicinal plants names associated with silencing others

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
16. <i>Thola</i>	'be quiet'	<i>Solanum supinum</i>
17. <i>Tabola</i>	'tears apart'	<i>Commelina africana</i>

Thola is used so that other people cannot speak against him/her or take any legal measures. The respondents go further to state that the person whom this medicinal plant is used against can literally be silent or die. It is therefore obvious that a dead person can never speak. On the other hand, *tabola* is also used to scare a person so much that whenever it is used, the one who it is used against will not utter a word. When he/she tries to say something, he/she will choke up out of fear and will therefore remain silent. The medicinal plant names indicates the function as well.

Table 5: Medicinal plants name associated with causing trouble

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
18. <i>Moferefere</i>	'trouble'	<i>Senecio parvalum</i>

Moferefere is a medicinal plant name that alludes to trouble. According to Mokuku and Mokuku (2004), the users of this plant have shown that once it is used it causes trouble in the family though the degree of the problem is not specified. Users of this medicinal plant believe that people whom this plant is used against will always have trouble. They will find it hard to keep the peace and as a result they will be dispersed and displaced.

Table 6: Basotho medicinal plant names associated with evil/witchcraft

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
19. <i>Phephetho</i>	'blower'	*
20. <i>Lirahalibonoe</i>	'enemies are not seen'	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>

Both plants in this category are meant to harm people whom they have been used against. *Phephetho* suggests that a person whom the medicinal plant is used against will flee from his home, village and or country and will never be seen in those places ever again. One of the respondents said she had a cousin who had left home and never came back after building a big house in his village. She said this was the only big house at their village. So she believes that some people became jealous and used *phephetho* to chase him away before doing more damage to for his family. She said they searched everywhere but never found him. She therefore mentioned that it is only through the use of this medicinal plant that a person can vanish like that. *Lirahalibonoe* suggests that the user uses it so that friends cannot find out easily that he/she is one of their strongest enemies. They can do many things with him or her without noticing that he is an enemy so that it becomes easy for him/her to hurt them. On the other hand, Mabile and Dieterlen (2000:209) say *lirahalibonoe* coined from '*lira*' and '*ho bona*' is a medicine that is supposed to hide people so that the enemy cannot see them.

Though many of the medicinal plants discussed above are secret and their use is viewed as negative among the Basotho, there are some medicinal plants names which are positive, hence their use. Their names are talked of publicly. Below are examples of medicinal plants used in public.

Table 7: Basotho medicinal plants used in public

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
21. <i>Hlokoana la tsela</i>	'foot path grass'	<i>Dianthus basuticus</i>
22. <i>Ts'itabalo</i>	'stopper of witches'	African Potato
23. <i>Ts'ita-tlali</i>	'stopper of thunder'	<i>Dichilus strictus</i>
24. <i>Maleleka</i>	'expeller'	<i>Morella serrata</i>
25. <i>Phonyoka</i>	'escaper'	*
26. <i>Setima-mollo</i>	'fire extinguisher'	<i>Pentania prunelloides</i>
27. <i>Moffi</i>	'darken'	<i>Rhamnus prinoides</i>

Hlokoana la tsela refers to a plant which usually grows closer to foot paths. Some respondents state that this medicinal plant is useful when one visits a place where one doubts one's safety. They indicate that if that is the case, one has to chew this medicinal plant. By the time that she/he happens to swallow anything poisonous, this medicinal plant is capable of helping the person to vomit the poison. *Ts'itabalo* implies that the medicinal plant by this name is able to stop witches/witchcraft; on the other hand, *Ts'itatlali* is a charm against lightning. '*Ts'ita*', which appears in both names, means to prevent or stop. *Maleleka* as the name implies is the medicinal plant believed to be able to expel evil spirits while *Phonyoka* suggests that the user

can be rescued from danger. *Setima-mollo* is a name of medicinal plants the use of which is said to be a positive one among the Basotho. It is believed that once placed around the house that house is safe from fire especially lightning and *fotha*. The name *setima-mollo* is a strong communicative devise, As the name suggests this medicine is used to silence the noise. most of the people use it when they are faced with scandals. It is therefore clear that the names above “accommodate Basotho beliefs and aims” (Moorosi 1997, 49). *Mofifi* is a forked stick that is stuck into the outside thatch roof of a hut to prevent lightning from striking the hut. *Mofifi* (a cleft sapling) is also hidden in the roof of a home to render the inhabitants invisible to evil influences. It is also buried around agricultural fields to ward off misfortune. *Mofifi* is also carried by female initiates (*bale*) to ward off evil spirits. As the name implies, users of this medicinal plant are said to be invisible to enemies.

Medicine associated with Healing

Mateete (2011, 209) observes that traditional healing has been practiced in Lesotho from time immemorial. He maintains that many people in Lesotho, particularly those in rural areas with no clinics or health facilities, are able to diagnose and treat minor ailments such as colds, coughs, headaches and constipation. This self-medication relies almost exclusively on medicinal plants. Below is a list of medicinal plants used to heal common ailments.

Table 8: Remedies for flu/cold

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
28. <i>Lengana</i>	*	<i>Artemesia afra</i>
29. <i>Phate ea ngaka</i>	‘doctor’s blanket’	<i>Helichrysum caespitium</i>
30. <i>Mothimolo oa thaba</i>	‘sneezer’	<i>Asclepius fruticosa</i>
31. <i>Moarubetso</i>	‘smoke sauna’	<i>viridifolia</i>

Lengana, *phate ea ngaka*, *mothimolo oa thaba* and *moarubetso* are decoctions used to cure colds and coughs in children and adults. As the names indicate, *Mothimolo* from *ho thimola* (sneezing) is a snuff made from the burnt and crushed whole plant smoked for head and chest colds and when snuffed, one will sneeze and the headache or colds will stop. On the other hand, *Moarubelo* from *ho arubela* (to inhale) is smoke obtained from burning the whole plant, inhaled as a decongestant. It is burnt as a fumigant to clear head colds. *Phate* is a skin given to a doctor to spread his drugs on it. *Phate ya ngaka*, which is a medicinal plant, is named after this skin as it gives warmth; hence it is used to cure the common cold. However, it is also used for other things such as winning court cases. One of the respondents said when there is a dispute, he rolls it into a ring and then puts it in his shoes and goes where the case

is held. According to him, he is guaranteed that he is going to win that case. Unlike the other names whereby the name is semantically connected with the cure, *Lengana* is an exception. This name is derived from the blocking of the nose which makes a person speak in a different tone. However, it is still relevant in this paper because this name was derived from the observation that when used, people speak through their nasal cavities. This medicinal plant is placed inside one's nose in order to cure colds.

Medicines for women

There are diseases that affect Basotho women only such as period pains, womb problems and other complications that are brought on by pregnancy and giving birth. According to Veale, Furman and Oliver (1992, 185), many black South African women use traditional herbal remedies as antenatal medications or to induce or augment labour. They observe that in South Africa the majority of plants are used to enhance fertility. Fertility is a dominant theme in the culture of black South Africans as it ensures preservation and propagation of the tribe (Veale et al., 1992, 185). They observe that this may be the reason for the vast number of plants used to treat infertility. Basotho also have remedies that have worked well and are still working for them. Below is a list of medicinal plants used to cure women's diseases.

Table 9: Plants used to cure women's diseases

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
32. <i>Selomi</i>	'that which bites'	<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>
33. <i>Phakisane</i>	'that which speeds up'	<i>Anthospermum rigidum</i>
34. <i>Phethola</i>	'that which turns'	<i>Ledebouria cooperi</i>
35. <i>Monya madi</i>	'that which sucks blood'	<i>Rhynchosia adenodes</i>

Unlike other names, *Selomi* from *ho loma* ('to bite') is a Sesotho name for period pains. Period pains are painful sensations felt in the lower abdomen that can occur both before and during a woman's menstrual period. The pain ranges from dull and annoying to severe and extreme. This name is also given to the medicinal plant used to cure the period pains. *Selomi* and *monya madi* are decoctions used to cure period pains. These medicines are believed to clean the womb and are also given to women who are struggling to bear children. They are understood to work well in the treatment of female infertility. According to Mojapelo (2009, 185) naming traditions and patterns mainly reflect a people's culture. Basotho are very good at taking care of their pregnant women. They have their own way of counting the months of a pregnant woman and can also tell when it is time for the baby to be born. Once that time arrives, they give the pregnant woman *Phethola*. This medicinal plant helps the baby to turn easily without any complications. As a member of Basotho society the

researcher went through this process too. The grandmother gave her this medicine while she was pregnant and everything went well. When the woman is in labour, she is given *Phakisane* as it is believed that it speeds up the process. *Phakisane* is a root decoction given as a purgative to pregnant women. It is believed that if the witches have complicated the pregnancy, the woman with complications will not have a problem if she is given *Phakisane*. Four of the respondents said they have used this medicinal plant and their labour was short.

Other medicinal plants used to cure other general diseases

Below is a list of other medicinal plants used to cure different diseases.

Table 10: Plants used to cure other general diseases

Medicinal plant name	Literal translation	Scientific name
36. <i>Mmusa-pelo</i>	'that which governs the heart'	<i>Trifolium burchellium</i>
37. <i>Thobeha</i>	'fracture'	<i>Kraussiana meisn</i>
38. <i>Tsebe ea pela</i>	'rock hyrax's ears'	<i>Piloselloides</i>
39. <i>Lebohlollo</i>	'that which releases'	<i>Hebenstretia comosa</i>

There are other diseases which Basotho cure with their medicinal plants, such as heart problems, earache, fractures and constipation. When a person has heart problems, that person is given *Mmusa-pelo*. One of the respondents indicated that this is a very strong decoction and it has worked on his patients. Because of dongas, hills, forests, rivers, rocks and bushy areas in Lesotho, especially in the rural areas where most of the land is mountainous, animals and shepherds frequently break their legs or twist their ankles or knees. When this has occurred, Basotho use *Thobeha* to heal the fractured limbs. Just as the name indicates, this medicinal plant is known for its property of healing fractures. When one has an earache, one is given *Tsebe ea pela* to cure the ear. People often experience indigestion and other stomach problems and Basotho believe that in order to be well, one has to release whatever is bothering the stomach. They therefore use *Lebohlollo* to release all that is not needed in the stomach.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to look at the names of medical plants used among the Basotho whose names allude to the remedy they provide. Onomastics proposes that there is a story behind every name, this has been observed in many names discussed in this paper. This article employed open-ended questionnaires and individual interviews

in Sesotho as the medicinal plant names required for this paper are in Sesotho. Open-ended questionnaires were used in order to give room to the respondents to add relevant information in order to make this study a success.

The observation was made that there are some medicinal plants names whose use is not secret and their names are said in public. On the other hand, there are many of these Basotho medicinal plants names that are not publicly discussed as they are not used in the open where everyone can witness it, as it is believed that their use disables others to think correctly and they are often used to make other people's plans fail or even kill them.

It was also observed that there are other diseases that Basotho cure with their medicinal plants such as heart problems, earache, fractures and constipation, and it is easy to know these herbs because they are named after the organs they cure.

The article also observed that there are diseases which affect Basotho women only such as period pains, womb problems and other complications that are brought on by pregnancy and giving birth and the medicinal plants are named after these complications or illnesses.

The paper found that the naming of Basotho medicinal plants is semantically connected to the remedy they are believed to provide

NOTE

1. <http://www.cambio.com/videos/celebrity-news/basotho-peoples-knowledge-of-indigenous-plants-and-herbs--489146231>

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